

Tis' The Season!

Our team at the Foundation For Appalachian Advancement want to take this opportunity to wish each of you a very safe and happy holiday. Thanksgiving passed us by way too fast and Christmas and Hanukkah are already here.

It's this time of year that we count our blessings and are reminded of all of the things in our lives to be thankful for. As you go out and shop and spend time with friends and family, take note of the folks that are out braving the weather for good causes such as providing hot meals to those in need during this time of year. If you look around many grocery stores you'll see boxes where people are collecting coats and school supplies for kids from needy families.



*Photo by Linda Lawson Hass

For some families, the struggle isn't just around the holidays. Although we are always thankful for those that donate to us and our causes, we also ask that you notice the other causes in your community that need attention. Well, that sort of goes without saying. Our supporters are generous people with big hearts. I know because

members of our board have met many of you either personally or through email and social media. We are blessed to have YOU reading and receiving this newsletter. Blessed that YOU follow us on social media and share in our goals, and have it in your hearts to help out when you can.

May your lives be full of joy and blessings during the season.

Sincerely,
Your friends at the FAA

The Santa Train

Every year for the past 76 years the Santa Train has made its run through Central Appalachia to delight of kids and families all across the region.

While most people were sleeping during the early morning hours on Tuesday November 20th, the volunteers and excited crew of the Santa Train began to slowly pull out of the Shelby Yard in Pike County, Kentucky just before 6:00 am.



The train spent the next nine hours travelling throughout Eastern Kentucky, Southwest Virginia, and Northeast Tennessee stopping in various towns and crossings, giving out toys, coats, and school supplies to kids of all ages.

In some of the most economically poor towns and counties (especially in the coalfield region) these gifts are collected and are the only way some kids have something waiting for them on Christmas morning.

The train delivers these gifts courtesy of CSX (a long standing tradition for the rail company) and it has become a tradition for people all over the region to go out to see the train and the jolly elf handing out presents at the end of it.

The tradition began back in 1943. Coal was booming back then. World War II was raging. It started by Flem Dobyns, the owner of a hardware store, as a way of saying thank you to folks all across the region that would drive to his store in Kingsport, TN. He and other business owners jumped on the Clinchfield Railroad passenger train to toss out candy to kids along the way. Today the tradition has grown to being a vital part of some families in need.

The Santa Train is a reminder about how important it is to count our blessings and pass our good fortunes forward, whether it is volunteering for a worthy cause or sparing a few bucks from time to time. Every dollar counts, every pair of hands count, and every

big heart can make a difference. This time of year is a great reminder of that.

Appalachian Regional Commission's Latest County Report Card

According to the latest report issued from the ARC, the number of counties considered economically distressed has dropped from 84 to 81 for fiscal year 2019. For those not aware of the ranking, the ARC has 5 categories of economic ranking for the 420 counties that make up Appalachia. Those are *Distressed*, *At Risk*, *Transitional*, *Competitive* and *Attainment*.

Our collective goal should be to see all 420 counties in the region reach the level of either *competitive* or *attainment*. Now, if you click on the link below and look at the map you will see that only 13 counties in the region have reached those levels. Thirteen! That leaves 407 counties that have not reached an adequate level of economic growth and diversification. There are 199 counties that are either *distressed* or considered *at-risk*.

The map also shows that several counties in Central Appalachia (Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky) have fallen in rank since the 2018 report.

https://www.arc.gov/appalachian_region/countyeconomicstatusanddistressedareasinappalachia.asp

Don't Forget the Appalachian Scholarship Fund!!



Donations are tax deductible and 100% of your donation goes to the program. You can support this program by donating online at our website www.supportappalachia.org or the old fashioned way of sending us a check made payable to Appalachian Scholarship Fund, P.O. Box 397, Richlands, VA 24641. We thank you for your help with this!

Artists Corner

FAA to Sponsor Appalachian Art Events

Our board of directors voted to approve to move forward with plans to hold "Meet the Artist" events in various locations in Central Appalachia in the coming year.

We have already reached out to several artists to gauge interest in being involved in the events and are getting great feedback. At first glance we feel confident that there won't be a shortage of artists to showcase to the public in the locations we choose to hold the festivals.

Our goal is to provide locations where artists can set up to promote their work in our region to new audiences, and provide that without a fee to them. Many may not know this, but at the major summer festivals held all around the region, artists have to pay between \$50 and \$200 just to have booth for a few hours. That's a hefty expense on the artists, especially if the directors of the festivals do not adequately promote them for the event or put them in locations of minimal foot traffic. We want to avoid this situation and still make the event free for the visiting public.

We will be seeking to have local businesses sponsor these events with a donation. Our goal is to raise \$5,000 for the events. *If you are a business owner that would like to sponsor the event* with a donation please contact J.C. Schweingrouber at jc@supportappalachia.org.

We are excited about this project and more details will be coming in the new year.

About Us

Our mission is simple. The *Foundation For Appalachian Advancement* (FAA) strives to promote educational opportunities, economic development, and the advancement of our culture, history and heritage through the arts.

We need your help to support this great region! The FAA is a tax-exempt

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THE APPALACHIAN

501(c)(3) organization and your donations are completely tax deductible. Absolutely 100% will go towards the FAA expenses. Operational expenses only include web site maintenance and the annual P.O. Box fee which have always been paid out of pocket. All directors/officers are volunteers, no one is salaried.

Programs we sponsor include the Appalachian Scholarship Fund and Appalachia Streaming. In addition, we are hoping to have funding available going forward to sponsor several events promoting artists throughout our region.

We accept Credit Card and electronic donations through the PayPal button on our website or the "Old Fashioned" way by personal check. If writing a check you can mail it to **P.O. Box 397, Richlands, Virginia, 24641**. Any amount is greatly appreciated!

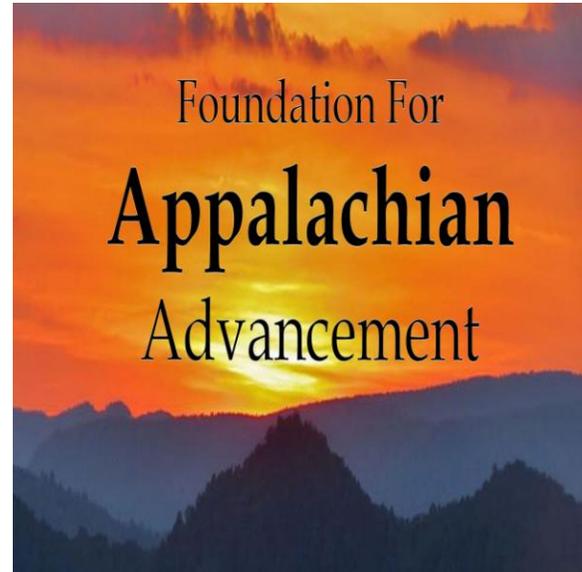
Thanks for your support and generous donation! We greatly appreciate it!

Make generosity part of your growth strategy

*****END OF YEAR DONATIONS!**

It's not too late to make a tax deductible donation for 2018. We are planning our next year and are hoping for some last

minute donations. If you have yet to make a donation to your favorite charities this year, we hope you will consider us for your giving. THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!!



Visit us online:

www.supportappalachia.org

<https://www.facebook.com/supportappalachia/>

<https://twitter.com/SuprtAppalachia>

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