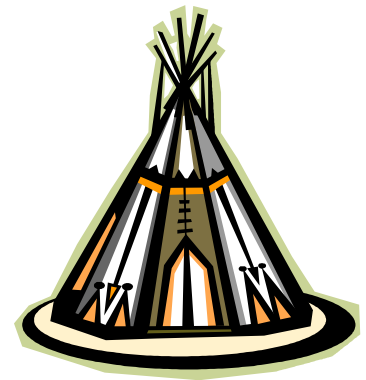


# Leslie.....

Small town charm with welcome home warmth.

# In the beginning.....

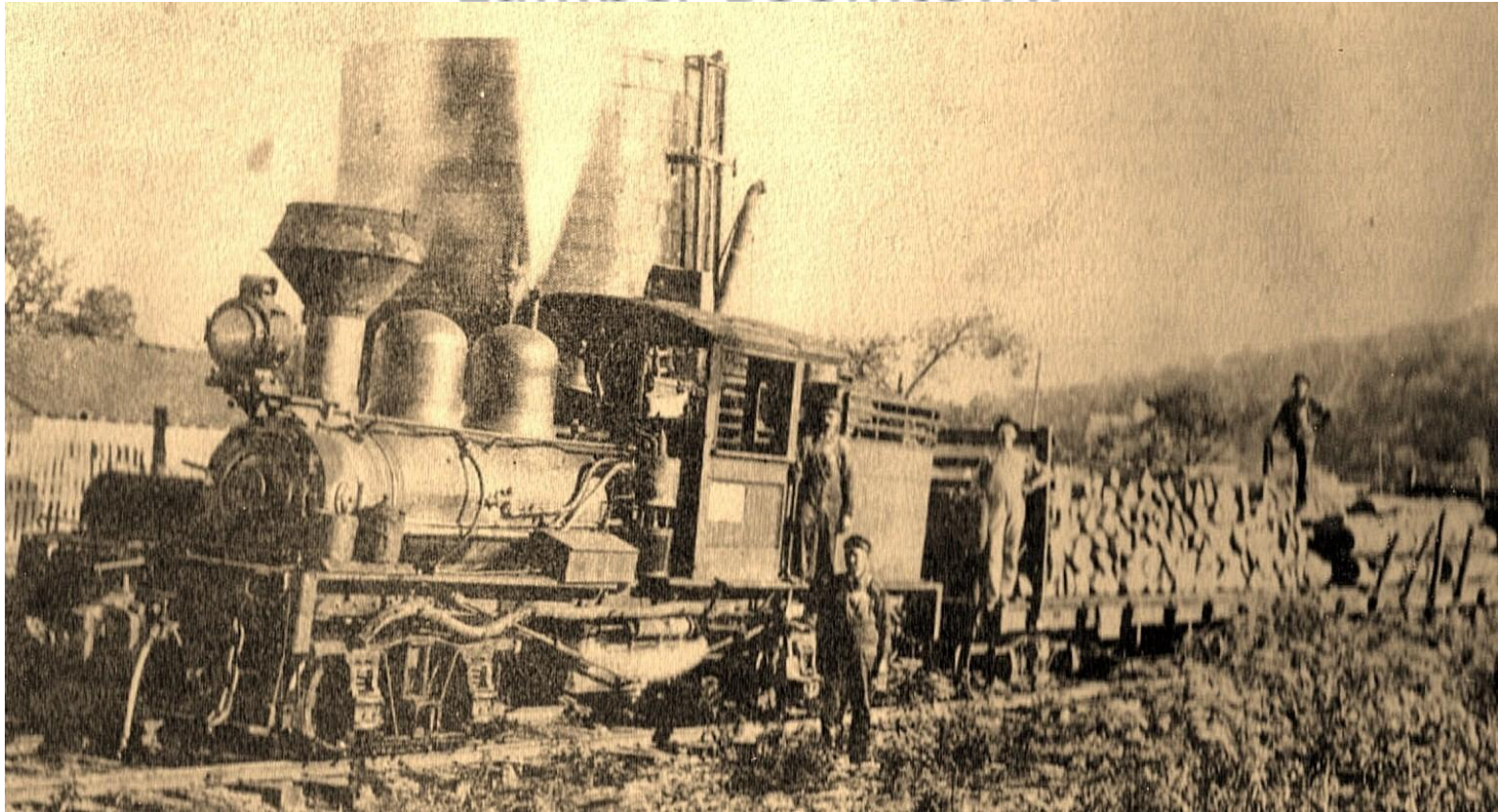


- ▶ Prosperous Indian encampments.
- ▶ French explorers in the 17<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup> centuries observed Indian encampments along Cove Creek.
- ▶ Wiley's Cove and Owl's Cove named after two Indian Chiefs.
- ▶ In 1803 the Louisiana Purchase brought the land into the U.S.
- ▶ Samuel Leslie arrived in 1838, just two years after Arkansas became a state.
- ▶ In 1887 the Postal Department changed the name from Wiley's Cove to Leslie to honor Samuel Leslie.
- ▶ The town of Leslie was incorporated in 1903, the same year the Missouri and North Arkansas Railroad came to town.

▶ *History and Folklore of Searcy County*, by Mary Frances Harrell

# Early Business and Industry.....

## Lumber Boomtown



The railroad and the bountiful oak forest attracted companies including Williams Cooperage, which would become the largest barrel manufacturer in the world by 1910, producing 3,000–5,000 barrels a day, and shipping all over the U.S and Mexico. The company employed 1,200 and housed most of them in Leslie.

*Photo courtesy Ozark Heritage Museum*

# Height of Prosperity—end of WWI

- ▶ Barrel Manufacturer
- ▶ Sawmills, handle mills, stave mills.
- ▶ Four newspapers
- ▶ Four Banks
- ▶ Four Hotels
- ▶ Hospital
- ▶ Canneries
- ▶ Creamery
- ▶ Flour Mill



*Hill Folks* by Brooks Blevins

# I can remember when....

“Every store building in Leslie had a business in it. We had three grocery stores, a furniture store, two barber shops, two clothing stores, a five and ten cent store, two drug stores, a feed store, a pool hall, three or four beauty shops, two restaurants, four service stations, three or four mechanic shops, a lumber company, two saw mills, one stave mill, auto parts store, and a hospital...and I have probably left out some”.

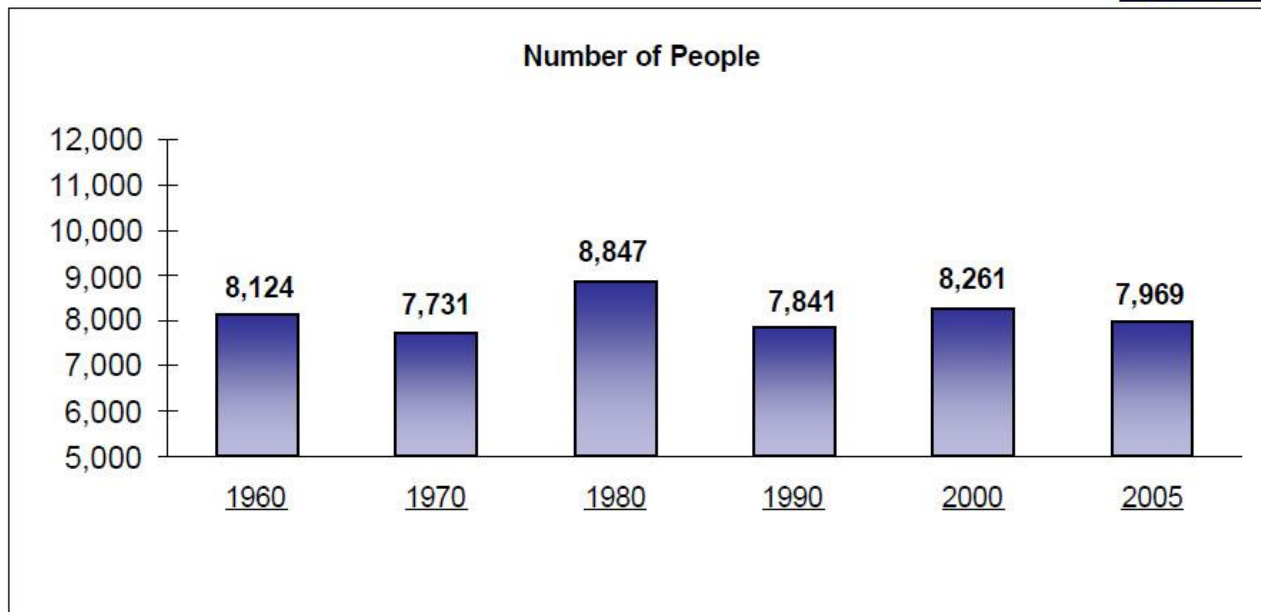
Wesley Smith, Leslie Resident



# Population Trend

**Population, 1960-2005**  
*Searcy County*

Figure 1



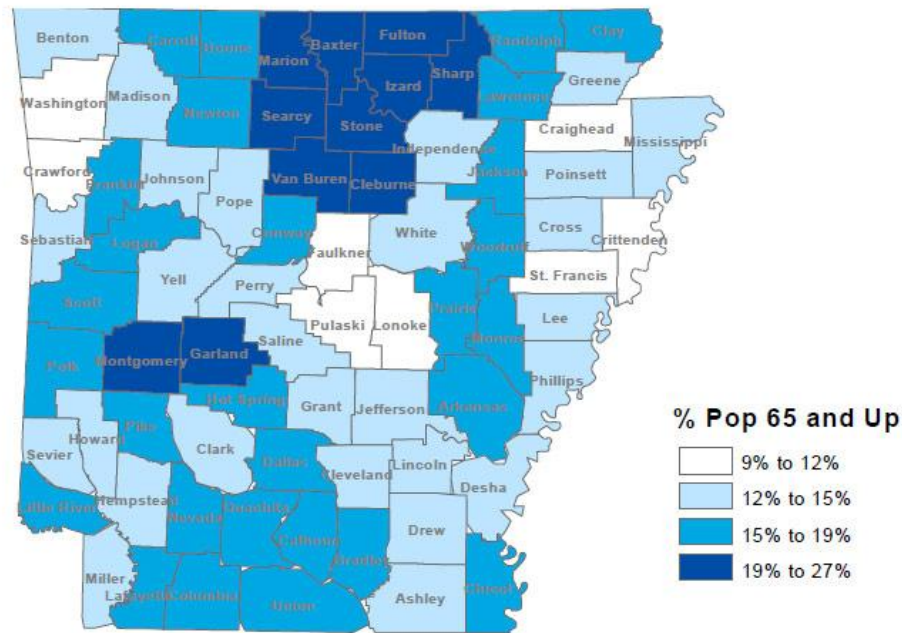
Source: 1960, 1960, 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000 Census of Population & 2005 Population Estimates, U.S. Bureau of Census

The population of Searcy County decreased from 8,124 in 1960 to 7,969 in 2000.

# Concentration of People 65+

Population 65 and Older, 2004  
*The Natural State*

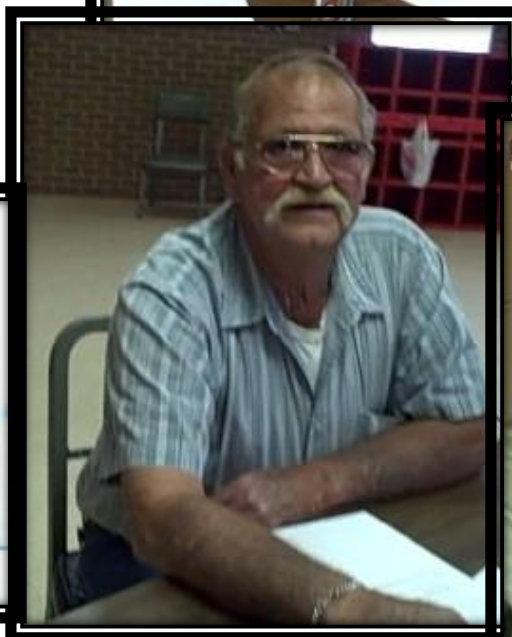
Figure 5



Source: 2004 Population Estimates, U.S. Bureau of Census

Counties in Northcentral Arkansas have the highest proportion of people aged 65 and older.

# ACRE makes presentation at Leslie City Council in August



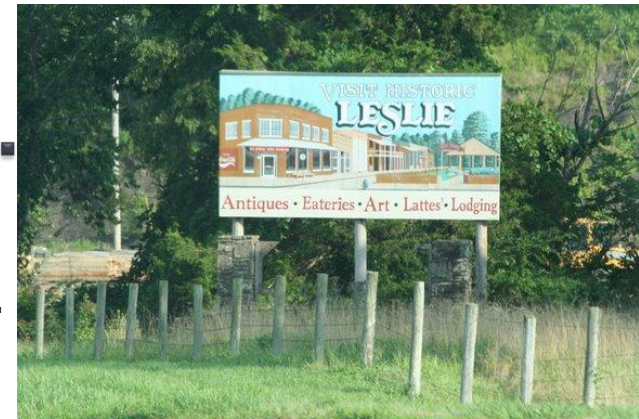
# Survey Committee Formed

- ▶ Survey committee met October 13, 2008 to determine who, where, what to survey.
- ▶ Committee members: Lene Sutterfield, Carl & Dottie Mayes, Laurie Gross, James White, Diane Huntley, James Casey, Adrienne Lafargue, and Talitha Hardin.
- ▶ Business surveys and community surveys were distributed the following week.
- ▶ Surveys were collected, then tabulated and summarized by Adrienne.



# Survey demographics....

- ▶ 57 individuals responded to community survey.
- ▶ 23 businesses responded to business survey.
- ▶ 51% of respondents have lived here 1–15 years; 49% over 15 years.
- ▶ 33% had children in the household while 67% had no children at home.
- ▶ 81% had no one over age 65 in the household while 19% had members of household over age 65.
- ▶ 54% had internet while 46% did not.
- ▶ 71% of those with internet had broadband or wireless.
- ▶ 46% were employed full-time, 19% were retired, 12% were unemployed, 9% were homemakers, 5% worked from home.



# And the survey says....

- ▶ 95% believe that the Leslie community is a good place to live.
- ▶ 86% believe it is a good place to raise children.
- ▶ 84% believe it is a good place for senior citizens.
- ▶ Top reasons for living in the Leslie community:
  - Scenic countryside
  - Reasonable cost of living
  - Low crime rate
  - Sense of community
  - Knowing your neighbors
  - To be near family



# S.W.O.T. Analysis

- ▶ Strengths
- ▶ Weaknesses
- ▶ Opportunities
  - ▶ Threats

# Strengths

- ▶ **People and Place....**
- ▶ Beautiful setting with forests, creeks, hills, and nearby national river.
- ▶ Intriguing history, a story to tell.
- ▶ Ozark Heritage Art Center and Museum.
- ▶ Leslie Homecoming and Ancestor Fair annual events
- ▶ Career Center
- ▶ 10 Buildings listed on National Historic Register
- ▶ Committed people interested in Leslie's future.



# Strengths....businesses

Home-owned  
Grocery Store  
Grocery/Gas Stations

Home-owned  
Lumber/Hardware  
Wood Flooring Store

Construction  
Excavation  
Sawmill  
Agriculture

Antique Shops  
Art Studio, Pottery,  
Books Plus,  
Leathercraft

Café  
Brick Oven Bakery  
Cappuccino Shop

Bed & Breakfast  
Trail Rides/RV Sites  
Horseshoeing

Bank

Auto  
Parts, Body Shop,  
Gas Stations

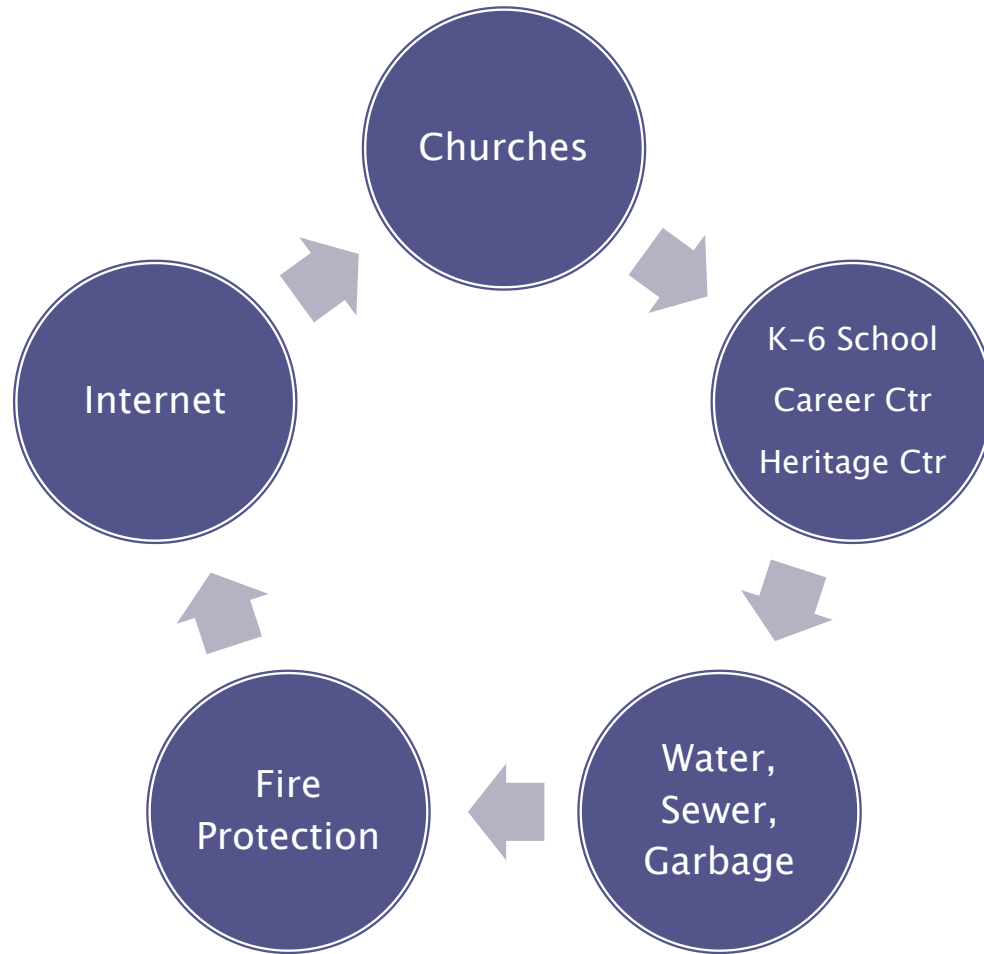
Alternative  
Medicine

Charcoal Plant  
Solvent Recovery  
National Yellow Pages

Home-based and  
Web-based  
businesses

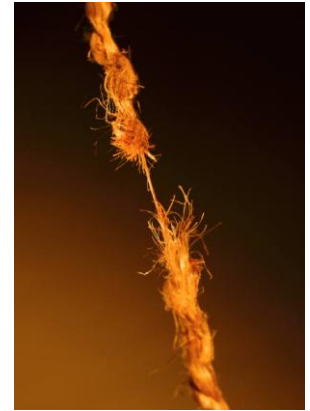
Storage Units  
Electronics  
Beauty Shops  
Flower & Gift Shop

# Strengths....services



# Weaknesses

- ▶ Outdated website.
- ▶ No chamber of commerce; inadequate space at City Hall.
- ▶ Vacant buildings in downtown.
- ▶ Expansion of water system would require negotiation with outside water providers.
- ▶ Lack of High School. (100% of respondents believe it important to have a school in the community)
- ▶ Lack of opportunity for younger residents to remain in community according to 68% of respondents.
- ▶ Need more childcare facilities. (49% of respondents)
- ▶ Need more law enforcement. (50% of respondents)
- ▶ 7% believe that city government actively promotes business expansion and development while 45% believe they do not and 48% do not know.
- ▶ Only 33% of respondents believe that residents have a positive attitude toward attracting new business and industry.
- ▶ 88% believe there are not sufficient opportunities for earning an income.



# Opportunities

- ▶ Location, location, location...Highway 65 traffic. Tourism opportunities. Proximity to Mountain View, Buffalo River, Branson.
- ▶ Cove Creek ...opportunities for walking trail, park, etc.
- ▶ Ozark Heritage Center ...opportunity to expand outreach and program.
- ▶ Career Center...opportunity to provide new programs.
- ▶ Take advantage of high speed wireless broadband in area.
- ▶ New small business enterprises should be the focus for economic development according to respondents.
- ▶ Continue restoration efforts of historic buildings.
- ▶ Homecoming and Ancestor Fair expansion.
- ▶ Start a recycling program and help Searcy County get a center.
- ▶ City Park with playground.
- ▶ Low socio-economic status of Searcy County provides eligibility for grants.
- ▶ Fayetteville Shale – be ready when it comes.



# Threats

- ▶ Loss of population can lead to more loss of businesses, school, jobs, services, tax base, etc.
- ▶ Decay of buildings if not renovated/restored.
- ▶ Apathy and/or feeling of helplessness.
- ▶ Drug and alcohol use.
- ▶ Poverty



# Objectives

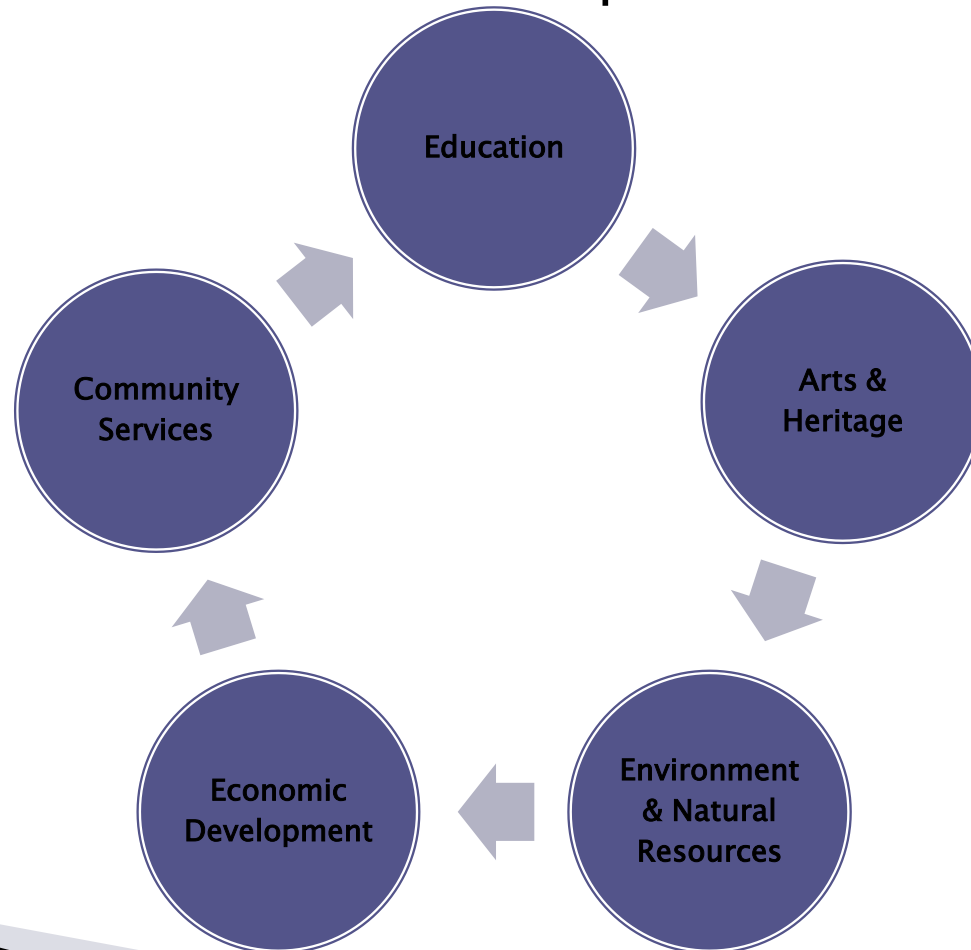
- ▶ Build on the Strengths
- ▶ Eliminate the Weaknesses
- ▶ Take advantage of Opportunities
- ▶ Prepare to counter Threats



# What's Next....

Community Members work together to formulate a plan.

## Focus Groups



# How to stay informed.....

- ▶ Contact the Project Leader
- ▶ Serve on a focus group.
- ▶ Contact Focus Group Leaders.
- ▶ The ACRE website will update monthly progress at Leslie at:

[www.thenewrural.org/communities/leslie](http://www.thenewrural.org/communities/leslie)