

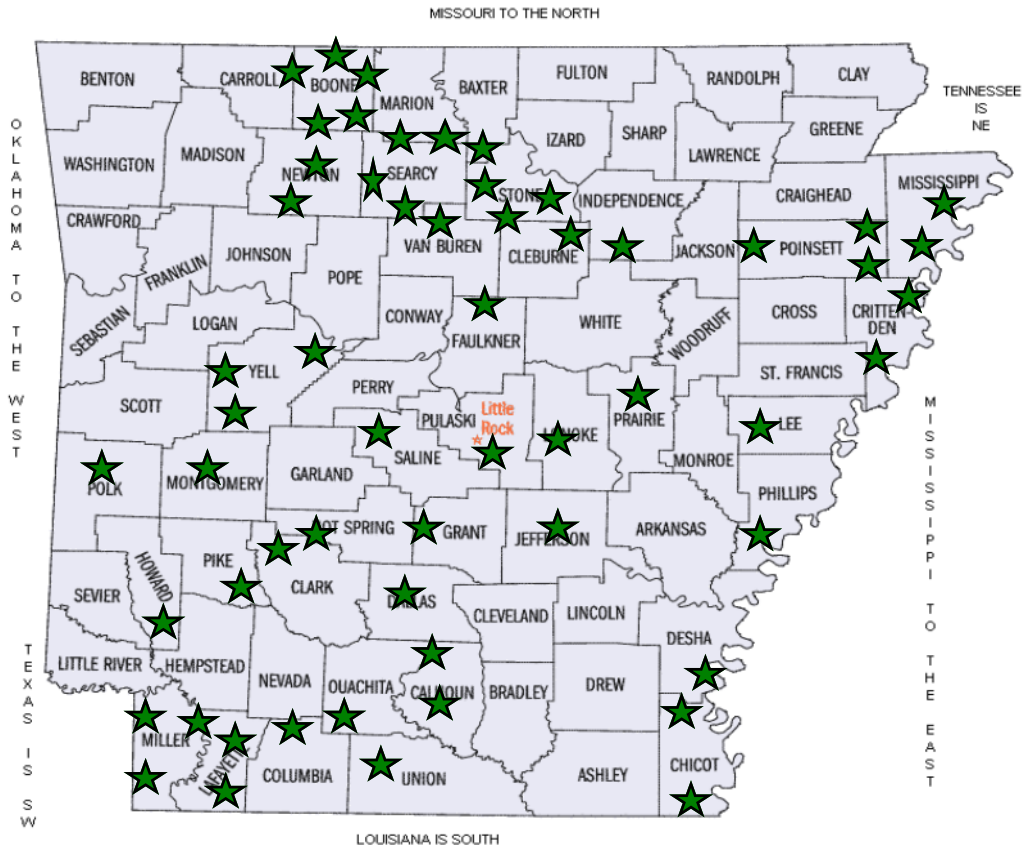


## 2012 Annual Progress Report

Helping rural schools and communities  
survive and thrive

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

# Where we are



## RCA Chapters

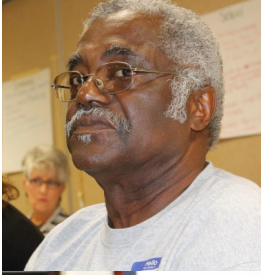
Acorn	Delight	Genoa Central	Norfolk	Stephens-McNeill
Alpena	Dermott	Guy-Perkins	Oden	St. Joe
Alzheimer-Dollarway	Des Arc	Hampton	Omaha	Timbo
Arkansas City	Doddridge	Jasper	Osceola	Turrell
Bearden	Earle	Lafayette County	Paron	Valley Springs
Bismarck	East Poinsett County	Lead Hill	Plainview-Rover	Valley Springs Youth
Bradley	Elaine	Leslie	Poyen	Waldo
Bruno-Pyatt	Eudora	Marianna	Rivercrest	Weiner
Carthage	Flippin	Marked Tree	Rural Special	Western Yell County
Carlisle	Fouke	Midland	Rural Special Youth	
Centerpoint	Fourche Valley	Mineral Springs	Shirley	
Concord-Ida	Friends of RCA	Mt. Judea	Smackover	



## Mission

Rural Community Alliance is a state-wide organization of community-based chapters whose mission is to

1. Preserve and improve rural and community schools and, by improving opportunities, create a more prosperous future for students and communities.
2. Educate the public about the role and value of rural schools and communities and share their successes.
3. Organize community members to support and strengthen their schools and communities.



## Vision

Members of Rural Community Alliance share a common vision for improving the communities of rural Arkansas, which includes

1. Excellent schools, which focus on the individual student and which are nurtured by close collaboration between school and community.
2. Strong communities, which through visioning, planning, and working together make the most of their resources in an environmentally and culturally responsible way, preserve their rural heritage, and offer the best possible lifestyle to their residents and future for their children.
3. Committed citizens, who band together across geographic, socioeconomic, and racial barriers to affect policies that impact their families, schools, and communities.

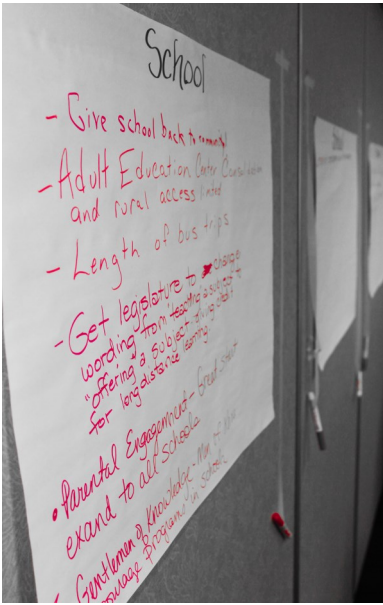




# 2012 RCA Summer Conference









# 2012 Champions of Rural Arkansas

A champion is

defined as “an ardent defender or supporter of a cause or another person; a warrior.”

Every other year, Rural Community Alliance honors **Champions of Rural Arkansas**, individuals who have selflessly given of themselves, their resources, and their talents to support the people, schools, and communities of rural Arkansas. Whether community leader, educator, legislator, business person, or innovator, our champions have demonstrated that they have a heart for the people, institutions, and way of life of rural Arkansas.



Northeast Arkansas Champions **Gentlemen of Knowledge** of Rivercrest High School, with Sponsor Lindsey Kelley and advisor Blaine Alexander. The Gentlemen of Knowledge created a model for their school and others of student-led empowerment and success. RCA board member Andrew Taylor (left) presented the award.



Northeast Arkansas Champion **Congressman Rick Crawford** is very active in supporting rural issues, especially his co-sponsorship of the All Children Are Equal Act and his activism and support of measures to mitigate the effects of rural post office closures on Arkansas communities.



Southeast Arkansas Champion **Rather Clark** (right) with RCA board member Candace Williams. As founding Chapter Leader of the Dermott chapter, Rather oversaw phenomenal growth of the chapter and the development and implementation of Dermott’s revitalization project and strategic plan.



Southwest Arkansas Champion **Randy Abbott** with RCA board member Penny Harris. Randy is the Delight Chapter Leader and founder of the South East Pike County Alliance, a non-profit community development organization that grew out of the Delight revitalization project. SEPCA continues the revitalization work in Delight with community building projects and events.





Northwest Arkansas Champion **Andy Anderson** of Diamond City is a charter member of the Lead Hill-Diamond City chapter. As an unpaid volunteer, Andy oversaw the development and construction of the \$72 million Ozark Mountain Regional Public Water Authority, which brought clean, safe water to 22 rural communities in North Central and Northwest Arkansas.



Central Arkansas Champion, the late **Governor Winthrop Rockefeller**. RCA chose to honor the 100th anniversary of Governor Rockefeller's birth by naming him a Champion of Rural Arkansas for his enduring legacy of philanthropy and systemic change, much of which is focused on and benefits rural people and communities.



The Lifetime Achievement Award was given to **Frank Henry, Jr.**, of Dermott in honor of his 53 years of public service in the community of Dermott and Southeast Arkansas. Mr. Henry has served on the boards of industries, community development corporations, health facilities, and community organizations. Even at 87 years young, as president of the Dermott Chamber of Commerce, Mr. Henry can be seen out and about, tirelessly promoting the city of Dermott's industries, schools, and institutions.

The Champions of Rural Arkansas event is co-sponsored by Rural Community Alliance and the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas.

The **Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas** are proud to serve nearly 490,000 people in Arkansas by providing safe, reliable and affordable electricity to power their homes, businesses and farms. Because we live and work in the communities we serve, we strive to enhance the quality of life by working to bring jobs, infrastructure and economic prosperity to benefit all citizens of Arkansas.



# Education

Rural Community Alliance members believe the safest, most nurturing environment for a child is a small school close to home. Members work for parent engagement, quality of education and positive school climate, and interventions for at-risk students. In 2012 RCA members continued their involvement in local schools and also collaborated with state and national efforts for better educational opportunities and more equitable access to education.



From left top : Youth participant at the Arkansas Opportunity to Learn Summit. First Lady Ginger Beebe at the Arkansas Grade-level Reading Campaign launch. Sign displayed to support Lead Hill School's enrollment campaign. Youth essay winner at OTL Summit. Dermott community members and school employees taking to the streets and neighborhoods to conduct a survey on the school. St. Joe's 3rd grade class recognized by Sen. Missy Irvin (center) for 100% proficient on Benchmark.

**The Arkansas Opportunity to Learn Campaign** is a part of the national Opportunity to Learn Campaign led by the Schott Foundation for Education. Rural Community Alliance is one of several partners in Arkansas working on this effort to close achievement gaps by closing opportunity gaps for students in public schools. RCA participated in strategic planning for the Arkansas OTL Campaign, the OTL Summit, and local initiatives.

**The Arkansas Campaign for Grade-Level Reading** is part of a national campaign to ensure that all children read on grade level by the end of third grade. RCA staff members are part of the AR-GLR steering committee, and RCA chapters participate in local activities to promote literacy and reading.

RCA staff member Tanya Broadnax and board member Candace Williams participated in the **Match on Dry Grass Community Organizing and School Reform Conference** held in Boston at Harvard University in March 2012. The conference brought together community organizers, education researchers, youth, educators, funders and other stakeholders to discuss the contributions of community organizing to school improvement and equitable education policy.

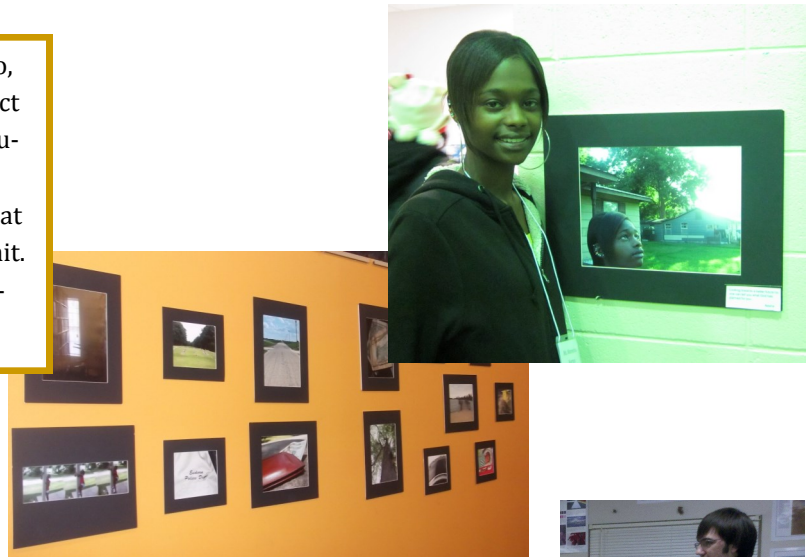


# Youth Empowerment

RCA supports and invests in rural youth. With an

intergenerational model of organizing, our chapters are encouraged to include the youth of their communities in their leadership and activities. RCA's Youth Empowerment Network (YEN) supports youth as they participate in activities that strengthen and promote their rural schools and communities.

**Youth Advocacy:** Students from Springdale, Monticello, and Eudora participated in a youth photography project to display the challenges for opportunity to learn for rural, minority, and low-income youth. Students from St. Joe, Bruno-Pyatt and Dollarway also displayed photos at the RCA Summer Conference and Arkansas OTL Summit. Youth from Dermott and Altheimer participated in discussion panels about the Opportunity to Learn.



**Youth Leadership:** Students from Rivercrest High School's Gentlemen of Knowledge continued to share their process for student-led school success. Students from Hampton started a Men of Knowledge and a Women of Wisdom group emulating the GOK's model of service and motivation. Bruno-Pyatt youth Zach Weaver presented to the Marion County Teacher's Association about the importance of supporting rural schools. Cydney Broadnax spoke at a meeting of the Rural School and Community Trust board and the OTL summit.



**Community Service:** Youth from Paron and Eudora helped with local festivals. Youth from Elaine participated in the Fish Hook Community Theater project. Youth from Fox helped document, restore, and publicize local historic landmarks. Youth from Alpena held classes for adults on computer and cell phone usage. Youth from Doddridge helped beautify the community center.



# Policy Development

At the annual summer conference, Rural Community Alliance members engage in a collaborative process to identify state and local policies that favorably impact rural schools and communities. RCA staff develops materials for members to effectively convey their beliefs and priorities to policy makers and provides members with information to allow them to act in a timely manner to affect state, local, and national policy.

In April 2012 RCA staff and member Cindy Aikman assisted Representative Kelley Linck with a presentation for the Joint House and Senate Education Committees on abandoned school buildings. The legislation that was begun in 2010 carried over into the 2013 legislative session and is now a law.

**Policy Issues Supported by Members for 2013:** Require abandoned school buildings to be returned to the community; funding for rural services; preserve funding for isolated schools; funding for summer and after-school programs; greater college access; more parent involvement; more access to pre-K; support for Opportunity to Learn agenda.



1. Senator Stephanie Flowers
2. Senator Missy Irvin
3. Rep. Kelley Linck with RCA staffers Renee Carr, Dorothy Singleton, Lavina Grandon
3. Member Mary Kirk





# Community Revitalization

Rural Community Alliance members recognize that in order to save their rural communities and make them more prosperous places to live and work they must pursue new economic development options and think about economic development in new and innovative ways.

In 2008, RCA began helping communities with grass-roots led holistic strategic planning and revitalization projects. Some of those projects have grown into targeted, themed economic development projects while others have become part of larger networks.

By 2012, RCA was assisting with community revitalization in 12 communities. We helped 13 communities in North Central Arkansas organize the Ozark Byways revitalization network and have taken the first steps to forming a Delta Highways revitalization network for small communities in Drew, Desha, Ashley, and Chicot Counties. The networks will combine opportunities for training, organizing, and marketing of member communities. More information can be found at [www.ozarkbyways.com](http://www.ozarkbyways.com) and [www.deltahighways.org](http://www.deltahighways.org).





# Revitalization Communities....

**Delight:** Delight was the first RCA-facilitated revitalization project in 2008. Since then community members have accomplished the following: City-wide cleanup and beautification, development of a courtyard for public events in a downtown vacant lot, farmers market, concerts, heritage festival, open air performance stage, annual Christmas parade, attracting new businesses, fundraisers for Rosenwald school and production of historical pamphlet, grant writer training, entrepreneurship training, nonprofit board training, music festivals, and advocacy for their local school.

As the Delight project evolved, community leaders formed the South East Pike County Alliance, a non-profit community development corporation, to guide activities. In 2011, this group received its 501c3 designation from the IRS, allowing it to pursue grants and tax-deductible donations.

In October 2012 the town held its third annual South East Pike County Music Fest. One of SEPCA's primary goals remains to construct a museum to honor native son and country music legend Glen Campbell and display artifacts of bygone days in Delight and the surrounding area. They are working on getting possession of one of the former Delight High School buildings for their projects.

More information and pictures of the Delight project can be found on the RCA website, [www.thenewrural.org](http://www.thenewrural.org).



Local and out-of-town bands perform for festival-goers.



Fun activities at music fest.



Penny Harris shares information on RCA.



## Revitalization Communities....

**Dermott:** The Dermott community finalized their strategic plan in 2010 and have since been working diligently to revitalize their community. Their accomplishments include various trainings for community organizing and community development, city-wide cleanup and beautification, Santa train and Christmas parade, shop-local campaign, a hospitality and tourism workshop, Youth Garden, grant for a Serenity Garden in the downtown area, formation of a Youth Empowerment Network (YEN) group, health fairs, Spring Break Jamborees and Back-to-School events.

Education has always been a special focus of the Dermott RCA chapter, and the group has been active in looking for ways to save and improve their small school. In 2011 with the help of RCA, Dermott Elementary received a \$100,000 grant to provide science equipment, library books and reading aids, mobile computer labs and place-based education training for teachers.

In 2012 Dermott formed a Parent Engagement group, honored local businesses, held a community-wide yard sale, collected community surveys for the school, and held a community health screening event.



Health Screening at City Hall



Community-wide yard sale



Event honoring local businesses

**Paron:** The Paron community continues a revitalization effort around the campus of their former high school that was closed in 2006. The project is enriching the life of the community with the help of youth and dedicated community members.

The facility now houses meeting rooms, a kitchen, exercise facilities, a library, and a gym where basketball games are played. The Paron group supports very active Girl Scout and Boy Scout troops. Their Lion's Pride 4-H group took county and state fair honors. Two youth were awarded heritage chickens and ducks by P. Allen Smith, and one was featured in a video done by P. Allen Smith. The annual Mayfest provides fun as well as fund-raising with displays, vendors, music, a Paron Mayfest pageant, games, and great food. People promote their businesses with displays in the Community Center.

Paron members participate in other fundraisers throughout the year, such as a monthly breakfasts at the community center. Money from fundraisers goes to pay for maintenance, upkeep, and utilities.

The group also works closely with the elementary school at Paron, holding back-to-school events and volunteering in whatever way is needed.



## Revitalization Communities....

**Leslie:** In 2012 Leslie is in its fourth year of community revitalization under the strategic plan facilitated by Rural Community Alliance, and it continues to shine as a model for revitalization using the art, craft, and culture of a community. In November they welcomed members of the Arkansas Coalition of the Ouachitas, a regional economic development group, to share the progress made by their community.

Since beginning the revitalization project, the community has received grants for a Fun Park and for renovations to the City Hall, and new businesses have started up. The town has formed a Merchants Association and instituted several annual events to attract visitors, including a Farmers Market and Fishing Derby, West Fest and Pageant, and Sugarplum Festival. Such diverse events as a blues festival, city-wide rummage sale, Walks Through History walking tour, annual Ancestor Fair, and Homecoming keep life interesting in this cool little town. They joined the Ozark Byways network.

In October Leslie hosted its first annual Mountain Man Rendezvous, with reenactors displaying pre-1840's crafts, weapons, clothing, tools, and trades.

Regular performances are given at the Ozarks Heritage Arts Center and Museum, as well as live music every Saturday night at the Drop Zone, home to the Buffalo River Blues Society. Keep up with the many events in Leslie at their website, [lesliearkansas.org](http://lesliearkansas.org).



Residents share experiences with ARCO.



History comes alive at the Rendezvous.

**Elaine:** The Elaine Community Opportunity Seekers (ECOS) kicked off their revitalization project with an organizational meeting in January of 2012. The group elected officers and received training in non-profit board development and grant writing, and they secured their non-profit charter. With RCA's help they applied for and received grants from the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation for the Colquitt (GA)-Miller Arts Council to do a four-day on-site training in developing a community theater. About 40 people attended their training in July. They also received a grant from the Arkansas Arts Council to fund the theater for one year.

The group wrote a folk life play entitled "How I Got Over" and performed skits from it for the RCA Summer Conference and the Arkansas Opportunity to Learn Summit. Several members attended the Swamp Gravy Institute to learn more about developing and running a community theater.

They have written grants for continued funding of the project and look forward to their first full performance in June of 2013. (Right: Young and old alike learn the art of storytelling as Elaine residents produce folk life plays for the Fish Hook Community Theater project.)





## Revitalization Communities....

**Eudora:** Eudora began its grass-roots led revitalization project in 2008. A main focus of the project remains community building. Eudora chapter members have had training in entrepreneurship, grant writing, and community organizing.

The group is very active with arts and heritage with its Writers Guild which meets monthly and also works with youth. The Lil' Jacob Learning Center offers free computer usage and tutoring. In economic development, the group is working on getting an office in Eudora to reinstate the railroad between Eudora and Lake Village.



Midway at Summer Fest in Eudora

In 2012 the Southeast Arkansas Human Development Associates again conducted a summer feeding program out of the Community Center, which is a part of the Eudora school that was closed down when the district was consolidated with Lakeside.

In the spring the Eudora chapter participated in what has become an annual event, the Great American Clean-up. They sponsored a summer festival and a back-to-school event where students received backpacks and school supplies.

In the fall chapter members began focusing on community literacy. Joining the Arkansas Grade-Level Reading Campaign, they participated in webinars about factors that influence learning to read and then with the help of RCA staff crafted a broad-based proposal for a grant from the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation to develop and promote literacy in the community.

**St. Joe:** Mayor John Henley began the St. Joe revitalization project with the restoration of their historic railroad depot. The town also added clean-up efforts, new welcome signs, and a historic marker to improve its appeal to the many visitors who drive through it on busy Highway 65.

In 2012 the Searcy County Rural Help Center officially opened its doors. Director Donna Grindler and the Help Center board acquired an abandoned church and installed a computer lab, library, thrift store, meeting space, and kitchen. The project is funded with gifts, donations, grants, and fundraisers.

The St. Joe community joined the Ozark Byways regional revitalization network and participated in the Ozark Byways Buy-Days event. Member Ben Henley has been very active and helpful in planning events and including the community in development of a website, [stjoearkansas.org](http://stjoearkansas.org).



## Revitalization Communities....

### Fourche Valley:

Since 2011 the Fourche Valley community revitalization group has worked to get possession of their former school buildings.

Chapter Leader Cindy Aikman worked with RCA to provide testimony to a legislative committee in April 2012 in an effort that ultimately resulted in a law being passed to allow communities to acquire abandoned school buildings. The chapter requested an Attorney General's opinion on the subject, which materially helped in getting the law passed. They have acquired the use of the former ABC building from the county and raised money for its support.

The chapter's Fourche Valley Arkansas Facebook page serves as a community bulletin board and market place for area goods and services. They are also working on getting better cell and Internet coverage in the Valley.



Valley native Pat Gillum reads from his book "Spreading Wings" at the annual Fourche Valley reunion put on by Fourche Valley Cultural Preservation and Restoration.

### Lead Hill-Diamond City:

Economic development, tourism and the natural beauty of the area are the focus of the Lead Hill-Diamond City communities' revitalization efforts. After creating a strategic plan in 2010 that encompassed economic development, community services, arts and heritage, and education, residents of Lead Hill, South Lead Hill, and Diamond City have worked together to accomplish their goal of a more prosperous community.

Accomplishments include new signage; new parks and recreational areas for residents; and upgrades of water, sewer, Internet and cell service. Under a rejuvenated Parks and Recreation Committee, events include the Lead Hill 4th of July Celebration, the National Canoe Races, kite flying, Diamond City's Fall Festival in September, and becoming a part of the Ozark Idol competition.

The communities joined the Ozark Byways regional revitalization network and participated in the Ozark Byways Buy-Days event. Both communities have new websites linked to ozarkbyways.com ([diamondcityar.org](http://diamondcityar.org) and [leadhill.org](http://leadhill.org)) with information and events. A very active Facebook page serves as a bulletin board for the community.

In 2012 the entire community got behind the Lead Hill School to help raise enrollment above 350 to keep the school from being consolidated. Residents from Lead Hill and Diamond City formed the Sugarloaf Foundation to preserve and promote their school and community. The foundation is conducting a successful promotional campaign for the "Lakeshore Districts." (See more in the Chapter Reports pages under Lead Hill Area.)





## Revitalization Communities....

**Alpena:** As part of their community revitalization project, Alpena community members met throughout 2011 to conduct surveys, hold community forums, and complete a strategic plan. Since then the community has made a promotional video of their revitalization process, held community events, and had city-wide Maintenance Days and cleanups. The Alpena YEN has helped elders in the community to understand cell phones and computers. New businesses have opened in the town.

Alpena is part of the Ozark Byways regional revitalization network and has participated in planning meetings for the network as well as network events like Ozark Byways Buy-Days. The town had heavy turnout from the entire region for their Buy-Days event. A new website ([alpenapass.org](http://alpenapass.org)) has been linked to the Ozark Byways website ([www.ozarkbyways.com](http://www.ozarkbyways.com)). The community hosted an RCA sponsored workshop on establishing school and community foundations.

The Alpena community has also restored one of its historic buildings, the old Auman Store building, and opened it as a museum and the facility for holding District Court.



**Mt. Judea:** Education and community development are the special concerns of the Mt. Judea Area Alliance (MJAA).

With some activities already in the works, the MJAA decided to join with Rural Community Alliance in 2012 in order to magnify their voice. They joined the Ozark Byways regional revitalization network and participated in the Ozark Byways Buy-Days event. Chapter Leader Sharon Pierce is helping plan a regional Quilt Trail to promote the area's quilters. The group has investigated housing opportunities, campaigned to increase enrollment at their school, and promoted local businesses. These got a boost when RCA was able to provide a website ([mtjudea.org](http://mtjudea.org)), where they display the area's home-based businesses and promote tourism with their incredible natural beauty.

Literacy has been a special interest of the MJAA. They have raised money for a Dolly Parton Imagination Library project, in which every child in the community will get a book each month from birth to five years of age. Member Bertie Wells has provided a model for individual literacy advocacy with her Little Free Library (see Mt. Judea in the Chapter Reports pages). Members also provided a Summer Learning Camp.



Above, scene from Mt. Judea's website home page. Below, Chapter Leader Sharon Pierce with children who will benefit from Imagination Library project.



# Chapter Reports

Rural Community Alliance has 1,474 members in 57 chapters throughout the state of Arkansas. Chapters are self-governing entities which are encouraged to “act locally but think state-wide.” Thus, each chapter is expected to carry out local advocacy and capacity building efforts in their school and community while participating in state, regional, and national activities that will benefit rural communities, students, and schools. Each chapter is led by a volunteer chapter leader, who is also part of the Rural Community Alliance Policy Council. Following is a list of Rural Community Alliance chapters and their activities in 2012.

## Acorn

Chapter since 2008

Members: 9

Activities

- Members volunteered at school
- Attended school board meetings
- Contacted legislators



Mayor Bobbie Bailey and RCA Executive Director Renee Carr at Alpena website launch and open house for the restored Auman Building museum

## Alzheimer-Dollarway

Chapter since 2006

Members: 25

Activities

- Sent members to RCA annual conference
- Members volunteered at school
- Members organized fundraisers for Alzheimer Museum and Cultural Center
- Attended school board meetings
- Participated in ESP selection process
- Contacted legislators
- Volunteered at community events
- Formed parent engagement group
- Sent members to OTL summit

## Alpena

Chapter since 2005

Members: 41

Activities

- Sent members to RCA conference
- Members volunteered at school
- Members volunteered at community events
- Members served on revitalization focus groups
- Members volunteered with historic restoration
- Members volunteered with community cleanup
- Sponsored Easter Egg Hunt, Christmas parade
- Restored historic building
- Participated in merchants' group
- Attended City Council meetings
- Attended school board meetings
- Submitted newspaper articles about school
- Youth Empowerment Network (YEN) group
- Participated in Ozark Byways planning
- Hosted community foundation workshop
- Participated in Ozark Byways Buy-Days
- New website: [www.alpenapass.org](http://www.alpenapass.org)
- YEN held classes for adults on cell phone and computer usage

## Arkansas City

**New Chapter**

Members: 25

Activities

- Volunteered at community events
- Joined Delta Highways revitalization network



## Bearden

Chapter since 2009

Members: 22

Activities

- Members volunteered at school
- Members attended school board meetings

## Bismarck

Chapter since 2008

Members: 16

Activities

- Members volunteered at school
- Members participated in merchants group
- Volunteered at community events
- Attended school board meetings

## Bradley

Chapter since 2005

Members 71

Activities

- Sent members to RCA conference
- Members volunteered at school
- Members organized/volunteered at community events
- Contacted legislators
- Attended school board meetings
- Attended Champions of Rural Arkansas
- Parent engagement project

## Bruno-Pyatt

Chapter since 2005

Members: 29

Activities

- Hosted teacher group at chapter meeting
- Members volunteered at school
- Members volunteered at community event
- Members helped preserve history/culture
- Historic building being renovated
- Members attended City Council meetings
- Attended school board meetings
- YEN participated in photo project
- Volunteered with after-school tutoring
- Submitted articles to newspaper
- Published promotional materials
- Joined Ozark Byways regional network
- Sent members to RCA conference

## Carlisle

Chapter since 2005

Members: 13

Activities

- Members volunteered at school
- Attended school board meetings
- Sent members to RCA conference
- Volunteered at community events

## Carthage

Chapter since 2006

Members: 5

Activities

- Members volunteered at community events
- Attended City Council meetings
- Participated in economic development activities



RCA staff made a presentation about rural school advocacy to Marion County Teachers and Bruno-Pyatt PTA.

## Centerpoint

Chapter since 2006

Members: 7

Activities:

- Attended school board meetings
- Volunteered at school

## Delight

Chapter since 2005

Members: 92

Activities:

- Members volunteered at school
- Volunteered/organized community events
- Produced 3rd annual music festival
- SEPCA obtained board training
- SEPCA obtained grant writing training
- Served on revitalization focus groups
- Annual Christmas parade
- Attended school board meetings
- Submitted newspaper articles
- City beautification
- Started new businesses
- Attended Champions of Rural Arkansas



The Doddridge community turned out to give the Kiblah Community Center a face lift.

## Des Arc (Prairie County)

Chapter since 2005

Members: 14

Activities:

- Sent members to RCA summer conference
- Members volunteered at community event
- Members attended school board meetings
- Members contacted legislators
- Attended OTL summit



Visiting and Jamming at Delight Music Festival.



## Doddridge

**New Chapter**

Members: 65

Activities:

- Sent members to RCA summer conference
- Members volunteered at community event
- Members attended school board meetings
- Community beautification
- Attended OTL summit



## Dermott

Chapter since 2008

Members: 70

Activities

- Added new members
- Members attended RCA summer conference
- Members attended OTL summit
- Formed parent engagement group
- Volunteered at school
- Organized community events
- City beautification
- Attended Chamber of Commerce meetings
- Attended City Council meetings
- Attended school board meetings
- Back to School Bash
- Spring Break Jamboree
- Produced health screenings
- Helped with after-school tutoring
- Submitted newspaper articles
- Held community yard sale
- Held businesses event
- Conducted survey for school needs
- Held legislative training, contacted legislators



Dermott member Tanya Broadnax attended the Match on Dry Grass education organizing conference at Harvard University.



Dermott residents sign in for health fair.

## Earle

Chapter since 2009

Members: 7

Activities

- Attended school board meetings
- Volunteered at school
- Participated in community event

## East Poinsett County

Chapter Since 2009

Members: 16

Activities

- Attended school board meetings
- Volunteered at school
- Volunteered at community events

## Elaine

Chapter since 2006

Members 25

Activities

- Attended RCA summer conference
- Attended school board meetings
- Volunteered at school
- Volunteered at community events
- Attended OTL summit
- Started community theater revitalization project
- Attended Swamp Gravy training
- Hosted community theater training
- Added new members
- Formed nonprofit, got board/grant writing training
- Wrote grants



Cyde Williams, Sr., and Reverend James Lamb

## Eudora

Chapter since 2005

Members: 61

Activities

- Sent members to RCA summer conference
- City-wide cleanup and beautification
- YEN participated in photo project
- Planned community literacy project
- Attended OTL summit
- Participated in AR-GLR webinars
- Attended school board meetings
- Volunteered at school
- Volunteered at community events
- Contacted legislators
- Hosted legislative training
- Held summer fest
- Held back-to-school event
- Lil' Jacob's Learning Center
- World of Learning after-school tutoring
- Summer Feeding Program



Eudora youth receive school supplies and backpacks at back-to-school event.

## Flippin

Chapter since 2011

Members: 4

Activities

- Attended school board meetings
- Contacted legislators
- Volunteered at school
- Volunteered at community events
- Joined Arkansas Grade-Level Reading campaign

## Fouke

Emerging chapter

Members: 4

Activities

- Volunteered at school
- Volunteered at community events

## Fourche Valley

Chapter since 2009

Members: 53

Activities

- Added new members
- Members attended RCA summer conference
- Organized alumni reunion
- Volunteered at community events
- Raised money for community projects
- Participated in school board election
- Worked for cell and Internet access
- Contacted legislators
- Participated in legislative study of abandoned school buildings
- Developing community center
- Requested Attorney General's opinion on abandoned school buildings
- Set up community Facebook page

## Friends of RCA

Chapter since 2005

Members: 56

Activities

- Added new members
- Members attended RCA summer conference
- Provided technical assistance



Fourche Valley members retire the flag that was left hanging at the gym when the school campus was closed.



## Genoa Central

Chapter since 2006

Members: 15

Activities

- Attended school board meetings
- Volunteered at school
- Contacted legislators

## Hampton

Chapter since 2005

Members: 6

Activities

- Attended school board meetings
- Volunteered at school
- Contacted legislators
- Volunteered at community events
- Attended RCA summer conference
- Gave testimony before Congress on rural education issues
- Attended national rural education Conference
- Established Men of Knowledge YEN

## Lafayette County

Emerging chapter

Members: 3

Activities

- Volunteered at community events
- Volunteered at school
- Contacted legislators



Officers of the Sugarloaf Foundation, established to preserve the school and promote the communities of Lead Hill and Diamond City.

## Guy Perkins

Chapter since 2009

Members: 7

Activities

- Attended school board meetings
- Volunteered at school
- Contacted legislators

## Jasper

Emerging chapter

Members: 2

- Volunteered at community events
- Volunteered at school
- Contacted legislators
- Added new businesses
- Participated in Ozark Byways regional revitalization network

## Lead Hill Area

Chapter since 2006

Members: 37

Activities

- Attended school board meetings
- Volunteered at school
- Contacted legislators
- Members attended RCA summer conference
- Participated in revitalization project
- Volunteered at community events
- Lead Hill 4th of July Celebration
- Diamond City Fall Festival
- Attended City Council meetings
- Attended Chamber of Commerce meetings
- Hosted National Canoe Races
- Participated in school enrollment drive
- New fiber optics in Diamond City
- Participated in Ozark Byways regional revitalization project and Buy-Days event
- Held community meetings to discuss school Consolidation proposal
- Attended community foundation workshop
- Established community foundation
- Launched "Lakeshore Districts" marketing campaign
- Received award for tourism campaign
- Obtained regional media coverage
- New community promotion billboards
- New websites: [diamondcityar.org](http://diamondcityar.org) and [leadhill.org](http://leadhill.org)
- New Facebook page for Lakeshore Districts

## Leslie

Chapter since 2006

Members: 50

### Activities

- Volunteered at school
- Contacted legislators
- Attended school board meetings
- Participated in revitalization project
- Added new businesses
- Participated in Ozark Byways Buy-Days
- Displayed billboard on Hwy 65
- Sent members to RCA summer conference
- Hosted Arkansas Coalition of the Ouachitas
- Regular music performances at OHAC
- Play produced at OHAC
- Farmers Market
- Fishing Derby, Homecoming, West Fest, Sugarplum Festival
- Grant to renovate City Hall
- Continued work on Fun Park
- Continued city cleanup
- Instituted annual Mountain Man Rendezvous
- Attended City Council meetings
- Participated in Ozark Byways regional revitalization network planning meeting
- Updated website: [lesliearkansas.org](http://lesliearkansas.org)
- On arts tour
- Leslie Facebook page
- Historic walk for students
- Participated in Searcy County Chamber of Commerce
- Weekly music at Drop Zone
- City-wide rummage sale
- Lawn mower races



Pioneer crafts, foods, entertainments, weapons, and dress were featured at Leslie's first annual Mountain Man Rendezvous.



Something for EVERYONE at the Leslie Reunion!

## Marianna

Chapter since 2005

Members: 40

### Activities

- Attended school board meetings
- Volunteered at school
- Contacted legislators
- Volunteered at community events
- Attended City Council meetings
- Attended RCA summer conference
- Attended OTL summit

## Marked Tree

Chapter since 2009

Members: 4

### Activities

- Attended school board meetings
- Volunteered at school
- Volunteered at community event

## Midland

Emerging Chapter

Members: 2

### Activities

- Attended school board meetings
- Volunteered at school
- Volunteered at community event



## Mineral Springs

Chapter since 2009

Members: 5

Activities

- Attended school board meetings
- Volunteered at school
- Contacted legislators

## Norfolk

Chapter since 2011

Members: 6

Activities

- Attended school board meetings
- Volunteered at school
- Added new members
- Volunteered at community event
- Attended RCA summer conference
- Participated in Ozark Byways planning event
- Participated in Ozark Byways Buy-Days event
- Linked to Ozark Byways website

## Omaha

Chapter since 2009

Members: 5

Activities

- Attended school board meetings
- Volunteered at school

## Paron

Chapter since 2006

Members: 12

Activities

- Attended school board meetings
- Volunteered at school
- Contacted legislators
- Hosted Paron Pride day
- Hosted May Fest
- Raised money for community center
- Continued developing community center
- Volunteered at community events
- Sent members to RCA summer conference
- Back-to-School block party
- YEN group
- Fall Fest
- 4-H, Girl Scout and Boy Scout activities for youth.

## Mt. Judea

Chapter since 2011

Members: 30

Activities

- Added new members
- Attended school board meetings
- Volunteered at school
- Contacted legislators
- Joined Ozark Byways regional network
- Summer Learning Camp
- Participated in Ozark Byways Buy-Days
- Mt. Judea Area Alliance worked on community revitalization
- Christmas parade
- Attended RCA summer conference
- Attended OTL summit
- Participated in AR-GLR activities
- Started Dolly Parton Imagination Library
- Got dictionaries for 3rd and 4th graders



Mt. Judea member Bertie Wells displays her Little Free Library. Literacy is a special interest of the Mt. Judea chapter.

## Oden

Chapter since 2005

Members: 24

Activities

- Attended school board meetings
- Volunteered at school
- Contacted legislators
- Volunteered at community event

## Osceola

Chapter since 2009

Members: 9

Activities

- Attended school board meetings
- Volunteered at school
- Volunteered at community event

## Plainview-Rover

Chapter since 2005

Members: 56

Activities

- Attended school board meetings
- Volunteered at school
- Contacted legislators
- Helped Western Yell County start chapter
- Volunteered at community events
- Attended national rural education conference
- Historic preservation of Old Town
- Hosted Fall Festival
- Participated in merchants group
- Attended City Council meetings
  
- Participated in school board race
- Attended State Board of Education meetings

## Rural Special/Rural Special Youth

Chapter since 2005

Members: 110

Activities

- Attended school board meetings
- Volunteered at school
- Contacted legislators
- Submitted newspaper articles
- Gave testimony before legislative committee on abandoned school buildings
- School foundation
- Ozark Byways regional revitalization project
- YEN oral history project
- YouTube.com/FoxArkansas: Over 5,000 Views!
- Attended Ozark Byways planning meeting
- Volunteered at community events
- Veterans Day event
- News coverage for Music Roots program
- Sent members to RCA summer conference
- Annual Fun Fest
- Member attended OTL summit
- Participated in AR-GLR events and planning
- Participated in Ozark Byways Buy-Days
- Linked to Ozark Byways website
- Contributed to *Hats, Pies, and Fiddles* community foundation video

## Poyen

Chapter since 2005

Members: 13

Activities

- Attended school board meetings
- Volunteered at school
- Contacted legislators
- Submitted newspaper articles
- Attended City Council meetings

## Rivercrest

Chapter since 2009

Members: 6

Activities

- Attended school board meetings
- Volunteered at school
- Participated in Champions of Rural Arkansas event
- Gentlemen of Knowledge facilitated project to close achievement gap
- GOK presented at area schools
- GOK video documented Student Voice project to close achievement gap



Fox area residents lovingly support the Rural Special School and fight for its survival.



## Smackover

Chapter since 2007

Members: 13

Activities

- Attended school board meetings
- Volunteered at school
- Volunteered at community event

## St. Joe

Chapter since 2009

Members: 30

Activities

- Attended school board meetings
- Volunteered at school
- Contacted legislators
- Volunteered at community event
- Restoring historic railroad depot
- Opened Rural Help Center
- Attended City Council meetings
- City cleanup
- Joined Ozark Byways regional revitalization Network
- Attended Ozark Byways planning meeting
- Participated in Ozark Byways Buy-Days
- Held events to raise money for community projects
- Added new members
- YEN participated in student photography project on Opportunity to Learn
- Community held meetings to discuss merger of Ozark Mtn. School District with Lead Hill School District
- Attended RCA summer conference
- New website: [www.stjoearkansas.org](http://www.stjoearkansas.org)

## Timbo

Chapter since 2007

Members: 8

Activities

- Participated in school board elections
- Volunteered at school
- Joined Ozark Byways regional revitalization Network
- Hosted alumni reunion

## Shirley

**New Chapter**

Members: 20

Activities:

- Added new members
- Joined Ozark Byways regional revitalization network
- Attended school board meetings
- Attended City Council meetings
- Volunteered at community events
- New website: [shirleyarkansas.org](http://shirleyarkansas.org)
- Annual Shirley Homecoming event
- Halloween event
- Santa's Visit



Exciting rodeo events are part of the annual Shirley Homecoming.

## Stephens

Chapter since 2009

Members: 5

Activities

- Attended school board meetings
- Volunteered at school
- Contacted legislators
- Volunteered at community event
- Participated in enrollment drive
- Sent members to RCA summer conference

## Turrell

Chapter since 2006

Members: 17

Activities

- Attended school board meetings
- Volunteered at community event

## Valley Springs/ Valley Springs Student

Chapter since 2005

Members: 120

Activities

- Attended school board meetings
- Volunteered at school
- Volunteered at community event
- YEN video on Senior Scholars program on RCA You-Tube channel
- Participated in school board election
- Contacted legislators
- Attended community foundation workshop
- Started Valley Springs School and Community Foundation
- Joined Ozark Byways regional revitalization Network and participated in planning
- Sent members to RCA summer conference
- Participated in Ozark Byways Buy-Days
- Participated in OTL summit
- New website: [valleyspringsar.org](http://valleyspringsar.org)
- Participated in AR-GLR planning and events



Valley Springs School and Community Foundation board members meet to outline foundation's work.



Western Yell County student Caitlyn Laster raised over \$5,000 to help her school get off fiscal distress.

## Waldo

**New Chapter**

Members: 6

Activities

- Attended City Council meetings
- Volunteered at community events
- Sent members to RCA summer conference

## Weiner

Chapter since 2010

Members: 33

Activities

- Attended school board meetings
- Volunteered at school
- Volunteered at community events
- Worked to keep school campuses open
- Maintained Friends of Weiner School District Facebook page
- Contacted legislators
- Developed legislation to suspend Act 60 consolidation
- Participated in enrollment campaign for school



Weiner Lady Cardinals took second in the state basketball tournament. Residents hope it won't be their last and are fighting mightily to keep their campus open.

## Western Yell County

**New Chapter**

Members: 37

Activities

- Attended City Council meetings
- Volunteered at community events
- Attended Chamber of Commerce meetings
- Attended school board meetings
- Held numerous fund raisers to raise money for school
- Contacted legislators



## Funders and Donors

Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation  
Marguerite Casey Foundation  
Schott Foundation for Public Education  
Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas  
Center for Midwestern Initiatives  
Bank of the Ozarks  
New World Foundation  
Arkansas Arts Council

## Partners, Collaborators, Resources

The Rural School and Community Trust  
Center for Midwestern Initiatives  
Schott Foundation for Public Education  
National Opportunity to Learn Campaign  
Equal Voice for America's Families Campaign  
Southern Echo, Inc.  
CFO Rural Schools Partnership  
Arkansas Rural Education Association  
Arkansas Opportunity to Learn Campaign  
Arkansas Department of Rural Services  
Arkansas Economic Development Commission  
Department of Arkansas Heritage—Arkansas Arts Council  
USDA Rural Development (Arkansas offices)  
Regional economic development agencies  
Planning and development districts

# RCA Board Members



**President – Lavina Grandon.** A retired teacher with 32 years of experience in rural schools, Lavina Grandon led the opposition to Governor Mike Huckabee’s effort in 2003 to consolidate all schools in Arkansas with under 1500 enrollment. She lives in north central Arkansas and serves as a board member for the Rural School and Community Trust and the Valley Springs School District. Grandon is the founder of Rural Community Alliance and has been a board member since 2005.



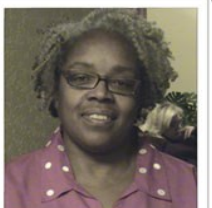
**Vice President —Erma Brown** is a retired County Administrator for the Arkansas Department of Human Services. She holds a MS degree in Counseling. Currently she is the Region 13 School District Representative of the Arkansas School Boards Association and is President of the Stephens School Board. She has served on the Arkansas Child Abuse Prevention Board, the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, and as president of the Women’s Crisis Center. Brown joined the board in 2009.



**Secretary – Candace Williams.** Candace Williams is a graduate of the University of Central Arkansas. She is currently a student in the MBA-Project Management program at Capella University. She is from the small Delta town of Elaine, Arkansas. She has been a board member since 2007.



**Treasurer – Kerry Cunningham.** Kerry Cunningham is a retired educator from Plainview in the Ouachita Mountains of west central Arkansas. She has a Master’s degree in Education and holds a K-12 principal’s license and a reading specialist’s certification. She helps organize chapters in central and west central Arkansas.



**Member – Dorothy Singleton.** Dorothy Singleton is a retired telephone company employee and community activist. She serves on the Board of Alzheimer Working Together in Altheimer, Arkansas, and since 2004 has organized community members to support small and rural schools across the state. Singleton serves on the board of the Jefferson County Single Parent Scholarship Fund. She has been a board member since 2005.



**Member — Beverly Cothran** is a literacy specialist at the Ozarks Unlimited Resources Education Service Co-operative. She was Arkansas Rural Teacher of the Year in 2005 and has earned similar honors at the school and county level. She is a National Board Certified Teacher. Cothran’s term began in 2009.



**Member—Andrew Taylor.** Andrew (“Coach”) Taylor is a retired teacher and coach and is currently a builder from Eudora, Arkansas. He has been actively advocating for rural schools since 2005 and has been an integral part of the Eudora Community Revitalization Project. Coach Taylor’s board term began in July 2010.



**Chapter Leader Advisory Member—Penny Harris** is the chapter leader at Bradley and serves as an ex-officio member of the board in the role of chapter advisor. Penny is a phlebotomist, postal service employee, and community volunteer. Penny organized one of the first Rural Community Alliance chapters in 2005 and due to her strong leadership also has one of the largest and strongest chapters, with 104 members.



## RCA Staff

**Executive Director Renee Carr** (front left) – Carr is a CPA with a master’s degree in Community and Economic Development. She handles finances, scheduling, and strategic planning and operations.

**Policy and Education Director Lavina Grandon** (front right) – Grandon is a retired teacher with a master’s degree in English. She produces publications and oversees development of policy and education initiatives.

**Lead/Delta Organizer Dorothy Singleton** (front center) – Singleton is a former telephone company employee and community volunteer. She trains new organizing staff and organizes communities in south and east Arkansas.

**Project Director Matt Grandon** (back right) – Grandon is a graphic artist with 14 years of professional experience. He oversees the Ozark Byways project; designs websites, signs, and graphic art; and organizes chapters in north central Arkansas.

**Southwest Organizer Penny Harris** (back center) – Harris is a phlebotomist, postal service employee, and community organizer and volunteer. She works part-time organizing communities in southwest Arkansas.

**Southeast Organizer Tanya Broadnax** (back left) – Broadnax has deep roots in Dermott and came back there after a career in the health industry. Since returning to Arkansas, she has been a youth organizer and a community organizer.



## RCA History



**Save Our Schools (2003)** - Supporters across Arkansas rallied to save rural schools from consolidation and give them the funding they need.



**Advocates for Community and Rural Education (2005)** - Rural advocates formed a permanent nonprofit organization to advocate to preserve and support rural schools and communities..



**Rural Community Alliance (2009)** - ACRE members and board voted to change the name to Rural Community Alliance to reflect the organization’s increased emphasis on community revitalization and youth development—integrating efforts to preserve both school and community.

**Save Our Schools.** Rural Community Alliance began in 2003 as a grass-roots movement called Save Our Schools. SOS was formed by rural educators, students, and community members to resist a massive school consolidation plan that would have eliminated every Arkansas school district with fewer than 1,500 students. The statewide movement held local, regional, and state-wide rallies and led a grass-roots campaign to stop school consolidation and refocus attention on quality of education and an equitable school funding formula.



**Bruno-Pyatt residents voicing their concerns at the Capitol in March 2003**



**RCA President Lavina Grandon speaking at a Save Our Schools rally in February 2003**

Through the efforts of Save Our Schools and coalition partners, the proposed minimum enrollment number was reduced to 350, saving about 175 small rural schools. The Legislature mandated Education Renewal Zones to provide partnerships between rural schools and university education departments to improve academic outcomes. More money for high poverty and special needs money was added to the school funding formula. The state approved incentives for teachers to be employed in hard-to-staff areas. Access to preschool was greatly expanded. Distance learning technology was funded to give every school access to affordable high quality curriculum. County-wide schools bills were defeated in three successive sessions of the Legislature.

## Advocates for Community and Rural Education (ACRE).

Following the 2003 regular and special sessions of the Arkansas Legislature (which lasted into April of 2004), rural education advocates realized that a permanent advocacy organization was needed to stand up for rural schools and students. With the help of mentors at the Rural School and Community Trust, grass-roots leaders



chose a board and a name, wrote by-laws, incorporated as a nonprofit organization, and applied for charitable 501c3 status. With a board, one part-time organizer, and some dedicated volunteers, Advocates for Community and Rural Education began organizing chapters throughout the state. Leaders were greatly assisted during this period by training and mentoring from Southern Echo of Jackson, Mississippi, and continued involvement of the Rural School and Community Trust.



**Left: Since 2006 members have gathered each summer to share their stories, participate in training, and make decisions that guide**



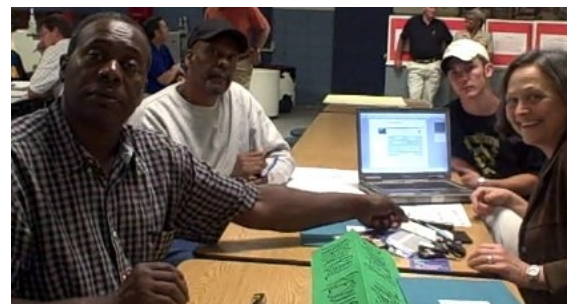
During the period from 2005 to 2009, the organization helped numerous communities fight off attempts to close their schools after they were “administratively consolidated” or annexed following the enactment of a minimum enrollment number of 350 students. It maintained a website that provided information on rural education issues and policy efforts. It published a quarterly newsletter, regular e-mail updates, and educational materials to help members understand and advocate for their issues.

Legislatively, members successfully advocated for funding for isolated and super-isolated schools and districts; school choice for students whose school was closed due to consolidation; and passage of a bill that provided for earlier notification of districts in danger of being on fiscal distress and prevented a district’s being placed on fiscal distress due to capital improvements. Their actions helped defeat a bill that would have given the State Board of Education the power to hire and fire school district superintendents. Chapters of Advocates for Community and Rural Education participated in a number of local efforts, including helping resolve a teachers strike, running candidates for school board, recruiting quality staff for their schools, running successful millage campaigns, helping their districts improve their financial situation, improving school climate, producing brochures to attract more students, initiating tutoring programs, and holding school boards accountable. From 2006 to 2009, Advocates for Community and Rural Education’s summer conference trained more than 400 participants in education advocacy and community development.



**Bismarck supporters ran a successful campaign to pass a millage to get their school off of fiscal and facilities distress.**

**Rural Community Alliance.** As more rural school districts began to be in danger of not maintaining the minimum enrollment, it gradually became clear to the ACRE board and staff that rural schools must be supported by thriving rural communities, and the loss of people and jobs must somehow be reversed to create a truly prosperous rural Arkansas. In 2008, the organization launched its Rural Community Revitalization Initiative to create a ground-up, grass-roots led revitalization process in which community members vision and plan to build on their past and their present to create a better future. In the summer of 2009, the board proposed to ACRE membership that the organization change its name to Rural Community Alliance in recognition of the growing importance of its community-based work and its overarching significance for rural families, children, and schools. A membership campaign in late 2009 increased the membership base of Rural Community Alliance to over 1,000 members in more than 45 communities.



**Delight Natural Resources focus group**

As RCA expanded we remained committed to our original purpose of empowering rural community members by “helping rural schools and communities survive and thrive.” We joined the Equal Voice Campaign for America’s Families, the Formula Fairness Campaign to equalize funding for Title I students, the Opportunity to Learn Campaign, and the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading to advocate for sufficient and equitable funding for education. We began forming revitalization networks to magnify the voice and influence of small rural communities. We continued to advocate for policy issues that create opportunities for rural schools and people. Entering its 10th year, RCA membership had grown to almost 1,500 members in 57 chapters throughout the state. Happy birthday, RCA!

Looking ahead.....

# RCA Celebrates 10th Anniversary in 2013



Be part of the excitement as RCA celebrates its 10th anniversary throughout 2013. Activities are planned each month to commemorate RCA's history and mission.

**January: Proud to Be Rural Month.**

Acknowledge the importance of place and reaffirm your commitment to the movement to renew rural Arkansas.

**February: Rally for Public Schools Month.**

Hold a local rally celebrating 10 years of progress in education or join the statewide rally at the Capitol sponsored by the OTL Campaign on February 20.

**March: Opportunity to Learn Month.** Advocate for measures that help ensure every child an equal opportunity to learn: Schools of Innovation, funding for after school and summer programs, pre-K funding, improved parent involvement, greater college access, bills that protect community schools, and more.

**April: Celebrate Our Rural Heritage Month.** Do something to preserve, celebrate, or promote the natural and historic heritage of your community.

**May: Community Literacy Month.** Support the Grade-Level Reading Campaign ([ar-glr.net](http://ar-glr.net)) and participate in a project to promote literacy in your community.

**June: Local Advocacy and Service Month.** Get involved in serving your community.

**July: Celebrate Freedom Month.** Schedule and participate in local events that celebrate the freedoms we have in our great country.

**August: Gather Together Month.** Plan to attend the RCA Summer Conference.

**September: Parent and Community Engagement Month.** As children head back to school, let's get our parents and communities involved in supporting both students and schools.

**October: Organizing and Advocacy Month.** Join us as we participate in this third annual event of honoring those who strive to make Arkansas a better place to live, work, and go to school.

**November: Honor Our Veterans Month.** Join us in showing rural Arkansas' patriotic spirit and respect for those who serve: Veterans, fire fighters, emergency responders, policemen, nurses, and teachers.

**December: Christmas in the Community.** Christmas is about love, about coming together to share our common humanity, about appreciating our blessings, and acknowledging the Lordship of our Creator. Celebrate this special time with friends and family.



# Congratulations, Fourche Valley, winner of the RCA Membership Contest!

From the time of the Membership Challenge at the RCA summer conference until the competition closed in January, the Fourche Valley Chapter added 34 new members, almost doubling their membership.

The Fourche Valley chapter is very active in their community, conducting revitalization projects, working to get access to their closed school buildings, hosting an annual reunion, working to get cell phone and Internet coverage in the Valley, helping out their rural fire departments, and advocating with legislators.

The Fourche Valley Folks are some of RCA's most faithful members. They have attended every summer conference since they joined RCA, recorded a video promoting their community, and started a Facebook page as a communication tool for the community. Way to go, Fourche Valley! You are an inspiration to all of us.

**We're creating a movement  
to renew rural Arkansas.**

*GET CONNECTED.*

*GET INVOLVED.*

**Join us!**

Download a membership form at

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

**Rural People  
Working Together**

**Education  
Youth Development  
Community Revitalization  
Policy Development**

**RURAL COMMUNITY ALLIANCE**

633 Highway 9

Fox, AR 72051

Phone: 870-615-2195

Fax: 866-824-9598

E-mail: [carr@thenewrural.org](mailto:carr@thenewrural.org)

**[www.thenewrural.org](http://www.thenewrural.org)**

[www.ozarkbyways.com](http://www.ozarkbyways.com)

[www.deltahighways.org](http://www.deltahighways.org)