

BEREA COLLEGE

MAGAZINE

CREATING CHANGE

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■ Berea College has once again been selected for the 2026 Carnegie Elective Classification for Community Engagement, a prestigious national designation recognizing the College's sustained excellence in community partnerships, public scholarship, and regional impact. A key contributor to this work is the Center for Excellence in Learning through Service (CELS), which coordinates service-learning and community service through team-based student leadership development and sustained partnerships with schools, nonprofits, and community organizations. Pictured are students browsing more than 250 bowls donated by student and professional potters at the 2024 Empty Bowls event, hosted by CELS for the 22nd year at Berea College. Proceeds from the event support the Berea Food Bank, part of Berea Faith Community Outreach.

Photo by Christina Nabors '26

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About the cover: Every story is a stroke of the brush. Together, they form Berea, where thousands of small acts of creativity gather into one shared light to create change.

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Photo by Brooklynn Kenney



LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Alumni and Friends,

We are all created with the ability to create. Beauty can be found in many expressions of creativity and artistry. But it took me a while to understand that. Growing up, my mom was a gifted artist. She loved to draw and paint. She would doodle fun, silly sketches while talking on the phone, unaware of the little characters she effortlessly brought to life. She painted individual cards for people to show that she cared for them, and she was the best help on school projects. I, on the other hand, can't draw a stick person in proportion and struggle to produce anything creative with a paintbrush. When we started our family, my husband and I asked my mom to paint our children's nurseries, allowing her love and gifts to flow into their little spaces and always surround them.

And they were beautiful.

For years, I wondered why I hadn't gotten any of her artistic ability. But, as I grew in my career, I began to realize that artistry is more than just sketches and paint. Writers, actors, poets, builders, crafters—they are all artists, leaving their own unique stamp of beauty on this world.

Often in education, we focus on natural sciences, technology, data collection, numbers. But the liberal arts remind us of the value of the humanities—studying our world through history, literature, philosophy, art, languages and religion. In this issue, we focus on telling stories of humanity and how art and creativity sinuously weave through human expression, experience and education.

From an alumna who is changing the face of Braille, to students creating new instruments in Student Craft, to alumni and friends mentoring the next generation of makers through new folklife apprenticeships, our faculty, students and alumni are using their education and creative talents to change the world around them, infusing it with beauty and a piece of their spirit. I hope these stories will inspire you to consider your own unique gifts and how you can use them to serve others and create something new in your corner of the world.

Abbie Tanyhill Darst '03

Editor
Associate Vice President for Marketing and Communications



■ Student dancers perform "Twilight," choreographed by dance faculty and director of the Berea College Middle Eastern Dance Ensemble, Nashwa Cahill to the Sergey Ivanov song "Wings of Flames/Dance of Life," during the annual Kinetic Expressions performance in April 2025. Cahill said the piece was inspired by the warm colors of the sunset over the Sahara Desert. While the veil is an essential prop in Middle Eastern dance, the fan-veil used in this piece reflects a fusion with fan dance techniques Cahill learned in Japan, blending the two art forms into a single performance.

Photo by Kaillah Hicks '27



By Jake Miller

Linsey Hogg '12 knows injustice. She was raised in it. Now that she's grown, Kentucky's assistant attorney general takes aim at her childhood nemesis by protecting the state's most vulnerable.

She knows vulnerability, too. In Rock Spring, Georgia, just over the mountain from Chattanooga, Tennessee, Hogg bounced from women's shelters to friends' couches to her grandmother's house, where her teen aunt offered as much assistance as she could.

"A kid raising a kid," she remembered.

Hogg was fleeing domestic violence in a home where she was told she would never amount to anything.

"I had no idea about anything college-related," she said. "I didn't know what was out there. I'd never really traveled, much less two states away. But for the first time, I didn't feel alone."

The most successful people she knew growing up were teachers, and Hogg's talent with math led her to a logical conclusion that she would become a math teacher. But soon she took her first philosophy course, and it changed everything.

"I had never even heard the word 'philosophy,'" she said. "But logic, like math, just inherently made sense to me. Philosophy gave me a framework to think critically; I had no framework before that. I couldn't write worth anything. Philosophy taught me how to write."

She discovered ethics as well, as a whole classroom of students grappled seriously with right and wrong. Hogg declared a major in philosophy and one day left Berea with a powerful sense of direction. Though law school was on the horizon, she measured the expense of going, and she took a job in the managed healthcare field to save money while considering whether healthcare fraud was a path she wanted to pursue.

"I wanted to work in healthcare because I never had healthcare," Hogg said. "I wanted to give back to people like me who didn't have a voice."

That voice was rooted again in her logical, mathematical mind.

"I did a lot of the data-driven stuff," she said, "medical billing and coding. You can see the natural progression." After a few years in the managed care industry, Hogg entered law school at the University of Kentucky, where she focused on federal criminal law and healthcare fraud. She worked with professors on federal jury instructions and built relationships with the legal community and judges.

Before she finished law school, Hogg already knew where she wanted to go next. She called the state government's executive director of the Medicaid Fraud Control Unit and asked how to get there. The executive director did not hide her astonishment and told her the path was quite easy.

"No one seeks out the Medicaid Fraud Control Unit," Hogg said. "I did."

And now, in her work as assistant attorney general, Hogg protects Kentuckians who are too often unheard: low-income patients, children denied eyeglasses because a provider billed fraudulently, elders mistreated or exploited by caretakers.

"I've prosecuted attorneys. I've prosecuted providers," she said. "If you commit the crime, I will uphold justice."

In addition to her work holding fraudsters accountable, Hogg considers her nonprofit efforts to have equal weight. She founded Kentucky Animal Tales, dedicated to animal rescue and welfare.

"Animal welfare is a passion just as important to me as my work within the attorney general's office," she said.

When asked what she took from Berea above all else, Hogg didn't choose grit or determination. She chose humility. It is, though, a kind of humility with tinges of pride.

"I am proud of what I do every day, but in this world, there's so much arrogance," she reflected, lingering on the stereotypes she often faces. "Sometimes I tell people, 'You know that poor Appalachian hillbilly you're talking about? That's me.'"

Their faces, she said, often change.

■ Hogg holds a kitten named Reve while wearing a shirt with the logo of the animal rescue and welfare nonprofit she founded, Kentucky Animal Tales. The logo was designed by artist and fellow 2012 alumnus, Jessica Dawn Holly.

Photos by Ehku Say '26



And as far as she knew, it was the truth. Her whole world had been this little mountain town, and the only college graduates she knew were teachers, who had placed her on a remedial learning path. One day, a math teacher understood what a mistake that was.

"I was good at math," Hogg said. "That was the one thing I could control. A couple of my teachers said, 'Not only should she not be in remedial, she needs to be in advanced.'"

Eventually, her calculus teacher and a guidance counselor paid for Hogg to visit Berea College.

FROM THE SHADOWS TO THE STATEHOUSE



WE ARE HERE

Photo by Julia Neubauer '27

By Derek Shorkey '26

Appalachia has been and continues to be a place of diversity despite narratives of the region being a monolithic culture. This diversity is a focus for Holden Dillman '17, who is committed to vital research into the mental health and resilience of LGBTQ+ individuals in the Appalachian region.

Hailing from southeastern Kentucky, Dillman majored in sustainable community development. Berea's unique experience of a small town, liberal arts education is an important aspect of their work today.

"Berea's no-tuition model made a transformative education possible for me," Dillman said. "It felt like a place where values, service, learning and equity matched opportunity."

Even after graduation, Dillman's Berea education provided the important building blocks necessary for their future projects in social research as they pursue a doctorate at the University of Kentucky's College of Social Work.

"Liberal arts trained me to connect dots: ecology to identity, statistics to story, policy to lived experience," Dillman said. "The breadth of a liberal arts education is what lets my work be interdisciplinary, rigorous and useful on the ground."

"Growing up in southeastern Kentucky, I saw how narratives about queer youth often default to risk without naming strengths, love or belonging," they said.

The name of the study is important and meaningful. Dillman mentioned the focus on resisting common simplified narratives that don't tell the full story of community.

"'We Are Here' is a statement of presence, plurality and place," Dillman said. "It resists the single-story that frames Appalachian queer life only through trauma by insisting on fuller truths: we are present in every county; we have families, mentors and traditions that sustain us; and we show creativity and care even in hard conditions."

A lack of research into this demographic was another motivation. Despite recent advancements in LGBTQ+ representation, Dillman mentions an acute lack of research that hinders people's ability to get the help they need.

The study is aimed at closing the gap in that evidence. It is for queer Appalachians and can play a key role in opening those pathways for individuals to improve their mental health.

"In most national LGBTQ+ research, rural or Appalachian participants

This is all to combat the narrative that Appalachia lacks diversity. When that idea is applied to LGBTQ+ Appalachians, Dillman stresses that the results can only be negative and do not tell the full story.

"If you only measure trauma, you will only find trauma," they said. "My study is deliberately refusing that."

Mental health is critical to saving lives. In the Appalachian region, it can be difficult for LGBTQ+ individuals to receive treatment due to the lack of evidence. Appalachia is a diverse region, and an important part of that diversity is queer Appalachians.

Dillman's project focuses on tracking mental health patterns of LGBTQ+ Appalachians and offering specific, practical advice to institutions in the region on how to best accommodate them.

"I translate these findings into practical guidance for schools, clinics and youth-serving organizations through briefs, trainings and public resources that can be used immediately."

Through this research, Dillman hopes the needs of LGBTQ+ Appalachians can be met properly. The first step toward that goal


"Liberal arts trained me to connect dots: ecology to identity, statistics to story, policy to lived experience."

— HOLDEN DILLMAN '17

The lived experience as an Appalachian and the liberal arts education at Berea culminated in Dillman's latest project, "We Are Here," a study focused on the resilience of queer Appalachians.

either don't show up in large enough numbers to be analyzed, or their experiences get lumped into a generic 'rural' or 'Southern' category that treats Appalachia like background noise," Dillman said.

is evidence, research and understanding.

"'We Are Here' is both a map pin and a declaration: we exist, we matter, and our stories deserve nuance and investment." 



A COMMUNITY OF STORIES



■ In a review of Grace's book, "Grenadine and Other Love Affairs," professor emerita Libby Falk Jones writes, "To read these poems is to touch and taste and hold love deeply in body and soul, to celebrate love, unflinching and painful and joyful." Grace's book can be found on Amazon.

Photos submitted

To this day, Carolyn Grace '15 can't list all the places she has lived, but Idaho's wheat fields blur into "an ocean of gold" in her memory. It was there she read "Anne of Green Gables" and admired Lucy Maud Montgomery's romanticizing of nature. Without the roots to form real-life friendships, Carolyn and Lucy, and other writers like Laura Ingalls Wilder and Emily Dickinson, formed "a community of stories."

Even these dreamt friendships had been delayed.

"I struggled to learn to read at first," Grace explained. "I was in the bottom of my class in the second grade. But I think it was because the books we were reading were so boring."

Getting her hands on Gertrude Chandler Warner's "The Boxcar Children" changed everything. With something interesting to read, Grace soon was outpacing her classmates.

The first place that felt like home was Virginia, where the family settled at last in a "small-town gem" along the Blue Ridge Parkway known

By Jake Miller

for hippie communes and artisan affairs. This new community of stories included Friday night jamborees that sparked Grace's interest in music.

Until her junior year in college, Grace explored her musical side more than her literary one. She joined the choir, performed in operas and learned to play piano and guitar. When it came time to consider higher education, adults pushed her toward conservatory training, even if, to her, that particular note seemed pitchy. Grace was not confident in the choice, but also, the specter of heavy debt was a deterrent.

"I wasn't going to go deeply into debt," she said, "especially for a life I wasn't completely sure about."

One day, her mother read a story in the newspaper about a local student who was attending Berea College. Grace had only considered local options, and though a high school friend confirmed the school's legitimacy, she didn't have the means to actually travel there to find out for herself. So, Berea came to her.

"Berea sent an admissions counselor six hours to pick me and my mom up, drive us to campus and drive us home," Grace related. "That was extraordinary. I realized Berea was the right place for me, and it set me up in a way that I don't think I would have been set up in other places."

She declared an intended music major, but by the second semester, Grace was already being drawn elsewhere. Libby Jones's creative writing class unlocked something within her.

"Writing felt like breathing," Grace said. "It felt like remembering."

She stayed in the music department for years, but poetry tugged insistently. Eventually, she switched her major to English and minored in music.

"Creative writing kept me sane," Grace continued, remembering how she memorized Dickinson poems as a kid. "It reminded me who I am."

Berea allowed her to explore herself and other places that reawakened an itinerant past. Grace studied Irish poetry on the Emerald Isle, composing lyrical sequences inspired by liminal landscapes and blending research into verse.

For Grace, her education was not about future vocation—it was about understanding herself in the here and now.

"I didn't go to college with the idea of what job I wanted," she said. "I went to do the things I cared about."

Still, an English degree, she reasoned, would be useful for the next step. "Everybody needs a person who knows how to write," Grace said. "Everybody needs a person who knows how to edit."

These skills led Grace to her first job out of college, working as a regulatory specialist in clinical research and assuring compliance with federal guidelines. And life had her moving again, to Cincinnati, Kentucky and, eventually, back to Virginia, where she tutors neurodivergent students.

Within these lines of travel and time were publication and graduate school. Grace returned to Berea to read at a poetry conference, not knowing a publisher sat in the audience. She was offered a book deal on the spot. Grace finished her book at Eastern Kentucky University's Master of Fine Art program.

And now, Grace's debut collection of poetry, *Grenadine and Other Love Affairs*, a lyrical glossary of terms that explores selfhood, origin and meaning, has rooted her in the larger literary world. Not too far in the future, perhaps, she will also join some other little girl's community of stories. [B](#)

PATHS UNSEEN



By Jake Miller

Long before she found herself presenting at the International Council on English Braille, Willow Free '08 was feeling out a career in grocery store management.

"Nobody in my family had completed college," she explained. "In my family, success was getting promoted to supervisor."

Dad was a brake specialist, he worked on tractor-trailers in Louisville. Mom sold shoes before getting on at UPS. And Free was about to get fired. Winn-Dixie was closing stores all over, and young Willow needed a new direction.

"I wasn't going to college," she said. "I always made good grades, but it didn't seem like an option. I didn't know how I was going to pay for it."

And she hadn't given it much thought, really. In the world she knew, college was merely a concept like a foreign land that lay far beyond the Louisville horizon. But then she learned a friend from high school got into Berea College, a place she hadn't heard of, and he could somehow afford it. His acceptance flipped a switch in Free's mind.

"My grades were better than his," she recounted. "My test scores were better than his. I was like, 'If he gets in, I'm getting in.'"

Free presents one of two papers on braille at the 8th General Assembly of the International Council on English Braille in Auckland, New Zealand in May 2024.

Photo submitted

And she was right. Soon, Free was in Berea and majoring in English. She didn't have any particular career in mind, just wanted to do work that mattered one day.

"I didn't want to just make money," she said. "I knew I wanted to do something good. And I loved Berea. I

loved living in the dorms. I loved meeting people."

Free's first job after college was transcribing braille at the American Printing House for the Blind (APH) in Louisville.

"They paid me to learn braille," she said, "eight hours a day for three months."

Reading braille is an exacting and deliberate experience. Just six dots make up the entirety of a code that can tell a story, and a two-dot difference in characters can change everything.

"When a braille reader reads," Free explained, "they're reading one character at a time. Some advanced readers can read the shape of a word, but you're still taking it in very slowly."

Free's attention to detail made her good at reading and transcribing. It was a talent developed at Berea.

"A big part of braille is proofreading— noticing a missing dot. It made sense that my Berea experience fit: catching citations, catching commas."

Braille, of course, was developed in a world not as technologically advanced. Today, it draws skepticism echoed by sighted folks who have come to prefer video over text. Why read a book when you can watch the movie? Free hears similar criticism in her work.

"People will say, 'What do we need braille for? We've got audio.' No one would ever say that to a sighted kid," she said. "That kid doesn't need to learn to read—we've got audio books!"

Only the code is different, not the necessity of learning it. "If you don't learn braille, you don't learn how to spell, you don't learn punctuation, and you don't learn grammar."

But still, technology marches on, and even the world of braille must keep

pace with it. Much of the world's information is online but navigating it has remained difficult for people whose experience of text is tactile. Eventually, Free's work at APH turned technological when she helped develop the Monarch, the first multiline braille device that renders tactile graphics, a Kindle for the blind.

In conjunction with this advance in technology, Free chaired a collaboration with more than 50 organizations across 16 countries to develop e-braille, a standardized digital format that enables braille files to behave in the same way as digital books.

"E-braille is based on the EPUB digital publications standard," Free said, "So that when they open a book, students can now navigate much faster and take advantage of features like links that print eBooks have had for years."

These days, Free not only translates text to braille; she translates assistive technological advancements to the world, with the goal of getting braille to kids faster and cheaper. Again, she links that to skills she acquired at Berea.

"My number one asset is communication," she said. "I give presentations all over the world because of what I learned at Berea."

Free, a former grocery store manager, never set out to be a technologist or an advocate or a person who would speak at conferences around the world. She just followed the next right step and, in the process, built a career around access and dignity.

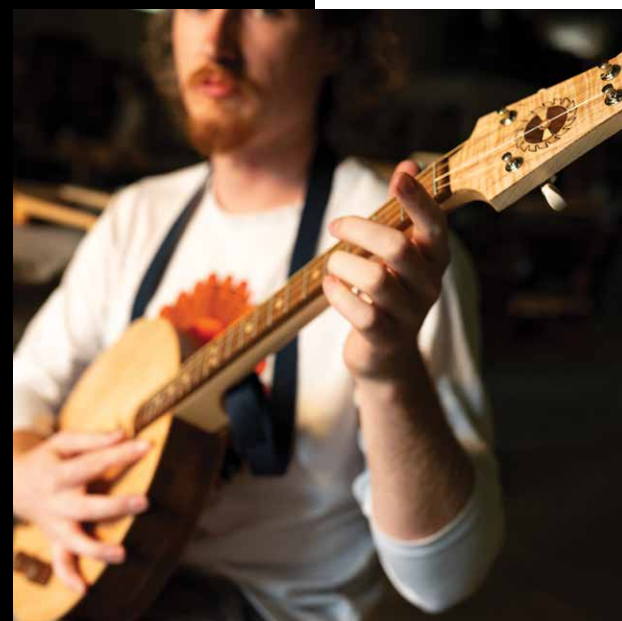
"The turning point," she said, "was realizing college was an option. From there, everything opened. Every opportunity led to the next one. And once I realized I belonged in those rooms, I stayed."



Strumming the Future:

STUDENT CRAFT DEBUTS INSTRUMENTS

By Zach Coleman '29



TOP: Rob Spiece, director of woodcraft, excitedly lifts one of his hand-crafted instruments overhead, as woodcraft students gather around with their musical creations.

Photo by Evy Medley '25

LEFT: Spiece works with a woodcraft student in the Student Craft wood shop, putting the finishing touches on her created instrument.

Photo by Kaelyn Brooker '28

CENTER: Part of building and designing unique instruments is putting an artistic flair into them. Here a student hand paints the neck of their instrument to add beauty and texture.

Photo by Evy Medley '25

RIGHT: Hand-crafted instruments, created by Berea College Student Craft students, are also a work of art. They can be seen on display on the walls of the newly opened Crafted restaurant in Boone Tavern.

Photo by Kaelyn Brooker '28

Berea College Student Craft teaches students to create furniture and other artworks from wood, broomcorn, threads and clay, then markets them to the public. Recently, Student Craft has gone above and beyond, creating stringed musical instruments under the guidance of Rob Spiece, the director of Woodcraft.

Spiece has always been a musician and craftsman. When he arrived at Berea in 2021, he noticed one of the assistants was working on a dulcimer. With his interest piqued, Spiece collaborated with Florida artist Beth Ireland, an architectural woodturner who has made large pillars for buildings and runs her own craft shop. At her shop, she makes guitars that look like sculptures.

"I went down to her shop in December 2024 to spend three days making a simple little strum stick-style guitar," Spiece said. "I came back here and was just filled with inspiration, so I started making a few instruments of my own."

After this adventure, Spiece launched a weekend workshop series focused on making instruments throughout January and February. There, he taught students what he learned from visiting Ireland's shop.

The Dulci-matic, an acoustic dulcimer-inspired guitar, was born after students Colin '27 and Ameer '27 were inspired to make a guitar with a melon shape. After the first prototype, the Melon turned into the

Dulci-matic through many iterations. Beth also came to visit for a week in April, where she helped design the Jolt, an electric banjo guitar.

Currently, both the Jolt and Dulci-matic are available for purchase on the Student Craft website at bestudentcraft.com.

"Each student got to make their own instrument," Spiece said. "That was really cool because people were excited about it, and it opened my eyes to people's talents and skill sets. What amazes me is that we could have any idea come in, and we have the ability to make that come to life in three dimensions."

One of Spiece's students, Janee '27, has used this experience to develop and pursue their artistic dreams. Janee is a studio art major with a minor in computer science. Art has been a passion of theirs since they were little, and they aim to work as an animator. Janee's journey into the arts began when they were 10, when they received their first sketchbook.

"It was gifted to me as a birthday present," Janee recalled, "and I would mark that period in my life as the place where everything started."

As years passed, Janee started taking art "really seriously," narrowing down what they wanted to do with their talent.

"For the past few years, I've been famously not knowing what I want to focus on," Janee admitted. "I just wanted to do art. But in the past year, I have known what I want to do. I want to be a visual development

artist, and I have an actual goal instead of just mindlessly practicing."

Before joining Student Craft, Janee interned for Zoom Group in the summer of 2024. There, they helped people with disabilities create art. Staff could also host their own art workshops.

"I had my own workshop," Janee explained, "like a comic book workshop, where people made comics. I brought my own comic books for people to look at so they could make their own stories."

The transition from pencil and paper to drill and wood fiber seemed easy at first for Janee but proved difficult in practice. Woodwork requires close attention to detail, and as a person who struggles with this, Janee has had to ask supervisors to repeat themselves multiple times to understand. Janee's supervisors have been very patient and understanding, allowing them to thrive in this environment.

Janee contributed designs for the guitars during summer 2025, including creating schematics for Jolt and Dulci-matic fretboards and the beautiful engravings on the headstocks of these instruments.

"I did multiple designs using a laser cutter to produce the shapes," Janee explained.

This experience inspired Janee to incorporate wood grain and music into some of their comic works, which include a story of an evil rock band and another story involving a group of witches with magical powers inspired by some of the materials used in Student Craft. They also have plans to continue doing woodworking as a hobby in the future.

"I appreciate the beauty of wood grain and want to incorporate those curvy, little, wavy lines into my line art or work," Janee said.

Janee has a wide array of paths to choose from. They hope to work for animation studios such as Disney or Pixar. If that doesn't work out, they may also consider entering the gaming industry as a concept artist or another tech-related field, leveraging their computer science experience. [B](#)

The Music of Other Appalachians

By Jake Miller

The co-authors of “The Music of ‘Other’ Appalachians” gather for a group photo in Presser Hall, which houses the College’s music department. From left, Bullock Hon. ’17, Berea College professor emerita of music; Gleaves ’14, director of the Berea College Bluegrass Ensemble; Thompson, then assistant professor of general studies and country dance program coordinator; and DiSavino, associate professor of music and director of Celebration of Traditional Music, participated in a 2020 Appalachian Studies Association panel discussing the rich diversity within the Appalachian music scene, which inspired the book.

Photos by Timothy Housa '27

When one hears “Appalachian music,” they may be forgiven for the image accompanying it in their mind. If the genre inspires a vision of an old, bearded white man in overalls holding a banjo, it might be because that stereotype is the one always carted out to go with it.

The stereotype is old, as Elizabeth DiSavino, Berea College’s associate professor of music and director of the Celebration of Traditional Music (CTM), points out, and is, by nature, exclusive of other kinds of Appalachians. DiSavino noted a particular “hillbilly” presented on the cover of an old CTM festival pamphlet that bothered her and colleagues for years. In a forthcoming book on the subject,

This image stood in the back of DiSavino’s mind as she prepared for the virtual gathering of the Appalachian Studies Association in 2020. She hosted a panel titled, “Still Here: Music of Other Appalachians.”

To assist her in pointing to the rich diversity within the Appalachian music scene, DiSavino’s co-panelists included Dr. Kathy Bullock Hon. ’17, Berea College professor emerita of music; Sam Gleaves ’14, director of the Berea College Bluegrass Ensemble; Dr. Deborah Thompson, then assistant professor of general studies and country dance program coordinator; and Dr. Barbara Duncan, a folklorist.

“From that experience,” DiSavino said, “we got the idea to turn what we had discovered into a book.”

outsiders looking in—we were insiders looking out.”

DiSavino’s contribution is rooted in surprise: an Italian Heritage Festival in Fairmont, West Virginia.

“I said, ‘What?’ I certainly felt like the only Italian in Kentucky,” she recalled.

But West Virginia, it turned out, received the lion’s share of Italian immigrants working the mines. They stayed and formed lasting communities.

“They established a culture in Fairmont,” DiSavino explained, including an “Italian Radio Hour” in the 1940s that mixed Italian accordion songs with country and other types of music. “Everybody in four counties tuned into it on Sunday afternoon,” she said. “That blew me away.”

It made sense, though. Even the most stereotypical Appalachian images carry the influence of the Italians: the violin and the mandolin.

“You can’t have a Bluegrass band without a mandolin,” she said. “The mandolin comes from Italy. And that fast tremolo Bill Monroe does—that is an Italian technique all the way.”

African and African American notes thread throughout the Appalachian music scene as well, Bullock noted. The banjo, for example, is an African instrument. But the legacy is also within the old hymns, the specific syncopations, discoveries Bullock found surprising.

“I thought African American and Appalachian culture and music were totally separate,” Bullock said.

But during a visit to Little Dove Old Regular Baptist not far outside of Hazard, Kentucky, Bullock could hear the fusion in the hymns they sang. This revelation led to further research into coal camps where Black, white and immigrant workers lived and made music in tightly packed communities. As she delved further, she found African influences again, patterns within the foot-stomping and hand-clapping—and within the rhythms of the fiddle.

“You can hear syncopated rhythms that came from African heritage,”

the old hillbilly banjo player serves as an introduction.

“The irony,” she said, “was that he wasn’t a very good banjo player. He said, ‘That woman over there plays way better than I do. Why don’t you take her picture?’”

As though his photo would appear alongside the entry for “Appalachian musician” in a cultural encyclopedia, the photographer for the event assured the man he was the best fit.

“That’s how strong the stereotype is,” DiSavino noted, “white, rural, male. And while that’s one thread, it’s not the whole fabric.”

Each author of the forthcoming “The Music of ‘Other’ Appalachians” tackled aspects of Appalachian music identity closest to their own experience. DiSavino explored Italian influences in West Virginia, Gleaves fleshed out the LGBTQ+ experience, Bullock traced African American stylings in the region and Thompson explored women musicians. Dr. Duncan covered contributions from the Cherokee.

“In so many ways, Appalachia has been defined by people who aren’t from Appalachia,” DiSavino said. “All of us were writing from within the identities we were studying. That mattered. We weren’t





Photo by Timothy Housa '27

Bullock explained. “The same rhythmic complexities I grew up hearing at my Black church in Washington, D.C. It blew my mind. It’s in the foot-stomping, the phrasing, the feel. Musicians always get together—they always have. Underground in the coal mines, where life was dangerous and everyone depended on each other, people sang together no matter their color. Up above they might have been segregated, but below ground, it was one sound.”

The same spaces above ground often excluded women from the Appalachian music story as well, Thompson added. Their feelings of being excluded were pervasive throughout the interviews Thompson conducted.

“A lot of the women that I talked to felt undervalued,” Thompson said. “If they walked into a music store with their husband, people would ask the husband, ‘Oh, what do you play?’ They wouldn’t ask her. And yet, women have been the carriers of

tradition: teaching, singing, organizing festivals, running family bands. The erasure is cultural, not factual.”

Being outside the image that for so long has accompanied notions of “Appalachian music” creates ground to explore intersectionality that forms braids rather than boundaries.

“People do have preconceived notions,” Thompson said. “And there can be compounding otherness put on people because of having different identities. Can you be Black and a woman and an Appalachian at the same time? Of course, but the world doesn’t always make space for that.”

This “compounding otherness” is deeply felt within Gleaves’ portion of the book. Within this section, Gleaves explores the contributions made by LGBTQ+ Appalachian musicians and their careful decisions about the expression of their identities. The recurrent theme among them was a kind of code-

switching that happens when artists perform for audiences that hold various attitudes about LGBTQ+ people. How “out” can one be when playing on a picket line beside striking coal miners versus playing for a dance in an urban lesbian bar? The work of Appalachian LGBTQ+ musicians who became active in the 1970s has encouraged younger musicians today to “stand onstage and say who we are.”

This openness is a rather modern phenomenon. It is safer to be out than it used to be. Gleaves, who grew up in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia, remembered how music became a lifeline between cultures and generations.

“When I started interviewing musicians, I asked how being LGBTQ+, Appalachian and traditional players shaped their lives,” he said. “It amazed me how music helped people be their whole selves. “One musician told me that because they played music, their family loved them more. Two trans musicians performed at a family reunion, and that was what made everyone’s day. Music bridged the difference.”

Bridging differences, not merely exposing the existence of “other” Appalachians, is at the core of this work. By highlighting the contribution of others, DiSavino and her fellow authors hope to paint a more diverse image of Appalachia than the world may notice on its own.

“It’s all about othering,” DiSavino said. “It’s all about looking at somebody and saying, ‘They’re not one of us,’ which is something the country is still struggling with. The most fascinating thing to me was how many themes played out simultaneously in all the areas, issues of identity, exclusion, assimilation. People belong to more than just one culture.”

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– Katharyn, a long-time Kiplinger reader who secured a charitable gift annuity with Berea College in 2024.



photo by Brooklynn Kenney

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and Curator Dr. Kelsey Malone. Most early acquisitions were generously donated by College supporters from their own collections. Now, donors are aiding in filling gaps and diversifying perspectives by funding works made by people of color, members of the LGBTQ+ community and immigrants.

Established in 1935, the collection is uniquely Berean. Based on the premise that every student deserves a world-class liberal arts education, it is first and foremost a tool for teaching. Students engage with the artifacts through an array of educational opportunities, from introductory workshops on viewing art to preparing and curating exhibits.

That exposure is especially important because many incoming students have never visited an art museum before. Some of that is a lack of opportunity or encouragement. But some are believing art galleries are not places that will welcome them. Creating a space where students belong is central to the work of Dr. Malone and her team.

“We want students to feel ownership and agency over this collection created for them,” Malone said. “The college is thinking intentionally about experiential learning, and the Doris Ulmann Galleries are one of our learning laboratories.”

Many students have their first encounter with the Galleries during a class visit organized by BereaCorps Art Collection and Gallery Associate Dante Stewart. She and Malone work together to design sessions based on class goals and objectives, in consultation with the professors. That might feature a tour of current exhibits and a discussion on slowing down and looking critically, or it might involve pulling select artworks from one of the two museum-grade storage vaults and displaying them in the teaching gallery.

Independent research sessions and class visits provide the kind of close examination of artwork that’s not available at other places. That includes direct viewing, without protective glass or frames, and the chance to scrutinize works with magnifying glasses and flashlights. Fine points of technique as well as

instances of damage are all part of the conversation.

Art classes visit the Galleries frequently for study and inspiration. But those from a wide variety of other disciplines also access this artistic resource. In the last year, professors of religion, biology, political science, English, child and family studies, and health and human performance have benefited from the collection.

Dr. Jeff Richey, professor of Asian Studies, usually brings three classes a year to interact with the collection. The senior Asian Studies research seminar visits at the beginning of the semester to explore the potential of studying objects in the collection. The students in his introductory China and Japan courses visit towards the end of the term as a kind of test. As they view Buddhist iconography or Shinto imagery, he asks them to apply what they have learned in class and demonstrate their grasp of visual literacy.

“I use a lot of visual culture in my courses because I want students who study abroad in Asia to have some cultural competence about the objects they see in museums and temples,” he said. “Some of the collection’s East Asian artifacts are really priceless, and the Galleries are competitive with any museum collection in the world.”

Dr. Richey described some premier examples. One is a 2,000-year-old Han dynasty coin. Another is a series of prints from the Japanese Edo period, from 1603-1868, featuring celebrities, geisha and actors. He recalled that a visiting specialist in prints from that period was astonished by the dozens of interesting pieces in the Berea collection.

The chance to view, interpret and analyze exquisite artwork is only part of the richness the Galleries offer.

Student artists see their own work exhibited and celebrated beside the renowned pieces of the collection. A blue woven wool textile sample from Berea College Student Industries, now Student Craft, is tucked into an “All Peoples of the Earth” display case. A flexible pop-up gallery regularly hosts work by art students and Student Craft Fellows. As

Berea’s Premier Art Museum

By Kim Kobersmith

Walking through the “All Peoples of the Earth” exhibition in the Doris Ulmann Galleries is a way to travel through both time and space while staying firmly grounded on campus. It contains 100 diverse creative works from the College’s permanent art collection. The paintings, ceramics, textiles and prints span 5,000 years of human creativity and every region of the globe. Thematic groupings underscore collective human experiences rather than highlighting differences.

The Storytelling & Myth Making section presents a Salvador Dalí

print next to a pair of pink silk children’s shoes from China. In Labor & Leisure, a 19th-century Japanese print of the traditional Boy’s Day contrasts with “Our Land,” a Charles Wilbert White painting of a strong Black woman holding a pitchfork (a loan through the Galleries’ partnership with The Art Bridges Foundation).

The Berea College Art Collection contains more than 16,500 artworks and is the largest university art collection in Kentucky. It includes some significant artifacts, like 19th-century American landscapes by esteemed artists Thomas Moran and Henry Ossawa Tanner. The

Samuel H. Kress Foundation selected the Galleries as a repository for a series of Italian Renaissance paintings. Contemporary artists Wendy Red Star, Kara Walker and Alison Saar also are represented.

In addition, the collection holds several thousand pieces by the museum’s namesake artist: Doris Ulmann. A preeminent 19th- and 20th-century documentarian of Appalachia, her photographs captured everyday life across the region.

The collection is still in development under the stewardship of Gallery Director



■ Doris Ulmann Galleries Director and Curator Dr. Kelsey Malone showcases archival pieces for art education galleries that can be used for classroom instruction. The Berea College Art Collection contains more than 16,500 artworks and is the largest university art collection in Kentucky.

Photos by Niema Hussain '27

graduation approaches, capstone shows by senior art studio majors fill two galleries usually set aside for visiting artists.

Students who work in the Galleries gain valuable, practical experience in collections management and exhibition design. Learning to care for artwork and planning events prepares them for future careers in fields like public art or cultural heritage management.

Malone's spring 2025 Women in Art class discussed the structural barriers women experience to being recognized as part of the artistic canon of the West. She pulled from her own research that focuses on American women photographers, sculptors and illustrators who collaborated to achieve success in a profession that had historically been closed to them.

Together, class members curated artworks from the permanent collection into a museum-quality exhibition of women's art. "reframing: women artists in the berea college art collection" presented images that countered traditional roles for women. Through archival research on pieces in the collection as part of the curatorial project, one student unearthed the

name of the artist of a previously unattributed work.

Throughout her education, Malone always kept one foot in teaching and one in curatorial work. She believes in the imperative of an educational museum and finds joy in teaching art history classes, mentoring work-learning-service students, curating exhibitions and museum outreach.


Offering the Galleries as a resource for the broader Berea community is a priority. Admission is always free, and visitors are welcome Monday through Friday, while school is in session.

The public is invited to more than 30 gallery programs annually. During the exhibit, "A Meandering Line," visiting artist Rosemary Meza-DesPlas gave both an artist talk and a workshop on the intricacy of lines. The Galleries partnered with the Forestry Outreach Center for a Tree Week painting party and with the Loyal Jones Appalachian Center for a workshop on crocheting granny squares. At curator conversations, students explained the methodology and practice behind the exhibits they designed.

"Our art museum hosts one of the largest free art collections in

Appalachia, a vastly underserved region," Malone said. "It's an amazing treasure and an underutilized resource."

The final exhibit visitors can see during a tour of the Galleries is entitled "At Home with the Elliots: A 'Fine Art Print Collection' before Berea College." It's an homage to Shelly and Gerry Elliott, who have gifted more than 500 prints to the College. Here, many of those in the collection hang on the wall in a near-perfect reproduction of the Elliots' home. Pictures hang close together, floor to ceiling, with hardly an inch of wall showing. A large window frames tree tops, illuminated by a light system that reproduces the sun's angle in Washington, D.C. Low bookshelves hug the walls, stacked with books about the history of printmaking and craft.

The Elliots chose to surround themselves with what they cherished as beautiful and interesting, and visitors are invited to consider different ways to craft a life in touch with the creative. In a cozy nook with upholstered chairs, the exhibit serves as a living room for the building, a subtle reminder to everyone that they have a home with art at the Doris Ulmann Galleries. 

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Photographed by Kalilah '27, aspiring photojournalist, uses her art to tell Berea's story. Your support on Giving Day helps students like her share theirs with the world.

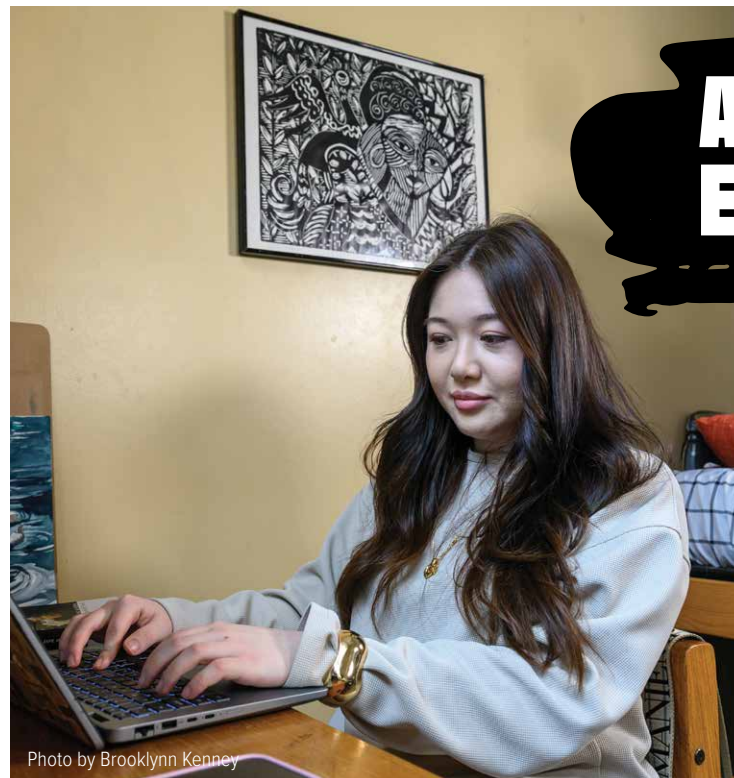


Photo by Brooklynn Kenney

ART IS FOR EVERYONE

Having fine art in your living or working space is seen as an expensive luxury. But what if it wasn't? Thanks to the Lloyd Loan Collection, Berea College students, staff and faculty can have fine art prints in their own campus spaces.

This generosity is attributed to Major H. P. Lloyd, a former trustee. The funds he donated are used for the acquisition, preservation and circulation of fine arts. Whether a person is seeking inspiration, comfort or simply a touch of beauty, this program turns a residence hall or office into a gallery.

Activating Art in the Community

By Francisca Duarte '29

What happens when art steps out of the classroom and into the community? A pilot program called Art in Action (AIA) seeks to answer that question through creative projects that make art accessible to everyone.

Spearheaded by Heather Dent '11, program assistant at the Loyal Jones Appalachian Center, AIA aims to bridge the gap between the College and the community.

"Part of this is trying to reach out and connect with people in the community and let them know that we're a resource and that we want to work together," Dent explained.

During her college years, Dent majored in sociology but didn't shy away from the arts. She sang in the Black Music Ensemble, performed in theatre productions and, even as a resident assistant, she found creative ways to connect with others.

"I majored in sociology because I didn't think art was practical," she said.

But after returning to Berea in 2016, Dent rediscovered her passion for art through picture books. She has since published several titles and been featured in various publications. Dent continued the picture-book theme with the creation of the Story Trail that runs through the city park.

"I saw that there was a need, that people were craving connection through art and nature," she said. "I

find that art just transcends across all ages and demographics."

Dent's efforts to engage the community in the arts led to winning the Elizabeth Perry Miles Award for Community Service this past May. This recognition drew the attention of the Labor Office to her work, and they proposed the idea that she supervise 10 first-year students doing art and community work the following fall semester. That is when Art in Action was born.

Dent's students have been a key part of this process, and they come from diverse backgrounds, not necessarily in the arts.

"It's not just drawing and painting," Dent said. "It's also music and storytelling. I've been able to find strengths in all my students, and they're doing really great work."

One of her students, Lavell '29, is an example. As an electrical engineering major, many might not consider his artistic side. Lavell serves as the connector between AIA and other entities, such as group leaders and professors across the broader community, for organizing events within AIA.

"I feel like since AIA started, we have been making a bigger impact week by week, from renovating the work area to events like the AIA Open House," Lavell explained.

Another student is a musician who has started bringing music to the Art in Action scene, leading jam sessions during the open house program. Clementine '29 is deeply

involved in the arts, majoring in music composition.

"So far, I have seen so many people realizing their love and appreciation for art, not just visual art but also music, poetry, etc.," she said. "If it is an art form, we have people interested, or we are already starting to add it to our initiative to share art and make it accessible to everyone."

AIA has seen results through its consistent work in organizing events for the College. One of their recent events was an open house at AIA's location, attended by students, faculty members and families with children. Even though it's still a pilot program, the students are enthusiastic about its potential. Clementine believes the impact will only grow.

"I wouldn't be surprised if the group expanded beyond the college and did events statewide to share our passion for art," she said.

Her co-worker, Lavell, shared a similar hope, trusting that AIA will "bring people together and inspire them through interactive play and creativity."

"Art releases the inner child that everyone has but keeps dormant in their lives," he added.

Dent shares their excitement for the future. "My hope is that it's so successful that it'll just become a staple that allows us to do this good work for years to come," she concluded. ■

TOP PHOTOS: Using natural materials gathered by AIA staff from around campus and Brushy Fork, participants created fairy lanterns and other whimsical creations.



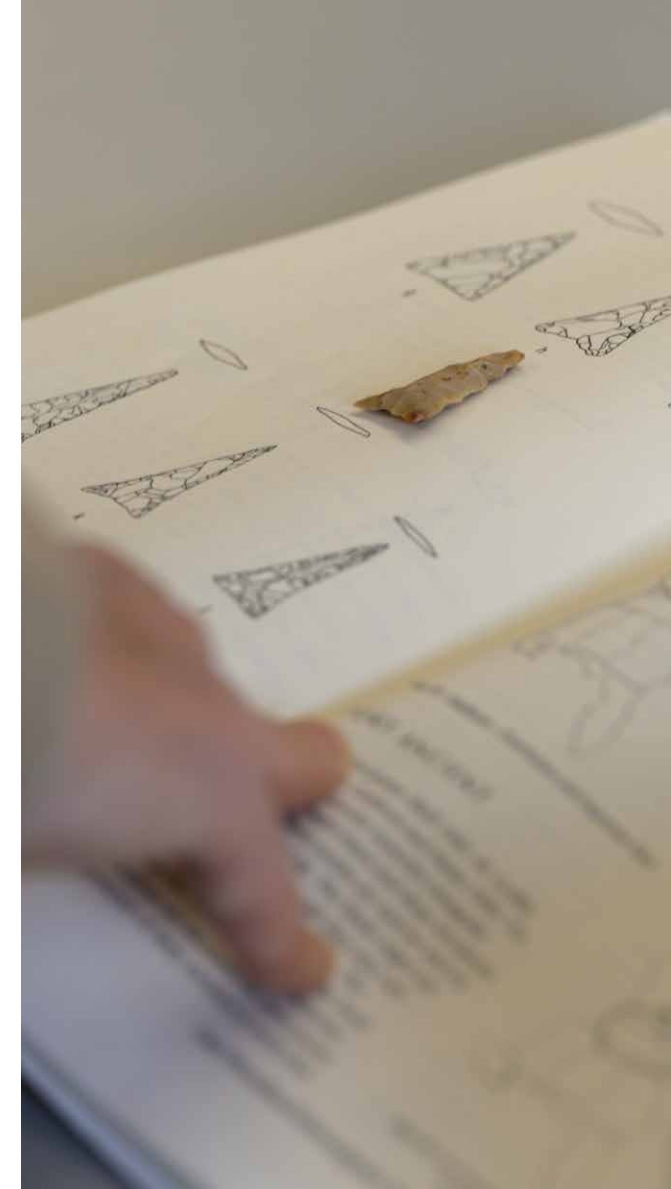
LEFT: Dent '11 and her student team prepare for the "Woods and Whimsy" Art in Action event at the Berea College Forestry Outreach Center, where members of the Berea community, both on and off campus, were invited to create art together. Also pictured is the unofficial AIA mascot, a green goblin created by a student staff member at a previous event that they have fun hiding in a different spot in the AIA space every week, Dent said.

Photos by Sonam Tsering '27

Almost Anything:

ARCHEOLOGY AT BEREA COLLEGE

By Derek Shorkey '26



■ Anthropological archeology independent major, Zeke '26, and associate professor of archeology, Anderson, clean and analyze locally-found indigenous arrowheads in the archeology and geology lab located in the Margaret A. Carghill Natural Health and Sciences building.

Photos by Eli Simpson '27



What type of career can a student studying anthropology pursue? “Almost anything,” says Dr. Broughton Anderson, associate professor of archeology at Berea College.

Berea College’s liberal arts education offers unique opportunities for students to pursue their goals in flexible, personalized ways. Archeology can be useful in many fields and is available to all students on campus, whether through an independent major or as an elective.

While Berea doesn’t offer a major in archeology, the College does have three anthropology professors on campus teaching in other departments. Dr. Anderson’s classes fall under art history, but archeology

and the larger field of anthropology have broader focuses, she explained.

“The standard idea is that we work with remains (or ruins) of things, but it’s a lot deeper than that, depending on what area of interest you have,” Anderson said. “We’re looking for the same things—how humans have adapted and changed the world around them using material culture.”

Because anthropologists focus on culture, this prepares students to tackle jobs in almost any field. Anderson provided examples as diverse as medical school, law and construction consultants.

In such a broad field, archeologists can be found in critical roles throughout society. Anderson uses the example of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), which operates a team of

archeologists that go into areas recently affected by natural disasters. They monitor archeological sites that may have been destroyed or find new ones revealed by the disaster.

This is all part of a system where government agencies and companies have archeologists on staff. Other agencies Anderson mentioned are the National Park Service and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

“I think that’s what anthropology is after: We’re trying to understand human beings,” Anderson said. “And we look to find ways of answering really tough questions with the hope that we solve problems.”

Anthropology is a field with broad applications, but it has equally

universal interconnection with other fields. As a social science, Anderson explains that archaeologists work with incomplete data and sometimes other experts aid in understanding complex problems such as dating finds through radiocarbon dating or understanding food systems through molecular analysis.

“A good anthropologist knows who to ask when we can’t answer our own questions,” Anderson said. “If we can’t figure out what we’re looking at, or why it is the way it is, often the next step in the analysis is finding someone who can add context. We know to ask.”

It’s an interconnected field that builds wider working relationships. The word Anderson used was “interdisciplinary.” The implication is that it works in both directions and also allows for specialization. One

can be an archeo-zoologist, for example, adding even more opportunities for people studying archeology.

Zeke '26 is an anthropological archeology independent major who has worked closely with Anderson. He echoes her sentiment of anthropology’s extensive utility in society.

“I think archeology is useful as one of many tools that I have that I could use in outreach work, in working for our parks system, in working for the Kentucky Archeology Survey,” he said.

Zeke’s opportunities at Berea have been wide-ranging. Through study-abroad experiences, he studied Neanderthals in Spain and took archeology classes in Peru. In Kentucky, he studied

sites of indigenous peoples and former plantations.

These experiences turn into practical, hands-on knowledge that can be applied broadly in society.

“There are so many pathways in life, and I have so many different tools,” Zeke said. “I don’t just study archeology. I study geology and environmental science as well. There’s so much that I could do.”

With widely applicable skills and experiences, Zeke is confident there will be plenty of job opportunities post-graduation.

“I think archeology does fit into an ‘I can do anything’ mentality because it gives me new tools that other majors don’t,” he said. “It’s great for puzzle solving, and it’s a lot of critical thinking. It’s great for a lot of different things.”

Skills and Belonging:

NEW FOLKLIFE APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM TAKES FLIGHT

By Jake Miller



■ Bella '26 works with mentor Sarah Broomfield '08 in the working studio of the Mueller Student Craft building. A textile artist specializing in handweaving and natural dyeing for more than 50 years, Broomfield has worked in production weaving and designed textiles at Churchill Weavers, Berea's first business unaffiliated with the College, founded in 1922. A Berea alumna and retiree, she co-founded Berea's fair trade store PeaceCraft, completed an independent study documenting the history of the student weaving industry, and designed an organic color-grown cotton placemat woven by students for the College's sesquicentennial celebration. She is currently working on a book about Churchill Weavers.

■ Michael '28 learns blacksmithing skills from mentor and local artist Bob Montgomery. A Kentucky blacksmith and farrier for more than 50 years, Montgomery has served as a mentoring artist across the state since the early 1990s. He is the owner of Wolf Gap Mountain Forge, located just outside Berea, and his wrought iron sculptural work can be seen throughout the community.



▶ Scan the QR code to watch a video of Michael '28 reflecting on his blacksmithing apprenticeship experience.

■ Anthony '27 is pictured with his storytelling mentor, Jazmine LeBlanc, who founded the East Lake Language and Arts (ELLA) Library, a community arts organization in Anthony's neighborhood in Chattanooga.

For millennia, stories have been the glue that holds cultures together. Tradition, information and culture are passed along in often surprising ways, through craft, music or even regional foods.

Berea College folklorist Emily Hilliard has documented midwives, herbalists, musicians and weavers. In 2023, she brought her everyday storytelling expertise to Berea College. There, with funding from South Art's "In These Mountains" initiative, she launched the College's first Folklife Apprenticeship Program.

"People think of folklore as myths or ghost stories," Hilliard said, "but folklife is really the culture of everyday people. It's the skills, traditions and creative practices that make up a community's way of life. Part of my work is making sure these skills and traditions are passed on to the next generation."

She announced the new program at her annual ghost story event, inviting students to apply to work with mentors to hone their traditional skills in disciplines of their choosing. The first summer, student apprentices studied blacksmithing, weaving, lutherie (making instruments) and storytelling.

"As far as I know, this is the first Folklife Apprenticeship Program to be specifically designed for college students and administered at a higher education institution," Hilliard said. "Colleagues at Michigan State and Harvard have contacted me, interested in learning more about the model so they might create a similar program at their respective institutions."

Mentors receive a stipend for their mentorship, and students receive a travel and supply stipend. In the summer, they are eligible for a housing stipend due to a generous donor's experiential learning fund.

"When I came to Berea, I wanted to build something that connected students to the community through traditional arts," Hilliard said. "We have so many talented students already—in the Bluegrass Ensemble, Mariachi, Student Craft—and this

apprenticeship complements that beautifully."

Among the first applicants was Anthony '27, an English major from Chattanooga, Tennessee. Anthony is a science fiction buff and writer, though he didn't feel the pull to become a serious storyteller until recently. While considering a career in medicine during the pandemic, Anthony decided he could be of better assistance helping people process their worlds through narrative.

"I realized I'd rather help people emotionally," he said, "through stories. As a kid, I always imagined scenarios in my head. Over time, that imagination became how I processed emotion, and that turned into writing."

This way of processing reality, he feels, makes him especially suited to the work. When Hilliard announced that students could earn credit studying traditional art and practices anywhere in Appalachia, Anthony was eager to sign up.

"Anthony told me he wanted to study storytelling," Hilliard recounted, "and I knew he was from Chattanooga. I told him to look into the Black Appalachian Storytellers Network. He did—and he found Jazmine LeBlanc, who basically works in his neighborhood."

LeBlanc founded the East Lake Language and Arts (ELLA) Library, a community arts organization Anthony frequented in the past since he lived nearby.

"He reached out about doing a storytelling apprenticeship," LeBlanc said. "He showed up a week later." Their work together focused on oral performance, things like tone, pacing, gesture and posture, "all the little nuances that make someone not just a good yarn-spinner, but a masterful storyteller," LeBlanc explained.

"Anthony's a fabulous writer," she continued, "but telling your story out loud to a crowd is a little bit different. You get instant feedback with an audience that you don't necessarily get from someone sitting quietly and reading your work. You are using your brain a little differently."



◀ Jacob '28 works with mentor Will Parsons, a luthier specializing in mandolins, at his shop on his family farm, The 144 Farm, in Olive Hill, Ky. Parsons learned to both build and play instruments at a young age and has taught courses on bluegrass instruments.

Photos by Emily Hillard



Training in Tradition

▲ Esther '27, a sophomore nursing major and Fall 2025 apprenticeship participant, practices banjo with her mentor, Dr. Deborah Thompson. An active traditional music and dance organizer in Berea since the early 2000s, Thompson has played banjo since 1974 and also sings and plays guitar and lap dulcimer. She performs with old-time and folk musicians, co-founded and leads a regular old-time music jam in Berea, and plays with the English country dance band, The Merry Maggots. Esther, who is from Rwanda, was struck by the similarities between her culture and Appalachian music and dance and hopes to use the skills she gains through the apprenticeship to better connect with the communities she'll serve after graduation.



▶ Watch a fall apprentice in action! Scan the QR code to hear more from Esther and Thompson and explore folklife apprenticeships
<https://bit.ly/Berea-Folklife>

Telling stories to a group of people also involves body language and consciousness of personal quirks. LeBlanc helped Anthony work his “fidgets” into his presentation, so they went with his story, not distracting from it. They also worked on slowing down.

“I tend to talk fast,” Anthony admitted. “When I get excited, I want to get everything out at once.”

LeBlanc reminded Anthony of why slower is better. “When you slow down,” she said, “you let the audience enter the story. They stop racing to catch up and start living inside it.”

The apprenticeship became more than class credit. It was a collaboration. They interviewed regional storytellers, musicians and authors, including children’s writer Rita Hubbard, exploring how African and Appalachian traditions intertwined. But the most rewarding for Anthony was getting to work with Kelle Jolly, who incorporates the ukulele into her storytelling. Anthony even adapted an African folktale, setting it in Chattanooga to reflect his own landscape.

“It was perfect serendipity,” Hilliard said. “He was studying the art of storytelling right in his own neighborhood, guided by someone keeping that culture alive. Students are not just learning skills; they’re finding belonging.”

In addition to that, Anthony also found some useful skills for the future. “Storytelling isn’t just an art,” he said. “It’s a life skill. Being able to

speak clearly, connect with people and have them follow you—that’s useful everywhere.”

He is applying these new skills immediately. When the apprenticeship ended, Anthony returned to Berea with renewed purpose. He founded the Creative Writing Crew, a student group where peers write short stories together each week. In the future, Anthony hopes to study storytelling abroad in Ireland. And one day, he hopes to find himself working in a library full-time.

“I love libraries,” he said. “They’re full of stories waiting to be heard.” Hilliard, meanwhile, imagines apprentices becoming mentors themselves in the future.

“It’s been so rewarding to watch students form these relationships,” she said. “In 10 years, I can see some of them on the other side as mentor artists themselves, passing on what they’ve learned. Folklife apprenticeship programs like this are important because they are so successful at ensuring these traditional arts and practices are sustained and passed on to the next generation.”

Three of the four mentors in the summer of 2025 were Berea College alumni and included one retiree. The program returned for the fall semester and will again encourage students to preserve and pass on their traditional art forms in summer 2026. Hilliard is seeking additional funding to secure the program’s future. [B](#)



BEREA COLLEGE THANKS YOU
 Loyal alumni and friends are the reason Berea College is able to carry out its historic mission. The entire Berea community is grateful to those who support Berea for their unwavering belief in the College's talented, deserving students. This generosity is vital to Berea's success—thank you.



A Gallery of Generosity

Inside the Alumni Building, every name on the Wall of Appreciation represents a story of generosity, belief, and love for Berea. This space is dedicated to celebrating the College’s Lifetime Giving Society donors, those whose gifts total \$50,000 or more, and the impact of their giving. We hope you will visit if you find yourself on Berea’s campus.

Retirement and Rejuvenation

By Andrew Baskin '73

When I left Berea's Office of African and African American Studies on July 31, 2019, I ended an almost 40-year affiliation with Berea College as either a student or employee. Retiring from Berea College did not mean that I was retiring from teaching. In August, I began teaching at Simmons College of Kentucky, a small, private historically Black college or university (HBCU) in Louisville, Kentucky.

Simmons was a new experience after teaching for 46 years at predominantly white institutions like Ferrum College and Berea College. At least 95 percent of Simmons' students are African Americans from urban areas. In addition, I commuted approximately 230 miles round-trip, between Louisville and Berea, twice a week. The first semester was a learning experience as the classes at Simmons met for three hours a week, not four hours as at Berea. Thus, I had less time to cover course content. However, the most challenging experience came in March 2020.

Students at Simmons left for spring break and did not return to campus for a year and a half due to the COVID-19 pandemic. During this time, I taught online. Unfortunately, Simmons lacked the technology of Berea College. All Berea College students receive a laptop computer, a device that many Simmons students do not own. Simmons had only a few Chromebooks, and some of my students at Simmons used a cell phone to draft their essays. In August 2019, Simmons transitioned learning management systems—to Canvas from Blackboard. Then, in March 2020, the abrupt change to online teaching required students and faculty to learn how to navigate Zoom.

In 2019, Simmons did not have any residence halls, so all students had to commute; some used Uber and TARC. Because landlords threatened to raise their rent or evict them, students often



■ Andrew Baskin '73 taught African and African American Studies at Berea College for 36 years and was also the first director of the Black Cultural Center.

Photo by Jon Kemp '19

prioritized work over academic obligations. Despite all the challenges of teaching at Simmons, except for family health issues, my tenure at Simmons would have lasted past 2022.

Simmons students face different challenges than students at other schools, such as Berea College, but there is less complaining. Being around other African Americans compensated for the lack of technology and financial resources. They are happy to be in the majority. Everyone can be “unapologetically Black.” Even non-Black faculty and staff at Simmons understand that the students do not want to “code-switch.” This attitude also existed at Kentucky State University, where I taught for one semester in 2023. As a Berea College student said when I announced that I would be teaching at Simmons, she believed that I would recover my soul at Simmons. She may be right. At Simmons, I could also be unapologetically Black.

If I could return to 2019 with the knowledge that I now have, would I retire and end my Berea journey? The answer would be an unqualified “yes,” even though not all aspects of my learning curve at Simmons were positive. Still, I learned from teaching at Kentucky's two HBCUs that I was born to teach. It is 2026, and I still miss teaching. I miss grading papers, class discussions and student interaction. However, I do not miss the faculty meetings, the whole issue of assessment and the administrative work.

Retirement can be scary. For too many people, they retire and wait to die. In contrast, retirement rejuvenated me. The flame of teaching glows as brightly now as it did when I walked into a classroom in Garber Hall at Ferrum College in January 1973. More than 50 years later, and despite possibly never teaching another college class, the fire to teach glows brightly in retirement.

ALUMNI AWARDS

Photos by Nenna Hussain '27



Distinguished Alumnus Award

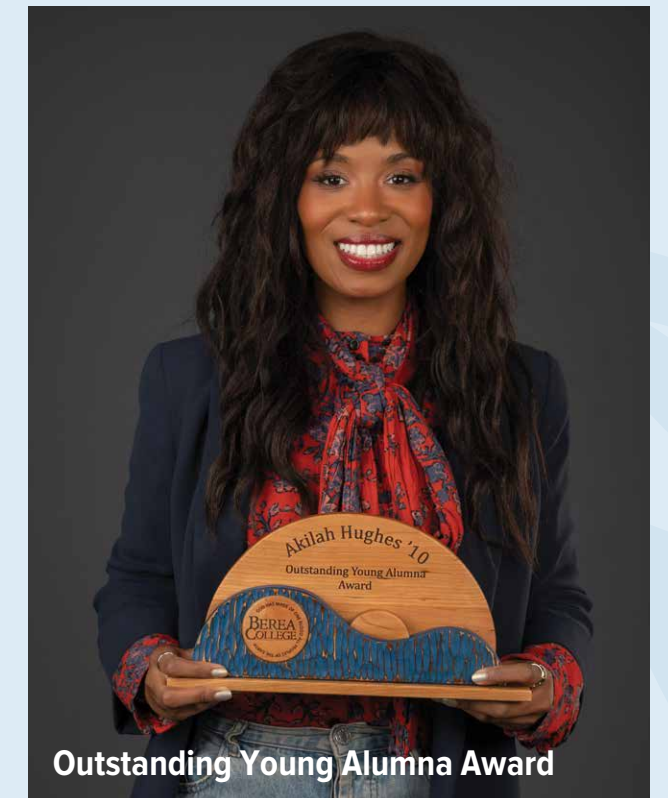
Dr. Steven W. Yates '83

A lifelong advocate for patient-centered, evidence-based care, Dr. Steven W. Yates has spent more than four decades shaping oncology programs and mentoring the next generation of physicians. Dr. Yates earned his M.D. from Virginia Commonwealth University and his M.P.H. from the University of North Carolina's Gillings School of Global Public Health, completing his residency and fellowship training at the University of Kentucky and the University of Wisconsin.

After 25 years in private practice in North Carolina, he helped build a community cancer program recognized by the Commission on Cancer and the National Accreditation Program for Breast Centers. He also chaired a regional management services organization and served on the Board of Directors of Medical Mutual of North Carolina.

In 2018, Dr. Yates joined Intermountain Healthcare in Las Vegas as medical director for Oncology Services, drawn by the challenge of advancing population health and value-based medicine for Medicare Advantage patients. His leadership fostered multidisciplinary collaboration and cost-effective, compassionate care. Now semi-retired, he continues to see patients part-time while dedicating more time to his wife of 42 years, Debbie, and their family.

From his first fascination with cancer as a middle-school student to a career defined by faith, stewardship and service, Yates exemplifies the Berea ideal of learning, labor and love in service to others.



Outstanding Young Alumna Award

Akilah Hughes '10

Akilah Hughes is a writer, comedian and multi-platform storyteller whose voice resonates across modern media. An award-winning podcast host, she co-created Crooked Media's daily news show What a Day, and her sharp wit and empathy have made her a trusted cultural commentator. A Sundance Episodic Story Lab Fellow and USC MacArthur Foundation Civic Media Fellow, Hughes has written for outlets from HBO to Comedy Central and earned a Writers Guild of America Award nomination for a climate-focused web series produced with Steven Soderbergh.

Her debut essay collection, Obviously: Stories from My Timeline (Penguin Random House), offers a smart, humorous look at identity, ambition and resilience. Through her Webby- and Signal-Award-winning podcasts—most recently Rebel Spirit from iHeartRadio and Ninth Planet Audio—she merges journalism and comedy to inspire change. In that series, Hughes returns to her Florence, Kentucky, high school to campaign for replacing its outdated “Rebels” mascot with “The Biscuits,” something all southerners love.

A proud Berean and self-described “southerner turned coastal elite,” Hughes continues to use storytelling to bridge divides, challenge assumptions and imagine a better, fairer future.



Alumni Loyalty Award

Katy Sulfridge '03

With a career rooted in compassion and community empowerment, Katy Sulfridge has dedicated decades to humanitarian service and nonprofit leadership. Beginning as an American Red Cross volunteer, she served on disaster deployments during Hurricanes Katrina and Wilma, coordinated pre-landfall communications, and advanced through leadership roles to become executive director for multiple Red Cross chapters in Ohio and North Carolina. Her tenure included rebuilding volunteer networks, leading large-scale blood drives and managing emergency responses such as the 2011 Valentine's Day Brush Fire.

Beyond disaster response, Sulfridge expanded access to nutrition and social programs through Rural Action and the Children's Hunger Alliance, launching the first community breakfasts and increasing after-school feeding programs to 15 sites. She also led the Volunteer Action Center, Marietta Main Street and regional Alzheimer's Association Walks, while serving as a volunteer grant writer for Belpre Area Ministries. An active member of Scouts BSA and St. Mark's United Methodist Church, Sulfridge continues to model servant leadership. In 2024, she founded her own grant-consulting firm, helping nonprofits secure vital funding and develop sustainable fundraising strategies. Her life's work reflects a steadfast commitment to meeting people where they are and building communities that thrive together.



Alumni Loyalty Award

Luke Sulfridge '03

Luke Sulfridge, a second-generation Berean, has built a career at the intersection of public service, environmental policy and renewable energy. With a major in political science and minors in history and Appalachian studies, he later earned master's degrees from Appalachian State University and Eastern Kentucky University and an MBA from Northern Kentucky University.

Sulfridge and his wife, Katy, spent a decade with the American Red Cross, earning the Presidential Lifetime Achievement Award for their volunteer leadership and disaster deployments during Hurricanes Katrina and Wilma. Luke and Katy served on the ARC leadership team for the 2009 Presidential Inauguration, and Luke joined President Barack Obama's 2012 campaign staff.

Sulfridge has served in government relations for the American Cancer Society, where he helped lead the campaign making Ohio the first Appalachian tobacco-growing state to ban indoor smoking and supported passage of the Affordable Care Act and other major public-health initiatives.

His later work advanced renewable energy adoption as the founding state director of Solar United Neighbors and, today, as executive director of the Sustainable Ohio Public Energy Council (SOPEC). Under his leadership, SOPEC manages \$100 million in annual clean-energy contracts for 125,000 households, saving customers \$40 million while accelerating Ohio's transition to renewable power. Named a Midwest Energy News "40 Under 40" honoree, Sulfridge also serves on the national board of LEAN and remains active in Scouts, church and youth programs. His career exemplifies Berea's enduring spirit of service, stewardship and social impact.



Outstanding Young Alumnus Award

Melvin Cowan '06

Melvin Cowan, MPA, CGP, is transforming the landscape of affordable housing through visionary leadership and community partnership. As founder and principal of Enough Housing, a mission-driven firm based in the San Francisco Bay Area, Cowan advances equitable development strategies that address homelessness and housing instability with compassion and innovation. His firm's flagship initiative, Legacy Village at Maria's Place in Vallejo, California, is a multi-phase project converting a former motel into permanent supportive housing and a comprehensive health and workforce campus built around the social determinants of health.

In addition to his housing development work, Cowan co-leads immigrant services initiatives that help newly arrived families navigate legal systems, stabilize housing and connect to education and employment. His integrated approach to community well-being bridges affordable housing, public health and social justice—turning policy into practice for those most in need.

Before founding Enough Housing, Cowan served as a senior executive at a major Bay Area nonprofit, where he directed housing, re-entry and violence-prevention programs across multiple cities. Under his leadership, the organization dramatically expanded housing placements, income growth and health access for people experiencing homelessness or returning from incarceration. His portfolio includes tiny home villages, safe parking programs for RV residents, rental assistance initiatives and green-building retrofits in partnership with local governments, philanthropic organizations and health systems.

A proud Berea College graduate with a Master of Public Administration, Cowan is also a member of the Urban Land Institute's Developers of Color cohort. His career embodies Berea's enduring values—uniting justice, equity and opportunity to build communities where everyone has a place to call home.

BEREA HOMECOMING 2025



1. Anthony '26 goes up for a shot during the men's game against Warren Wilson. Berea won 79-62.

Photo by Rafael F. Ramos Dávila '27



2. Alumni families enjoy fun activities for children at Berea Fest.

Photo by Sonam Tsering '27

8. Women's basketball team members, Joyce '26, Atyia '27, Mylee '27, Jada '29 and Nevaeh '26 pose for a photo during a break in the women's game.

Photo by Rafael F. Ramos Dávila '27

9. Chris Thorn '02, LeDon Jones '99 and Victor Crump '01 catch up during the alumni gathering in Crafted, Boone Tavern's new restaurant.

Photo by Timothy Housa '27

10. Left to right: Jonathan O'Harrow (spouse of William Baumann), William Baumann '05, Derek Cain '05 and Rachel Rosolina '06 reminisce about their years at Berea.

Photo by Julia Neubauer '27



11.



12.



3. Allison Hudson '25 is crowned queen at the 2025 Black Student Union pageant.

Photo by Maya Meads '27



4. Fritz Schindler '00 (right) poses with his daughter Rebekah for a cartoon portrait at Berea Fest.

Photo by Sonam Tsering '27



6. Ivan Santos '17, Taylor Santos '17 pose with their two children during the Berea Fest celebration in front of Fairchild.

Photo by Crystal Wylie '05

7. President Cheryl Nixon visits with alumni, staff and students gathered at the Computer Science panel in the new CMIT Technology building.

Photo by Ray Davis '11



5.



7.



8.



9.



10.



13.

11. Autumn Tarver '26 and Jakeisha Lewis '25 join the Black Music Ensemble's annual homecoming concert.

Photo by Eli Simpson '27

12. Berea College cheerleaders lead the crowd gathered to cheer on the Mountaineers. The men's and women's teams both brought home a win.

Photo by Rafael F. Ramos Dávila '27

13. Alumni Award recipients Melvin Cowan '06, Katy Sulfridge '03, Luke Sulfridge '03, Dr. Steven W. Yates '83 and Akilah Hughes '10 share a laugh during the Alumni Awards ceremony.

Photo by Crystal Wylie '05



Photos by Sonam Tsering '27

Front Row: Judy Ellenburg Brenda, Rebecca Tefft Curtis, Bart Blankenship, Kathryn Lynch Bowles, Jason Bowles **2nd Row:** Audrey Brown Davis, Lesley Isom, Amy Clifford Sieweke, Fritz Schindler, Ben Herzog, Edna Herzog, Tad Brewer **3rd Row:** Don Hodges, Dana W. Seymour, Adam Haskell, Chris Byers, Joey Noce **Back Row:** Nelson Alexander, Jeremy Grant, Dr. William Plummer, Raymond Low, Kelland L. Garland, Tarp Ledford



Front Row: Jonathon Adams, Jessica Ness, Sam Rosolina, Charlie Foster, Brittney Morris, Kayla McQueen, Alyson Layne, Akilah Hughes **2nd Row:** Chris Rains, Jenna Jones, Shannon Kiggen, Megan Gilpin, Gabrielle Steere **Back Row:** Christian Honce, Wes Gift, DJ Swiney, Scott Rowland, Bob Twiggs, Marcus Griffey



Front Row: Matthew Schenk, Matt Yaeger, Carrie Konstantopoulos, Wayne Centers, Jonathan Armstrong **2nd Row:** Erin Owens, Ashley Hall Rotty, Sharonda Steele **3rd Row:** Mary Schenk, Rachel McClain Gilbert, Jamie Ness, Justin Kindler, Jeremy Rotty **4th Row:** Christopher Awosika, James Barger, Missy Nasemon Rivera, Laura Haskell **5th Row:** Johnna Caudill, Ruth Combs, Angela Stephens, Derek Cain, Katie Hines **Back Row:** Denessa McPherson, William Baumann, Janet Meyer, Crystal Wylie



Front Row: Aaron Lang, Kayla Lunsford, Chelsea Watson, Jessica Wells, River Hart, Weiss Mehrabi **2nd Row:** Amy Myers, Hollister Doty-Griner, Sarah Carr **3rd Row:** Zane McKinney, Naomi Alix Burke, Matthew Cape, Hillary Howard Fredrick, Elizabeth DeVelvis **Back Row:** Doly Han, Wayne Jones, Christina Kolsto, Nicole Watson, Tevin Webster, Brittany Wick



Front Row: Sam Lint, Daniela Pirela-Manares **2nd Row:** R'mon Harvell, Anna Tomboly, Erycah Edwards, Jessica Vaccaro **3rd Row:** Sam Lint, Brianna Halliwell, Jessie Jones, Megan Caldwell, Samantha Vaccaro, Tanica Neal **Back Row:** Sienna Burgess



Melany Casanova, Jakeisha Lewis, Chantell Moore, Jerneisha Lewis, Temple Cunningham, Wesley Clay

CELTS Anniversary



Photo by Crystal Wylie '05

Front Row: Aaron Hannah, Heather McNew Schill, Sheila Lyons, Rebecca Darling, Jade Garner, Ashley Cochrane **2nd Row:** Chelsea Watson, River Hart, Ashley Rotty, Sarah Rohrer **3rd Row:** Lizbeth Wilson, Jessica Wells, Rachel Rosolina **4th Row:** Faith Calhoun-Louden, Samantha Vaccaro, Tonya Ford Smith, Matthew Cape, Melany Casanova, Megan Martinez **5th Row:** Taylor Santos, Katey McElrath, Caroline Twigg **Back Row:** Jess Steere, Zach Raab, Patrick McGrady, Joellen Pederson



The Berea College Alumni Association enjoys hearing from Bereans from all over the world. The “Class Notes” section of *Berea College Magazine* reports verifiable news you wish to share with your alumni friends and associates: careers, weddings, retirements, births and other items of importance to our alumni. Please include your class year and name used while attending Berea. Notes may be edited for style and length. While we will make every effort to put your information into the next issue of BCM, some delays may occur. We appreciate your understanding.

Correction: In the Summer 2025 magazine Deb McIntyre should have been listed as class of 2012, not 2011.

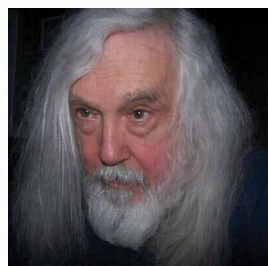
1956

Peggy Patterson Mull did not finish her degree at Berea after marrying **Donald Sherwood Mull '55**, in the summer of 1955, but she did complete an associate, bachelor's and master's degree elsewhere. She wants to share her new hobby of writing stories about growing up in Appalachia with her alumni friends. At the age of 89, Mull enrolled in a non-credit class where she was encouraged by the teacher to write about growing up in Appalachia. As a 90th birthday present, he presented her with a copy of her first book. Since then, Mull has written four more books. The last one, titled “Guess I’ve Waited Long Enough to Tell,” describes the past year for Mull. The other book titles are: “Picnic on the Hill,” “Quacky Lou” and “Berry Picking.” These books are available on Amazon.

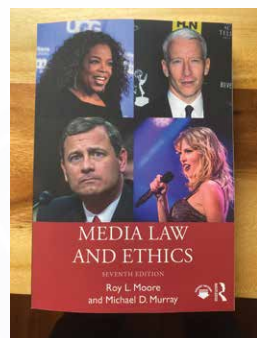


Tom Reesor shared news that the 1956 Foundation School swim team was inducted into the Kentucky Hall of Fame. Reesor, a seventh grader at the time, was unable to attend, but said John Stevenson and **Charles Fiske Fd. '59, '63**, were present. Seventh- and eighth-grade students had been invited to compete that year. The team presented Dr. Roelofs with their trophy, which is now displayed in Seabury Center.

1969



Jerry Kidd has a podcast on YouTube “Jerry Kidd Hillbilly Historian.” The podcast provides truth in history that you will not find in your high school or college textbooks. Kidd studied history at Berea under Dr. Lambert, Dr. Heckman, Dr. Drake and Dr. Wray. Kidd has published books on history and genealogy that can be found on Amazon.com. He was one of the first to publish a book on John Jay, the first chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. He also edited and published a book on the direction of historiography in today's world of advanced technology. Kidd has also published a couple of historical novels based on actual events. Kidd earned a BA in history at Berea and a master's at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. He also has an EdS in education from Lincoln Memorial University. Kidd says “I like to think I have discovered the path to truth in a society that favors fiction over reality.”



Dr. Roy L. Moore published the 7th edition of “Media Law and Ethics” (Routledge) with co-author Michael D. Murray. The work is designed as a college text and reference resource. Roy and **Dr. Pamela V. Moore '71** live on the coast of Maine in Belfast. They celebrated their 56th wedding anniversary this year.

1970

Carolyn Coffey Pennington won two awards: one for a poem in Kentucky Monthly magazine; another for writing five poems for Harriet A. Rose Legacies Contest at Carnegie Center for Literacy in Lexington, Ky.

1972

Professor Rocky S. Tuan was awarded

the highest award in TERMIS Global—the Jensen Tissue Engineering Award—for his work on stem cells, biomaterials, tissue engineering and regenerative medicine, that focus on musculoskeletal development and disorders, and his achievement in higher education leadership. Prof. Tuan was presented with a silver medallion and a monetary award of \$25,000 at the TERMIS-AM 2025 conference held in Detroit, Mich., in November 2025. During the awards ceremony, Tuan also presented an overview of his unparalleled research at the Detroit Marriott at the Renaissance Center.

Prof. Tuan also presented at the TERMIS-AP 2025 conference in Wuhan, China, in October 2025. Read more: <https://bit.ly/3WTpbaz>

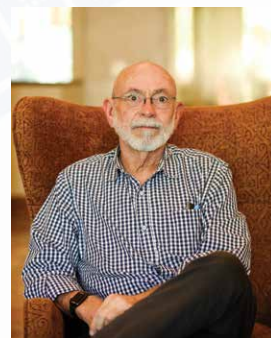
1973

John Grigsby has enjoyed reading about his classmates' post-retirement activities in recent issues of the magazine and decided to share his own update. Grigsby retired as an attorney in 2017 but continues to work about 10 hours a week for Professor Amy Hess of the University of Tennessee College of Law. He conducts research and writes for the *Bogert Law Treatise*, which Professor Hess has edited since 1994. Grigsby began writing for the *Treatise* in 1995 while still in law school and continues to do so today. He says he plans to keep writing, which he enjoys, “until either Professor Hess or I get old—and since she has better longevity genes, it'll probably be me first!”

1975

Rose Weaver, Oak Ridge, Tennessee's poet laureate, was honored with a surprise ceremony by friends, family and officials for her social activism. Read more: <https://bit.ly/4i0RqSB>

1979



Michael Banks became the director of code and regulatory compliance at Durasein Acrylic Solid Surface in January 2025.

1984



Gaitley Stevenson-Mathews received the Community Builder of the Year Award at the inaugural hmTV Awards Ceremony on Sept. 19, 2025, at the Holocaust Memorial and Tolerance Center of Nassau County in New York. He was recognized for his role as host of *Many Voices, One Community*, a podcast dedicated to amplifying a broad spectrum of voices. Stevenson-Mathews, who served as a guest artist and visiting assistant professor of theatre at Berea College during the 1996-97 academic year, said, “Berea played such an important role in shaping both my education and my outlook on life. To be honored now for work that carries forward this same spirit of service and community is truly gratifying.” Read more: <https://bit.ly/3LjegUP>

Stevenson-Mathews has also been working with students at the Glen Cove Economic Opportunity Commission summer program, teaching students Shakespeare. View more: <https://bit.ly/4hEPV83>

1988



Theresa Thompson teaches English composition at the University of Central Missouri. She received her master's degree in English from UCM, in 2014.

1994

Dr. Sarah Pennington published a book titled “Enacting Differentiation in the Teacher Education Classroom: Practical Strategies for Modeling and Reflection.” She currently teaches at Montana State University. Read more: <https://bit.ly/47Bj0Nc>



Amy Hoggard Vanderpool opened a brick-and-mortar location for the business she owns and operates with her daughter, Molly. Tennessee Sassenachs Herbal Apothecary was a dream that began online four years ago, and it now has a physical location to serve the community with homemade herbal remedies for common health complaints, as well as offering healthy hot and iced teas. The company can be found online at [tnsassenachs.com](https://www.tnsassenachs.com).

1995



Terina Hoskins Edington, M.S., R.D., SNS, CCNP, CMP, has been appointed the executive administrator for Jefferson County Public Schools, where she oversees the USDA Child Nutrition Programs for 147 school locations and approximately 100,000 students. The programs include the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, Child and Adult Care Food Program and the Summer Food Service Program.

1999

Rachel Newman Baker, a former Berea College women's basketball standout from Berea, Ky., continues to serve on the Southeastern Conference Executive Committee for the second of a two-year elected term. Baker has been with the University of Kentucky athletics department since 2013 and has served as a senior woman administrator since 2022. She previously served as managing director of enforcement for development and investigations at the

NCAA National Office. She earned her bachelor's degree in sociology from Berea College and a master's in sports administration from The Ohio State University. Read more: <https://bit.ly/3JFKZYK>

Tamilyn Ingram-Thompson graduated from The University of the Cumberlands on Oct. 16, 2024, with a Ph.D. in educational leadership. She is the director of analytics and academic programs for the Menifee County School District.

2002



Sarah Bryant has been promoted to the newly created role of Chief Scientific Advancement Officer (CSAO) for the American Mathematical Society. Read more: <https://bit.ly/4oF6N0S>

2003



BIRTH: a son, Ramy Moutki Abdur-Rahman, to **Dr. Rashaad Abdur-Rahman** and **Houda Moutki '13** on July 10, 2025. Houda and Ramy are both healthy and doing very well. They hope to see y'all at a future homecoming!

2004



Christina Caul was selected as one of the 70 I12 fellows, joining top HBCU

practitioners nationwide in reimagining self-sustainability for HBCUs. The event took place in May 2025 at Claflin University and was hosted by the Higher Education Leadership Foundation. Additionally, Caul was chosen as one of 30 participants in the 9th cohort of the AACU Emerging Leaders Program, which includes a week-long session in Washington, D.C., in June, followed by virtual sessions to prepare participants for leadership roles.



Amber Richardson Detty successfully defended her dissertation titled "The Impact of Annual Preventive Visits on Long-Term Patient Outcomes" on March 28, 2025, and graduated from Franklin University with a Doctor of Healthcare Administration (DHA) on June 1, 2025. She was supported in this journey by receiving the Thomas A. Boyd Graduate Scholarship in Sociology from Berea College from 2022 to 2024. Following her graduation, Detty intends to continue her work as the director of state performance outcomes with AmeriHealth Caritas, focused on supporting healthcare quality improvement across multiple Medicaid-managed care populations.

2007

Blake Ryan Henry has held multiple positions in the past 15 years with Cabinetworks Group. He was promoted to multi-site engineering manager in October 2025, working for their corporate office.

2008



Jamie D. Anderson, MBA, has published the "Everything is AOK Teen Keepsake," a 200-page guided journal designed to help teens build

confidence, resilience and focus through prompts and activities. She co-leads the Stamina Foundation with her husband, former NBA Champion Derek Anderson, focusing on youth empowerment and literacy initiatives.

2012



Randy Burson Spade has published his first book, "Walk Me Home: Surviving the Loss of a Loved One to Suicide with Honesty, Grace, and Grit."

2013



BIRTH: a son, Samuel Onyejindu Oleka, was born to **Jamie Oleka** and OJ Oleka on May 23, 2025.

2014



Betsy Ann Crabtree graduated from East Tennessee State University on May 10, 2025, with a master's degree in nursing, specializing in psychiatry and mental health. She recently passed her board certification exams and is now a board-certified psychiatric-mental health nurse practitioner. She plans to open her own practice in the coming months.

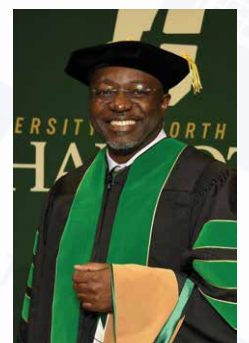


Seth Teegarden married **Brenna Robinson Teegarden '15**. The couple has two daughters, both born healthy and happy. Seth graduated from East Carolina University and is a public-school teacher. Brenna graduated from the University of Louisville and is a licensed therapist.

2015



Nathaniel Fouch accepted an appointment to join the faculty of Capital University Law School in Columbus, Ohio, as an assistant professor of law. Fouch and his wife, Theresa, welcomed their third child and first daughter, Rosa Lucia Fouch, during the first week of the semester!



Bobga Tachu graduated in May 2025 with a doctorate in business administration from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, marking his second terminal degree. He is an engineering leader, technical program manager and educator with a strong interest in using computer information systems, engineering and technologies such as blockchain, AI, IoT and cloud computing to drive innovation, sustainable growth and digital transformation across industries. Tachu's work focuses on the intersection of emerging technologies and their potential to create value for individuals, communities and society at large. He has led global teams at companies including Google, Intel, AWS, nCino and Drata, and he taught at institutions such as Portland Community College, Western Governors University and Purdue University.



MARRIED: **Cassandra Rolin Koirala** to Shrijit Koirala in Kathmandu, Nepal on Feb. 14, 2023, and gave birth to their son on May 26, 2024. He is 21 months old and delights in learning both Nepali and English.

2019

Kateryna Nabukhotna, an international student from Ukraine, earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in chemistry from Berea College. She completed her doctorate at Vanderbilt University last spring and is now a postdoctoral researcher at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York.

Ronnie Sloan Pessetto became executive director at Seven Canyons Trust in Salt Lake City to uncover and restore the Salt Lake Valley's urban streams.

2021



MARRIAGE: **Jacob Ford '21** to **Diana Hernandez '22** on June 14, 2025, in Glendale, Ky. They celebrated with several Berea alumni.

2023



MARRIED: **Kaela Davis Darling** to

Immanuel J. Darling on Aug. 25, 2024. Their story began at Berea College, where they met while pursuing their shared passion for health and human performance. From study sessions to campus events, their bond grew stronger each day, and they are excited to continue this journey together as husband and wife.

Hannah From brought her one-woman show, Appalachian Songcatcher, to the New York City Fringe Festival in April 2025. The show tells her story through short narratives and musical refrains. About the show, From says, "I want it to be an invitation to listen, to feel and for people to go into their own communities and ask questions and hear the stories of others. I know stories are one of the best ways we can come together and better understand one another." Read more: <https://bit.ly/47HmfUv>

2024

Gabrielle Scott was selected for the Fulbright award to Taiwan.

2025

Syakira Divany Wijaya of Sleman has been selected as a recipient of a Marcus L. Urann Fellowship by The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi—the nation's oldest and most selective collegiate honor society for all academic disciplines. Wijaya is one of only six recipients nationwide to receive the prestigious \$15,000 fellowship, named for the Society's founder. Wijaya received a bachelor's degree in psychology and computer and information science from Berea College. As a Urann Fellow, Wijaya will pursue a Ph.D. in clinical psychology at Southern Methodist University. Read more: <https://bit.ly/3Jwk110>

Support your Mountaineer spring sports teams!

All Berea home athletic events are free to attend!

See if the Mountaineers are playing in your area by following any team's schedule at <https://bereaathletics.com>



SUBMIT CLASS NOTES

To submit class notes and photographs, scan QR code or go to:

www.berea.edu/alumni/class-note

Staff & Faculty

Dr. John E. Fleming '61 Trustee (2007-2025)

Sept. 12, 2025

Photo by Anna Joines



Dr. John E. Fleming '61, a nationally respected museum leader, historian and champion of African American history and culture, passed away on Sept. 12, 2025, at age 81. A native of Morganton, N.C., he graduated from Berea College, an experience that helped shape his lifelong commitment to service. After college, he served in the Peace Corps in Malawi, later working for Pride Inc. and the U.S. Civil Rights Commission. He earned his master's and Ph.D. in American history from Howard University.

Dr. Fleming became one of the country's most influential museum builders. He was the founding director of the National Afro-American Museum and Cultural Center in Ohio and later

served as director and COO of the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center in Cincinnati. Over his career, he helped develop six major museums, including the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum and the National Museum of African American Music. He also held leadership roles in numerous professional organizations and was appointed to the commission establishing the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture.

A prolific author, scholar and mentor, Fleming was widely honored for his service. He is survived by his wife, Barbara; daughters, Diara and Tuliza; and siblings, James and Patricia.

1940s

Lillian Davis '45
May 27, 2025

Eloise Warming '47
Obituary unavailable

1950s

Lena Marie Dove '51
May 7, 2025

**Alexander J. Chalmers
Fd. '48 '52**
July 30, 2025

Reba Fothergill '52
April 29, 2025

Carolyn Malmberg '52
April 23, 2025

John S. Marsh '54
April 1, 2025

Billie Noland '54
March 4, 2025

Bettie S. Spangler '54
Feb. 16, 2025

Dr. Robert B. Claytor '55
April 17, 2025

Beth M. Perry '55
Aug. 22, 2025

**Rev. J. Wendell Powers
'56**
July 10, 2025

Joe Grant Neal '57
July 25, 2024

**Barbara Weaver Sawyer
'57**
May 7, 2025

Mary Nell Mahler '58
March 22, 2025

Seiko Mieczkowski '58
June 14, 2025

Shirley Goossen '59
July 3, 2025

William C. Roberson '59
Dec. 12, 2024

Alice Whitaker '59
April 13, 2025

1960s

Chase Dickson '60
Sept. 7, 2025

Emma Lowe '60
Feb. 11, 2022

Alma Ross '60
June 7, 2025

Barbara White '60
Feb. 1, 2025

Betty Cain '61
Aug. 22, 2025

Dr. J. Dan Pittillo '61
Aug. 10, 2025

Dr. Blue Wooldridge '61
March 22, 2025

**Richard Ray Bellando
'62**
July 4, 2025

Edward W. Davis '62
Jan. 24, 2022

Carole Hubble '62
July 23, 2025

**Janet Marie
McCutcheon '63**
June 28, 2025

Leo Begley '64
Obituary unavailable

Anita Fay Cooper '64
May 27, 2025

Samuel W. Lecky '65
April 9, 2025

Janet Boman '66
Obituary unavailable

Dr. John E. Fleming '66
Sept. 12, 2025

Janice Hamilton '67
Sept. 23, 2025

**Daniel C. Saunders Jr.
'67**
Aug. 5, 2025

Patrick A. Pfeifer '68
Obituary unavailable

Colon Clyde Byrd '69
July 13, 2025

Dr. Paul S. Lyda '69
June 4, 2025

1970s

Joyce Keating '70
June 26, 2025

Jean Parrish '71
Nov. 13, 2021

Margaret Arnold '73
Jan. 17, 2025

Brenda Crowe '77
July 5, 2025

**Susan Joyce Alexander
'78**
Obituary unavailable

1990s

**Jeffrey Thomas
Hammond '97**
April 12, 2025

2010s

Mahlon Murray Kirk '15
Aug. 28, 2025

Forbes Names Berea in Top 15 for Launching Careers

Forbes Magazine recognized Berea College as one of the top 15 colleges in the United States for new graduates to successfully launch their careers, highlighting the College's unique educational model and commitment to career readiness.

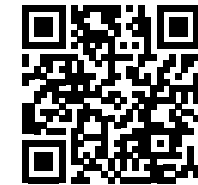
In its December 2025 feature, *Forbes* selected "15 Top Colleges for Launching Your Career," focusing on institutions that best prepare students to enter the workforce

with the skills, experience and opportunities needed to succeed in today's challenging job market.

In the article, *Forbes* cites several factors in their decision to place Berea College in the top 15, including Berea's no-tuition commitment, required on-campus work program, high internship participation and robust career preparation support.

Berea College's placement at the top of *Forbes'* career-launching ranking

further reinforces its position as a national leader in student success and a model for how higher education can be both accessible and transformative. To read the *Forbes* article, visit <https://bit.ly/Forbes-Top15>



Dean Robinson Selected for Prestigious Fellowship



Photo by Brooklynn Kenney

Berea College Dean of Labor Collis Robinson has been selected as a New Leadership Academy (NLA) Fellow. The NLA is a nationally recognized American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U)-housed leadership development program focused on applied leadership practice, coaching and research-informed approaches to leading change in higher education.

The fellowship spans six months and includes immersive case-based learning, small-group facilitation, individualized coaching and mentorship from nationally recognized leaders. Participation reflects both individual selection and institutional investment in leadership development.

The NLA Fellows Program offers immersive, real-world leadership practice through case studies and small-group facilitation in both virtual and in-person settings. Fellows gain personalized coaching, research-informed strategies and direct mentorship from nationally recognized leaders and presenters. With a focus on practical application and meaningful connections, this experience equips fellows with the confidence, tools and network to lead transformative change in higher education.

Berea Funds Support for Appalachian Nonprofits

Berea College, through its Brushy Fork Leadership Institute, has announced the launch of the *Strengthening Central Appalachia's Nonprofit Ecosystem* project, funded in part by a \$390,410 grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission's READY Grants to Grow (G2G) program.

This three-year initiative aims to build capacity for nonprofits serving economically distressed communities across 46 counties in Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia. Project funds will provide tailored

technical assistance, leadership coaching and organizational assessments to nonprofits, helping them improve sustainability and better serve their communities.

Through the program, Brushy Fork expects to assist 36 organizations directly, conduct assessments for 60 nonprofits and support leadership succession planning for six organizations. Additionally, 120 individuals will receive skills-development training.

The total project budget is \$606,880, with Berea College

contributing \$216,469 in matching funds. Key partners include the Foundation for Appalachian Kentucky, the Mountain Association, Grow Appalachia and the Berea College Appalachian Fund. To learn more about the Brushy Fork Leadership Institute and its programs, visit <https://www.berea.edu/brushy-fork-institute>.



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Sean Hall '25 and Evelyn Medley '25