

Press Release



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Appalachian Regional Commission Announces Appalachian Leadership Institute Fellows For 2020-2021

Class Includes 40 Fellows Representing A Variety of Disciplines and Backgrounds from 13 Appalachian States

WASHINGTON, D.C., September 30, 2020—Today, the [Appalachian Regional Commission](#) (ARC) announced 40 Fellows who will be participating in the second class of the [Appalachian Leadership Institute](#). The class draws on each one of Appalachia's 13 states and includes professionals who live and/or work in the Region in civil service, finance, healthcare tourism, and a variety of additional public and private sectors.

As a part of the Leadership Institute, each Fellow will participate in an extensive, nine-month series of skill-building seminars featuring regional experts, peer-to-peer learning, and case study analysis beginning virtually in mid-October through July 2021. Topics include:

- Designing effective economic development project proposals;
- Integrating community assets into long-lasting economic development strategies;
- Identifying resources available to spur economic development;
- Locating and accessing investment capital from a variety of public and private sources;
- Preparing competitive applications for public grant opportunities; and
- Using expanded leadership skills to create strong coalitions.

Upon completion of the program, Appalachian Leadership Institute Fellows will automatically become part of the Appalachian Leadership Institute Network, a peer-to-peer working group committed to Appalachia's future.

"Congratulations to the new class of Appalachian Leadership Institute Fellows. The skills development and network-building opportunities offered by this program have proven to be

valuable, and this past year has shown that effective local leadership is essential,” **said ARC Federal Co-Chairman Tim Thomas**. “This program has adjusted well to the present circumstance and offers a unique opportunity to learn first-hand from those who have provided leadership for their communities through difficult circumstances.”

Appalachian Leadership Institute Fellows were chosen via a competitive application process. Over 100 qualified applications were received for this year’s program. The 2020-2021 Appalachian Leadership Institute Fellows are:

Alabama

- **Ed Lowe**, City Manager, Oneonta;
- **Tami Reist**, President/CEO, Alabama Mountain Lakes Tourist Association, Moulton;
- **Teresa Merriweather Orok**, Ph.D., Executive Director, Center for Entrepreneurship, Innovation, and Economic Development (CEIED), Alabama A&M University, Huntsville.

Georgia

- **Betsy McGriff**, Economic Development Director, Dawson County Chamber of Commerce, Dawsonville;
- **Jessie Owensby**, Community Development Manager, City of Cornelia, Cornelia;
- **Jennifer Ivey**, Branch Manager, Madison County Library, Danielsville.

Kentucky

- **Amanda Clark**, External Affairs Manager, Kentucky Power, Ashland;
- **Edna O. Schack**, Ed.D., Professor, Morehead State University, Morehead;
- **Joe Choate**, Judge/Executive, Hart County Fiscal Court, Munfordville;
- **Maria Braman**, Chief Medical Officer, Appalachian Regional Healthcare, Hazard.

Maryland

- **Brandon Butler**, Consultant, Greenwill Consulting Group, Frostburg;
- **M. Elizabeth Georg**, Attorney, Deep Creek Title Group, McHenry;
- **Michael Dreisbach**, Co-Owner, Savage River Lodge, Frostburg.

Mississippi

- **Kyle Jordan**, Deputy District Director, U.S. Congressman Michael Guest, Starkville;
- **Lara Bowman**, Executive Director, The Enterprise of Mississippi, Ackerman;
- **Ramona Williams**, Executive Director, Jobs for Mississippi Graduates, Inc., Jackson.

New York

- **Matthew Bull**, Chief Operations Officer, ProAction of Steuben and Yates, Inc., Hammondsport;
- **Darren “Hal” McCabe**, Executive Director, NY State Legislative Commission on Rural Resources, Homer.

North Carolina

- **Carol Moore**, President & CEO, STEM West, Claremont;
- **Philip Cooper**, UpSkill WNC Coordinator, Asheville Buncombe Technical Community College, Asheville.

Ohio

- **Todd Wilkin**, City Manager, Village of Greenfield, Greenfield;
- **Beth Pirtle-Frazer**, President, Manchester Renaissance Foundation, Inc., Manchester;
- **Diane Lautenschleger**, Partnership Development, Tuscarawas County Conventions & Visitors Bureau, New Philadelphia;
- **Samuel Brady**, Executive Director, Jackson County Economic Development Partnership, Jackson.

Pennsylvania

- **Abbi Peters**, Executive Vice President of Operations, PA Wilds Center for Entrepreneurship, Ridgway;
- **John Sider**, Director of Second Stage Capital, Ben Franklin Technology Partners, Harrisburg;
- **Lesley Ridge Allen**, Director of Business Engagement, Erie Regional Chamber, Erie;
- **Kenneth Zipovsky**, Chief of Police, Rush Township Police Department, Tamaqua.

South Carolina

- **Donald Godbey**, Psychotherapist, Carolina Center for Behavioral Health, Mauldin;
- **R Mack Durham**, DC, Mayor, Williamston.

Tennessee

- **Angelee Murray**, Director of Corporate & Community Development, ReVIDA Recovery Centers, Johnson City;
- **Bridgett Massengill**, President/CEO, Thrive Regional Partnership, Chattanooga;

- **Jeremy Lively**, Manager, State Farm, Kingsport;
- **LeAnn Sutton**, Key Accounts Coordinator, Appalachian Electric Cooperative, New Market;
- **Mark Stevans**, Director of Special Projects, First Tennessee Development District, Greeneville.

Virginia

- **AJ Robinson**, Director of Communications and Tourism, Tazewell County, Bluefield;
- **Todd Wolford**, Executive Director, Downtown Wytheville, Inc., Wytheville.

West Virginia

- **Ron Scott Jr.**, Cultural Diversity & Community Outreach Director, YWCA Wheeling, Wheeling;
- **Rachel Dyer**, President/Owner, This Place WV, Fairmont;
- **Violet Burdette**, Development Specialist, MountainHeart Community Services, Inc., Princeton.

Due to the COVID crisis, the 2019-2020 [Appalachian Leadership Institute](#) pivoted from field visits and in-person seminars to online working sessions on developing community capacity and capitalizing on natural and cultural assets, followed by supplemental discussions. This year's program will remain online until further notice.

The Appalachian Leadership Institute is a comprehensive regional leadership training program developed by the Appalachian Regional Commission in partnership with the University of Tennessee, Knoxville; The Howard H. Baker Center for Public Policy; Tuskegee University; and Collective Impact. More information about the Appalachian Leadership Institute is available at leadership.arc.gov.

About the Appalachian Regional Commission

The Appalachian Regional Commission (www.arc.gov) is an economic development agency of the federal government and 13 state governments focusing on 420 counties across the Appalachian Region. ARC's mission is to innovate, partner, and invest to build community capacity and strengthen economic growth in Appalachia to help the Region achieve socioeconomic parity with the nation.

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