

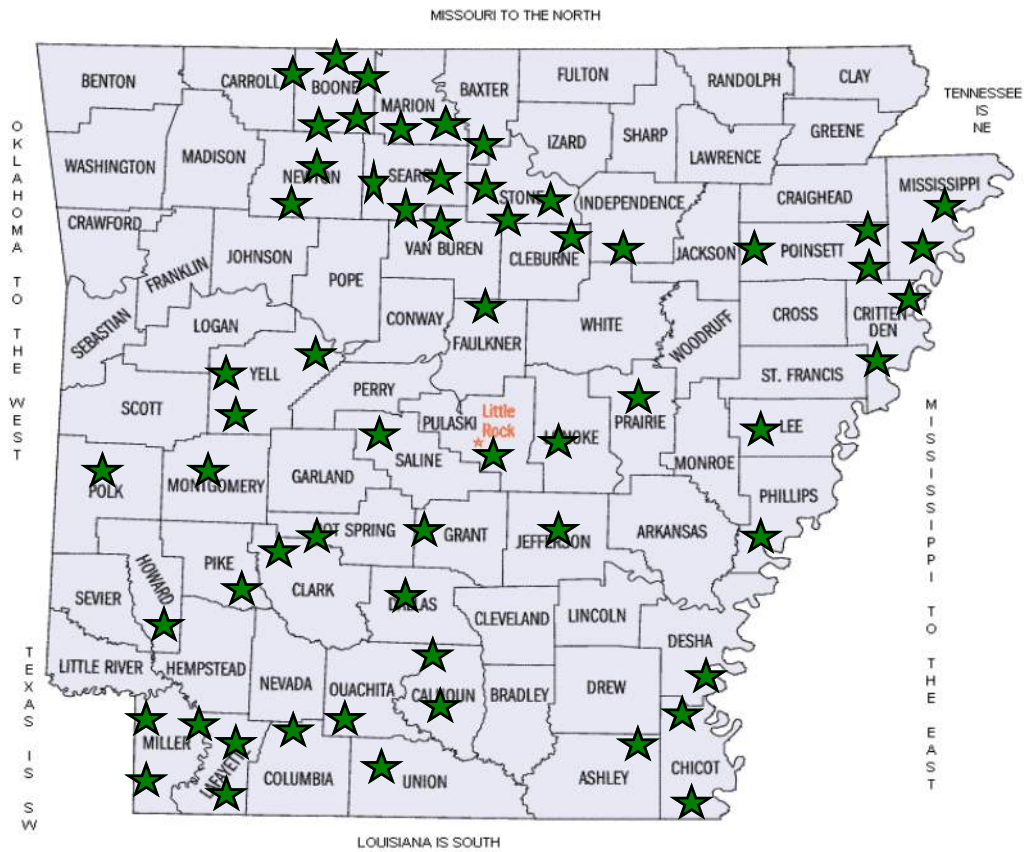
2013 Annual Progress Report:

Nurturing Leaders, Building Capacity,
Strengthening Communities

www.thenewrural.org



Where we are



RCA Chapter

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



Penny Harris: Building Community in Bradley, Doddridge, and Kiblah



Penny Harris established one of RCA’s first chapters in the small Miller County town of Bradley. As president of Bradley’s VIP (Very Important Parents) group, she led parents in the Bradley School District to extraordinary levels of parent involvement and community building. Her chapter eventually became so large that its membership was split between Bradley and the outlying Doddridge/Kiblah communities. Doddridge residents keep their community alive by creating a local museum and restoring a ferryboat that formerly provided the local crossing for the Red River. Kiblah community members celebrate their unique roots by preserving their Rosenwald School as a community center.



Jamie Mullins: Repurposing Resources to Serve Community in Paron



Jamie Mullins led the fight to keep the Paron school open when it was consolidated into the Bryant School District. After a lawsuit that went all the way to the Arkansas Supreme Court, Paron high school students were eventually bussed to Bryant, but residents were able to keep their elementary school and make it a model for parent and community involvement. Working together, they obtained the use of the former high school buildings for the community and use them for festivals, events, meetings, and community services, including fitness facilities and a library. Candi Webb masterfully brings the youth together for civic engagement with the Paron 4-H group.

RCA believes in the importance of place, and change that can be felt in people’s lives.

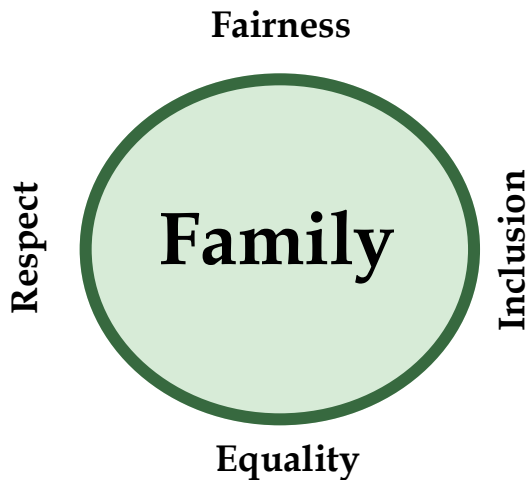
RCA Vision

Rural Community Alliance members have a vision for just and thriving rural communities that offer access to an excellent education, economic opportunity, and rewarding quality of life to all residents.

RCA Mission

The mission of Rural Community Alliance is to empower low-income rural communities to effect change by creating opportunities in education, economic development, and youth empowerment to improve quality of life and place.

RCA Moral Center



RCA Core Values

Low-wealth
Rural
Communities

- ◆ Education
- ◆ Justice
- ◆ Opportunity
- ◆ Economic Empowerment

RCA Theory of Change

RCA members believe change happens through informed and organized residents defining the change they want, building collective power, and taking action to improve their lives.

We work to bring about change in communities with a process that starts with assessment and visioning, then strategic planning and implementation--all led and controlled by the grassroots. RCA staff supports community members with information, resources, and training.

We work through our 59 chapters in low income rural communities throughout the state to share resources, information, and strategies, and we collectively advocate for policies that benefit low-income families, children, and communities. Our members decide on the issues and concerns they will address at the local level, and they determine state-wide and national issues and concerns the organization supports.

We work with state, regional, and national partners in the areas of education, rural economic development, and social justice to address these issues.



Alenora Williams and ECOS: Creating Opportunity in Elaine



After several years of attending RCA events and hearing about revitalization projects that are breathing new life into rural places, Clyde and Alenora Williams were looking for the right project for their community of Elaine. They found a strategy that resonated with them when RCA organizer Dorothy Singleton told them how a similar declining southern town had revitalized itself using folk life theater to preserve and celebrate their history and culture. They knew Elaine had stories to tell and people to tell them. Alenora organized the Elaine Community Opportunity Seekers, a group of about 20 community members who were interested in using folk life theater as economic development. RCA helped locate funding, get training for developing the theater and their non-profit organization, and organize the community. Involving youth to collect and record the elders' stories, they have written and performed two plays, *Love on the Wings of Hope* and *I Remember When*, and performed them for various audiences. They are planning town murals and an arts festival and hope to eventually be able to fund economic development projects.



Sharon Pierce and MJAA: Meeting Needs in Mt. Judea



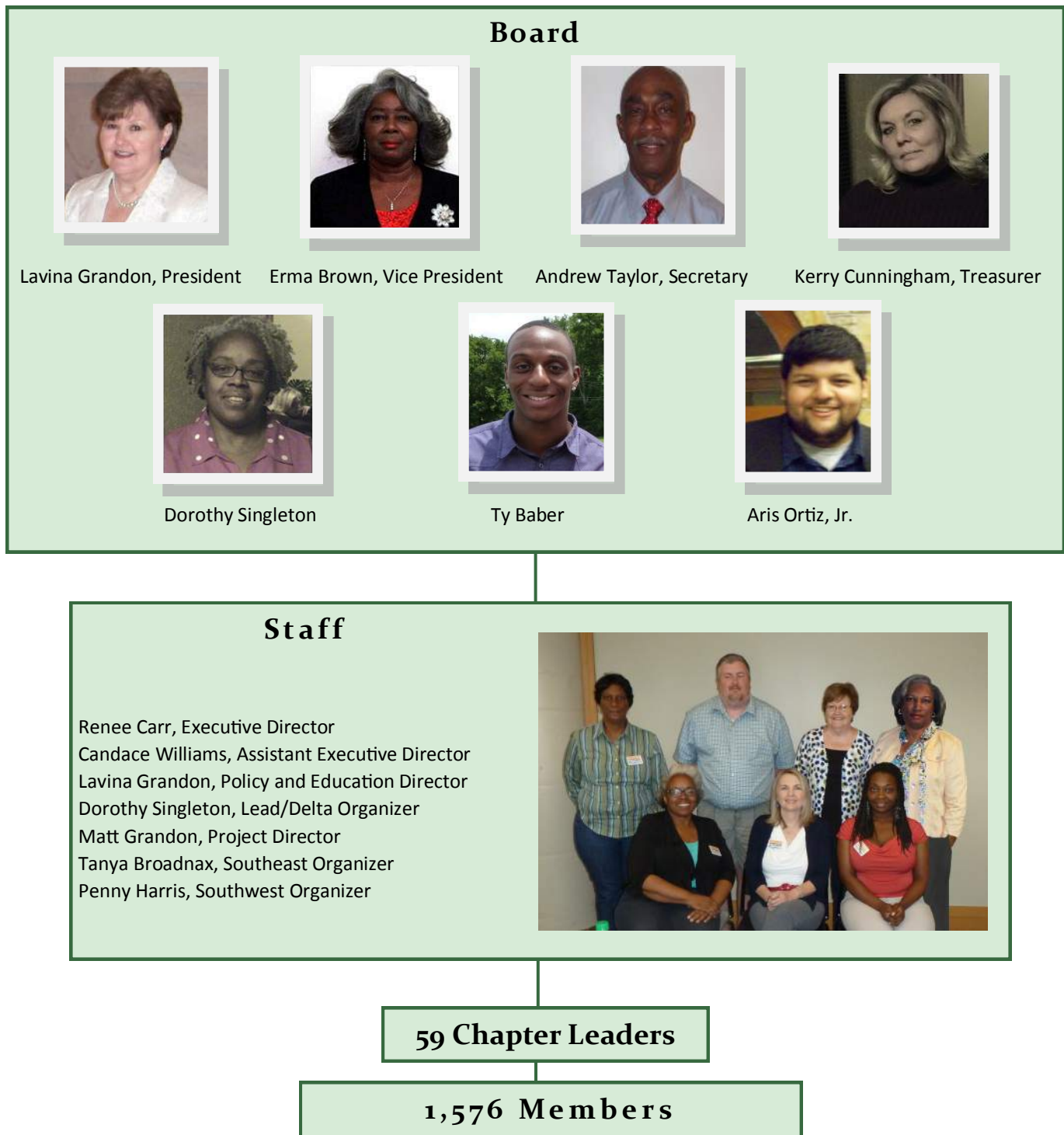
Saving their local post offices was the issue around which a group of committed community people in the small hamlet of Mt. Judea in Newton County organized the Mt. Judea Area Alliance in 2011. They became a non-profit organization whose mission is to "be an advocate for our community, our school, and our rural way of life by strengthening and sustaining our community by means of economic development, education, reducing poverty, celebrating heritage, and providing community services." Under Sharon Pierce's leadership, the group has organized a Dolly Parton Imagination Library project for area children, provided summer learning camps, and initiated a heritage festival. Upon joining RCA's Ozark Byways network, they developed a website and began participating in regional planning and events.

We believe that to build more sustainable and just communities, our efforts must reflect the characteristics of those living in the communities we serve and recognize and illuminate their authentic voices.

What Chapters Do

RCA chapters are self-governing local organizations which agree to “act locally and think statewide.” They determine their own structure, procedures, and set of local issues. They are led by a volunteer Chapter Leader, who serves as the contact between members and RCA leadership and staff. RCA staff provides information, resources, and training to local groups. Members are asked to work collectively with other RCA members around the state on issues that will benefit low-wealth rural communities as a whole.

Organizational Structure





Randy Abbott and South East Pike County Alliance: Celebrating Heritage, Revitalizing Community



The Pike County community of Delight initiated the first RCA facilitated revitalization project in 2008. The grass roots-led, holistic revitalization project focused on education, economic development, natural resources, arts and heritage, community services, and beautification. The community put up a valiant fight to keep its school but lost out to the inevitability of Act 60 consolidation. Today, high school students are bussed to Murfreesboro, but elementary students still attend school in Delight. In spite of this bitter blow, residents have persevered, forming a community development nonprofit under the leadership of Randy Abbott and building success around the town's music heritage with a two-day festival in October. They are also working on a Glen Campbell museum and have obtained a former school building for city use.



Renee Carr: Sustaining Community with Rural Education Heritage, Inc.



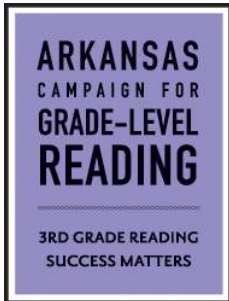
Little Fox Trotters Academy and Herbert and Shirley Taylor Training Center

Life in the isolated mountain community of Fox in Stone County is centered around Rural Special School, the Fox Community Center, the fun park, the post office, and several churches. With few resources, community spirit here is second to none. Organizer Renee Carr is one of many in Fox who cherish and nurture their rural roots. Residents love their school and strongly support its students and teachers. They celebrate together at the Fox Fun Fest, at community musicals, and a community revival that involves all churches of different denominations. Their successful mobilization in 2005 to prevent their school's closing prepared them for another fight to save their post office, which in turn sparked a state-wide push-back. And when the school district would not provide a much needed preschool, they formed Rural Education Heritage, Inc., raised money, and built their own with local volunteer labor.

RCA believes all communities should have the freedom, ability, capacity, and resources to become their own agent of change.

RCA Collaborations

The **Arkansas Opportunity to Learn Campaign** is a coalition of statewide organizations, community leaders, parents, students, educators, policy-makers and others who are committed to public education in Arkansas and dedicated to ensuring every child an equal opportunity to a good education.



The goal of the **Arkansas Grade-Level Reading Campaign** is that all children will read on grade level by the end of 3rd grade. Strategies include kindergarten readiness, good attendance, summer learning, and parent engagement.

The **Formula Fairness Campaign** works to end discrimination against rural and small schools in federal funding of education.



Equal Voice for America's Families seeks to provide a voice to poor and working families on the national, state, and local level.



Southern Echo, Inc. is one of the country's premier organizations for empowering the African-American community through an intergenerational model of community organizing. They have long mentored and assisted in training of RCA community organizers.

Major Funders

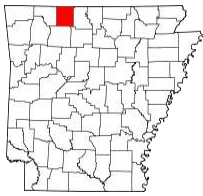
- Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation
- Schott Foundation for Education
- Marguerite Casey Foundation
- Southern Partners Fund
- New World Foundation
- King Foundation
- Arkansas Community Foundation
- Presbyterian Fund for the Self-Development of People
- Arkansas Arts Council



Andrew Taylor and “Eudora Reads!”: Promoting Early Childhood Literacy



For the past several years, Eudora Elementary School has been a model for high achievement in low-income minority communities. Its students consistently are among the highest scorers on state tests. Their secret: Eudora is a community that genuinely cares about education. So when the Arkansas Campaign for Grade-Level Reading was looking for places to implement community solutions, Eudora volunteered. Their Eudora Reads! campaign encompasses the entire community—students, parents, educators, business people, churches, and institutions such as the library, the culture center, and the Li’l Jacob Learning Center. Taking a holistic approach to early childhood literacy, they have parent university, story circles, after-school and summer programs, a literacy lab, Reach out and Read, and Imagination Library. Community member Andrew Taylor is heavily invested in the community as a long-time RCA member and actively participates in and promotes Eudora Reads! as a way the community can help advance early childhood literacy in the state.



Laretta Moore and Valley Springs RCA Chapter: Aiding Grade Level Reading



The Valley Springs RCA Chapter has taken on support of early childhood literacy and grade-level reading as its special project. Seeing an opportunity to impact three focus areas of the Arkansas Grade-Level Reading Campaign, they maintain a Children’s Book Exchange at City Hall as part of parent and community involvement. They raise money to provide a free bicycle at the end of each quarter for a drawing of students who have perfect attendance to encourage students to come to school. And they provide a free take-home book to each kindergarten student at the end of the year to encourage summer reading and reduce summer learning loss. One of their fundraisers was Pies for Literacy, a pie judging contest and pie sale held at a local business to call attention the need for community support for early childhood literacy. With RCA’s help the Valley Springs Foundation has been formed to provide resources to enhance school and community. The Valley Springs Chapter, under the leadership of Laretta Moore, is RCA’s oldest chapter. In addition to strong support for the Valley Springs School, members have been especially active in policy advocacy, going all the way back to 2003, when they led the fight against school consolidation.

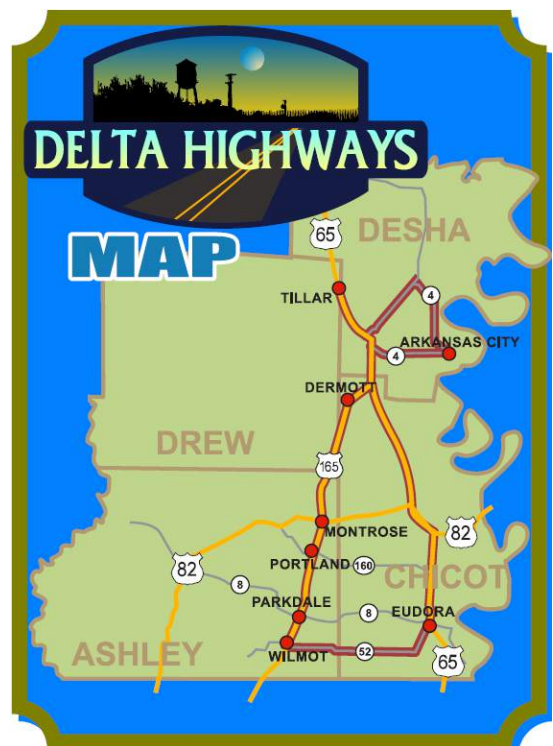
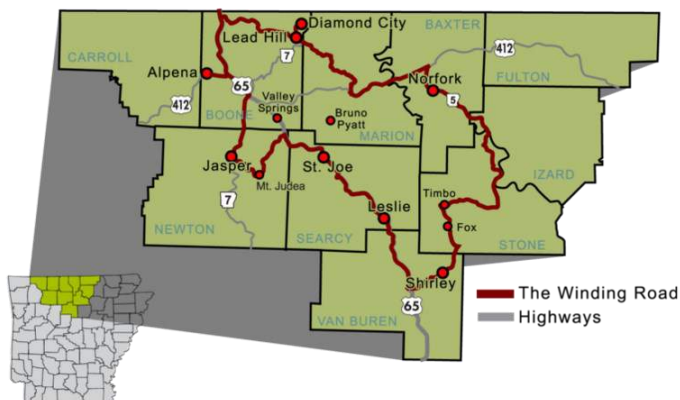
As a broker between national and local movements for change, RCA connects work on the ground in local communities with work across the state, pushing and legitimizing burgeoning community change work and brokering relationships to leverage resources.

RCA Regional Revitalization Networks

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 efforts, while others have become part of larger networks.

By 2013, 26 RCA chapters were carrying out some level of community revitalization. In North Central Arkansas, 14 communities collaborate in the Ozark Byways revitalization network with a parent website, linked community websites, regional events, and a regional magazine. The first steps have been taken to form a Delta Highways revitalization network for small communities in Drew, Desha, Ashley, and Chicot Counties. The networks combine opportunities for training, organizing, and marketing of member communities. More information can be found at www.ozarkbyways.com and www.deltahighways.org.





Rather Clark: Leading Community Revitalization in Dermott



Rather Clark is an extraordinary leader whose passion for her community led her to undertake Dermott’s revitalization process facilitated by Rural Community Alliance. Clark brought all different segments of the community to the table, including parents, students, educators, business people, city leaders, the faith community, and even former residents who were interested in seeing their home town thrive. Two years after formulating an ambitious strategic plan, an evaluation showed 80% of projects had been completed. As a result of Clark’s work, the community is more cohesive, the school system is better, and community spirit is positive and proactive. Dermott will now be one of the anchors of the Delta Highways Revitalization Network, which aims to bring smaller communities of Chicot, Ashley, Drew, and Desha Counties together for common planning, training, and marketing.



Talitha Hardin: Anchoring a Revitalization Network in Leslie



When Talitha Hardin accepted the challenge to form an RCA chapter in Leslie and lead a revitalization project facilitated by RCA, she only knew that she wanted to see her town more prosperous. She could not have foreseen the dramatic impact purposefully working together would have on the community. Five years later, Leslie is a model for what grass-roots action can do, and it is the anchor for Ozark Byways, a growing network of similar communities in north central Arkansas. Leslie’s accomplishments include beautification of the community; at least ten new businesses; a thriving arts community; an active merchants’ association; grants to renovate city hall and the community center and to build a fun park; and numerous festivals and events that draw people to the town year-round. As for Talitha, she is now the mayor and working hard every day to make her town better.

As a community of change agents, RCA provides countless opportunities for residents to determine how they want to impact change, learn from others, assess their own work, and develop skills and tools to advance their own strategies to achieve the highest impact.

RCA Policy Development

In addition to working at the local level for better schools and more prosperous communities, RCA members collectively identify policies that will benefit rural Arkansas, and then they advocate for those policies on the state and local level.

At the end of the 2013 legislative session, RCA members could count several significant wins for rural schools and communities, as well as some disappointing losses.

Wins:

HB1310 by Rep. Kelley Linck, co-sponsored by Senators Stephanie Flowers and Missy Irvin, became Act 318, making it mandatory for school districts to either use or make available for use by community groups and nonprofits school buildings that have been left empty by consolidation.

HB1770, now Act 600, extends time limits for academic, fiscal, and facilities distress from two to five years. Rep. John Catlett, a co-sponsor of the bill, was especially helpful to RCA's Western Yell County chapter, which had a special interest in supporting this bill.

Act 1507 by Sen. Flowers and Rep. Linck makes it possible for public school facilities to be shared with the public.

Act 1423 by Sen. Flowers and Rep. Linck allows parents to be more informed about their schools' parent involvement activities by requiring the schools to publish parent involvement plans in student handbooks.

Act 1230 by Sen. Key enabled funding of the Positive Youth Development Act for after-school and summer programs. However, the funding has not yet been appropriated.

RCA community groups will be pleased that Act 735 appropriates up to \$90 million for Department of Rural Services grants for community projects.

RCA members and allies were able to stop HB1040, which would have created a separate Charter School Commission unanswerable to the State Board of Education, although some money was appropriated for a charter school loan fund and a division was created within the Department of Education for charter school approval and oversight.

Also stopped was HB1418, which would have taken funding from education and other state services and given it to the State Highway Department.

Draws:

Four topics of importance to RCA members have been referred for interim studies: NSLA funding, pre-K, school discipline, and a moratorium on Act 60 consolidations.

Losses:

Two bitter losses balanced the gains of the session. Rep. Alexander's HB1938 to suspend administrative reorganization of school districts narrowly failed in the House, and Sen. Elliott's bill to extend in-state tuition to all graduates of Arkansas high schools failed in the Senate Education Committee, leaving work still to be done in future sessions.

RCA Youth Development

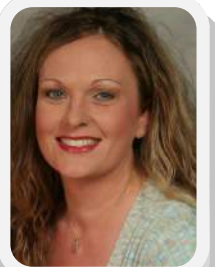
RCA's intergenerational model of organizing encourages grass roots participation at all levels by all age groups from students to seniors. Youth participants take part in community revitalization projects and advocacy efforts. They attend conferences and make their voices heard on issues of concern to themselves, their schools, and their communities.

Examples of RCA youth involvement include participation in the Jefferson County Parent Summit, two youth interns promoting Student Voice, a youth panel at the RCA Member Conference, youth involvement in the Elaine Fish Hook Theater Project, and community service by youth in Paron, Dermott, Doddridge, and other chapters around the state.

Grass Roots Activists Advance Policy Goals



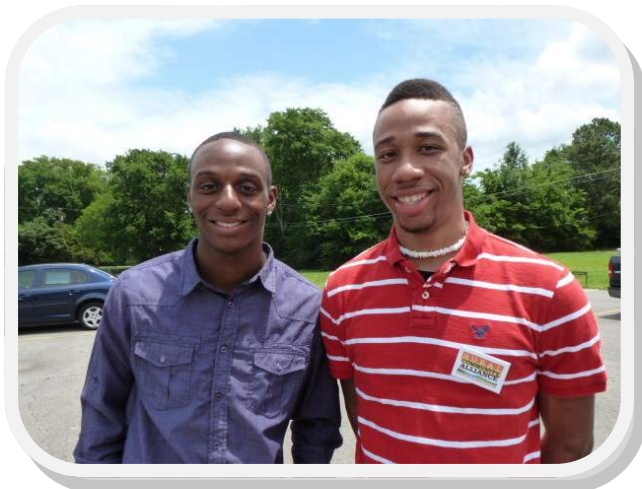
Heather Laster of Belleville first heard of Rural Community Alliance from RCA board member Kerry Cunningham when her school district, Western Yell County, was threatened with state take-over for fiscal distress. With a local economy heavily reliant on the natural gas industry, the community was experiencing an economic downturn that was affecting the school's finances. Heather organized an RCA chapter, led a fund-raising effort that added over \$30,000 to the school's finances, and learned about the political process as she and her community worked with their State Representative, John Catlett, to promote a bill to extend the timeline from two to five years for a school to get off fiscal, academic, or facilities distress. The bill passed, but happily the district didn't need the extra time. Due to their extraordinary efforts, they have already been removed from the state's fiscal distress list.



Greta Greeno and Michelle Cadle became passionate advocates for small schools and rural communities when their community, Weiner, lost its award-winning school to consolidation due to its enrollment falling below 350. Greeno and Cadle organized their community, began to educate a wide network of people through social media, and got involved in the policy process. Unable to stop the closure of their own high school by the receiving school district, they vowed to fight for other communities in similar circumstances. They recruited Representative Randy Alexander to

sponsor a moratorium on Act 60. Though the bill failed to pass the House by a handful of votes, they are participating in an interim study of the damage Act 60 does to rural Arkansas communities. They are also working on a concept for the state to establish special agricultural high schools to provide an educated workforce

RCA Youth Promote Education, Build Community



RCA Chapters

Rural Community Alliance has 1,576 members in 59 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 some of their activities in 2013.

Acorn: Chapter since 2006, 9 members, volunteered at school, attended school board meetings, contacted legislators

Alpena: Chapter since 2005, 41 members, attended RCA conference, volunteered at school, volunteered at community events, volunteered with historic restoration, volunteered with community cleanup; sponsored Egg Hunt, Christmas Parade, Run for the Gravy, and Smokin’ the Pass BBQ contest; attended City Council meetings; attended school board meetings; participated in Ozark Byways planning and events, www.alpenapass.org (Right: Alpena goes all out for Ozark Byways Buy-Days.)



Alzheimer-Dollarway: Chapter since 2006, 27 members, attended RCA conference, volunteered at school, attended school board meetings, contacted legislators, volunteered at community events, produced Jefferson County Parent Summit, attended national OTL Summit, added new members, attended Grade-Level Reading Summit, participated in parent engagement group, attended OTL lobby day, participated in GLR interim study and Act 60 interim study (Right: Youth Present at Jefferson County Parent Summit)



Arkansas City: Chapter since 2012, 29 members, attended RCA conference, volunteered at community events, member of Delta Highways revitalization network, community food pantry, added new members

Bearden: Chapter since 2009, 22 members, volunteered at school, attended school board meetings

Bismarck: Chapter since 2008, 16 members, volunteered at school, participated in merchants group, volunteered at community events, attended school board meetings

Bradley: Chapter since 2005, 75 members, attended RCA conference, volunteered at school, volunteered at community events, contacted legislators, attended legislative training, parent engagement project, attended school board meetings, added new members

Bruno-Pyatt: Chapter since 2005, 29 members, volunteered at school, volunteered at community event, attended school board meetings, produced heritage festival, participated in Ozark Byways planning and events, contacted legislators, added new members

Carthage: Chapter since 2006, 5 members, volunteered at community events, attended City Council meetings, participated in economic development

Carlisle: Chapter since 2005, 13 members, attended RCA conference, volunteered at school, attended school board meetings, volunteered at community events, contacted legislators

Centerpoint: Chapter since 2006, 7 members, attended school board meetings, volunteered at school

Concord-Ida: Chapter since 2012, 8 members

Delight: Chapter since 2005, 95 members, volunteered at school, volunteered at community events, produced 4th annual music festival, served on revitalization focus groups, annual Christmas parade, attended school board meetings, submitted newspaper articles, city beautification, attended RCA conference, obtained possession of former school building for community purposes, added new members, contacted legislators (Right: SEPCA President Randy Abbott, member Ed Jones, and RCA President Lavina Grandon.)



Dermott: Chapter since 2008, 89 members, added new members, attended RCA conference, attended national OTL Summit, parent engagement group, volunteered at school, organized community events, produced Crawfish Festival, city beautification, attended Chamber of Commerce meetings, attended City Council meetings, attended school board meetings, back to school event, health screenings, submitted newspaper articles, community yard sale, contacted legislators, attended OTL lobby day, joined Delta Highways network, held teacher appreciation event, held school SUCCESS rally, www.dermott.org (Right: Dermott Elementary Students celebrate at school SUCCESS rally.)



Des Arc: Chapter since 2005, 20 members, added new members, attended RCA conference, attended legislative hearings, contacted legislators, submitted article for RCA newsletter, attended school board meetings, volunteered at community events, became a sustaining chapter, held school SUCCESS rally (Right: Des Arc Chapter Leader Deanna Felts highlights new manufactory and rural entrepreneur Paul Guess for RCA Newsletter.)



Diamond City: Chapter since 2006, 10 members, attended City Council meetings, attended Chamber of Commerce meetings, volunteered at school, volunteered at community events, produced festivals, contacted legislators, received grants, participated in community foundation and Lakeshore Districts economic development network, participated in Ozark Byways planning and events, held veterans celebrations, www.diamondcityar.org

Doddridge: Chapter since 2012, 70 members, attended RCA conference, volunteered at community event, attended school board meetings, community beautification, attended Grade-Level Reading Summit, contacted legislators, developed museum and historic site, held back-to-school event (Right: Historic Spring Bank Ferry that formerly was the only means of crossing the Red River in Doddridge. After a bridge was built at Doddridge, the ferry served a stint at Peel on Bull Shoals Lake and then was retired from service. The community purchased it from the Arkansas Highway Department and restored it as a historic site.)



Earle: Chapter since 2009, 6 members, attended school board meetings, volunteered at school, participated in community event, contacted legislators, attended RCA conference

East Poinsett County: Chapter since 2009, 16 members, volunteered at school, volunteered at community events

Elaine: Chapter since 2006, 33 members, added new members, attended RCA conference, attended school board meetings, produced arts festival and community theater performance, volunteered at school, volunteered at community events, attended Grade-Level Reading Summit, attended OTL Lobby Day, contacted legislators, wrote grants, participated in GLR interim study

Eudora: Chapter since 2005, 65 members, added new members, attended RCA conference, city beautification, parent engagement group, received grant for community literacy project, participated in AR-GLR webinars, attended school board meetings, volunteered at school, volunteered at community events, held summer festival, contacted legislators, held back-to-school event, summer feeding/learning program, after-school tutoring

Flippin: Chapter since 2011, 4 members, attended school board meetings, contacted legislators, volunteered at school, volunteered at community events, participated in Arkansas Grade-Level Reading Campaign, participated in GLR Attendance Works project, held school SUCCESS rally (Right: Students, teachers, parents, and community members turned out for an awesome rally to celebrate the Flippin School District's success in student achievement; parent, teacher, and community engagement; and school climate.)



Fouke: Chapter since 2012, 4 members, volunteered at school, volunteered at community events

Fourche Valley: Chapter since 2009, 53 members, attended RCA conference, organized alumni reunion, volunteered at community events, raised money for community projects, attended school board meetings, worked for cell and Internet access, contacted legislators, attended legislative committee hearings, community Facebook page

Friends of RCA: Chapter since 2005, 59 members, added new members, attended RCA conference, provided technical assistance, contacted legislators

Genoa Central: Chapter since 2006, 15 members, attended school board meetings, volunteered at school, contacted legislators

Guy-Perkins: Chapter since 2009, 7 members, attended school board meetings, volunteered at school

Hampton: Chapter since 2005, 6 members, attended school board meetings, volunteered at school, contacted legislators, volunteered at community events, attended RCA conference, Men of Knowledge YEN, attended legislative committee hearings

Jasper: Emerging chapter, 2 members, participated in Ozark Byways regional network and events

Lafayette County: Chapter since 2012, 5 members, added new members, volunteered at community events, volunteered at school, contacted legislators

Lead Hill: Chapter since 2006, 29 members, added new members, attended school board meetings, attended Chamber of Commerce meetings, attended City Council meetings, volunteered at school, contacted legislators, attended RCA summer conference, participated in Lakeshore Districts economic development campaign, volunteered at community events, Lead Hill 4th of July Celebration and Parade, held veterans' event, participated in Ozark Byways regional planning and events, Facebook page, planning for 200th year celebration, www.leadhill.org

Leslie: Chapter since 2006, 52 members, added new members, volunteered at school, contacted legislators, attended school board meetings, participated in revitalization project, added new businesses, participated in Searcy County Chamber of Commerce, volunteered at community events, attended RCA conference, regular music performances at OHAC, Farmers Market, Fishing Derby, Homecoming, West Fest, Sugarplum Festival, renovated City Hall, city-wide cleanup, attended City Council meetings, Merchants Association, on arts tour, Facebook page, weekly music at Drop Zone, Rock Rhythm and Blues Fest, city-wide rummage sale, lawn mower races, annual Mountain Man Rendezvous, Ancestor Fair, participated in Ozark Byways regional network planning and events, www.lesliearkansas.org (Right: Mountain Man Rendezvous)



Marianna: Chapter since 2005, 41 members, added new members, attended school board meetings, volunteered at school, volunteered at community events, contacted legislators, attended RCA conference

Marshall: New chapter, 31 members, participated in Ozark Byways regional network planning and events, participated in Searcy County Chamber of Commerce, attended Chamber of Commerce meetings, held community events, volunteered at school, www.marshallar.org

Marked Tree: Chapter since 2009, 4 members, volunteered at school

Midland: Emerging chapter, 2 members

Montrose: New chapter, 3 members, attended RCA conference, attended City Council meetings

Mineral Springs: Chapter since 2009, 5 members, attended school board meetings, volunteered at school, contacted legislators

Mt. Judea: Chapter since 2011, 32 members, added new members, attended RCA conference, attended school board meetings, volunteered at school, contacted legislators, participated in Ozark Byways planning and events, summer learning camp, Mt. Judea Area Alliance, Christmas parade, attended Arkansas Grade-Level Reading Summit, participated in AR-GLR activities, Dolly Parton Imagination Library, applied for heritage grant, www.mtjudea.org

Murfreesboro: Emerging chapter, 3 members

Norfolk: Chapter since 2011, 6 members, attended school board meetings, volunteered at school, volunteered at community events, Pioneer Days festival, attended RCA conference, participated in Ozark Byways planning and events, linked to Ozark Byways website, www.cityofnorfolk.org

Oden: Chapter since 2005, 24 members, volunteered at school, volunteered at community events

Omaha: Chapter since 2009, 5 members, attended school board meetings, volunteered at school

Osceola: Chapter since 2009, 9 members, attended school board meetings, volunteered at school, volunteered at community events

Paron: Chapter since 2006, 12 members, attended school board meetings, volunteered at school, contacted legislators, Hosted Paron Pride day, Hosted Mayfest, maintained community center, volunteered at community events, attended RCA conference, Fall Fest, youth engagement

Plainview-Rover: Chapter since 2005, 55 members, attended school board meetings volunteered at school, contacted legislators, volunteered at community events, attended rural education conference, hosted fall festival, participated in merchants group, attended City Council meetings, attended RCA conference

Poyen: Chapter since 2005, 13 members, attended school board meetings, volunteered at school, contacted legislators, attended City Council meetings

Rivercrest: Chapter since 2009, 8 members, added new members, volunteered at school, attended RCA conference **(Right: Ty Baber and Robert Cooney served as RCA interns.)**



Rural Special: Chapter since 2005, 110 members, attended school board meetings, volunteered at school, contacted legislators, submitted newspaper articles, gave testimony before legislative committee, school foundation, Ozark Byways revitalization project, built community education building, started pre-school, YouTube.com/FoxArkansas, Volunteered at community events, Fox Fun Fest, Veterans Day event, attended RCA conference, attended national OTL Summit, attended Arkansas Grade-Level Reading Summit, on AR-GLR steering committee, linked to Ozark Byways website

Shirley: New chapter, 20 members, held annual Shirley Homecoming, attended City Council meetings, participated in Ozark Byways regional network, produced Halloween and Christmas events with gifts and treats for children, staffed Shirley Museum, www.shirleyarkansas.org

Smackover: Chapter since 2007, 13 members, attended school board meetings, volunteered at school, volunteered at community events

Stephens: Chapter since 2009, 5 members, attended school board meetings, volunteered at school, contacted legislators, volunteered at community events, attended RCA summer conference

St. Joe: Chapter since 2009, 35 members, attended school board meetings, volunteered at school, contacted legislators, volunteered at community events, restoring historic railroad depot, Searcy County Rural Help Center, attended City Council meetings, city clean-up, participated in Ozark Byways regional network planning and events, held events to raise money for community projects, added new members, www.stjoearkansas.org

Timbo: Chapter since 2007, 8 members, volunteered at school, participated in Ozark Byways regional revitalization network, hosted alumni reunion, volunteered at community event

Turrell: Chapter since 2006, 17 members

Valley Springs: Chapter since 2005, 122 members, added new members, attended school board meetings, volunteered at school, volunteered at community events, contacted legislators, Valley Springs School and Community Foundation, participated in Ozark Byways regional network planning and events, attended RCA conference, attended Arkansas Grade-Level Reading Summit, participated in AR-GLR interim study, set up children's book exchange, provide summer reading for kindergarten students, bought bicycles for attendance incentive at school, www.valleyspringsar.org

Waldo: Chapter since 2012, 7 members, added new members, attended RCA conference, attended City Council meetings, volunteered at community events

Weiner: Chapter since 2010, 33 members, 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 consolidations, participated in Act 60 interim study, opened new community center

Western Yell County: Chapter since 2012, 37 members, attended City Council meetings, attended school board meetings, attended Chamber of Commerce meetings, volunteered at school, volunteered at community events, contacted legislators, attended RCA conference, school removed from fiscal distress

RCA History



Save Our Schools (2003) - Supporters across Arkansas rallied to save rural schools from consolidation and give them the funding they need to provide a quality education for all children.



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.

RCA Accomplishments

Below is a partial list of accomplishments of RCA members and their allies since the organization was formed in 2003.

1. In consolidation controversy, reduced minimum enrollment number from 1,500 to 350 to save 175 rural school districts.
2. Education Renewal Zones to create public school/university partnerships to improve academic achievement.
3. Poverty and English Language Learner funding.
4. Funding for preschool.
5. Prevented passage of county-wide schools in 2003, 2004, and 2005.
6. Distance learning capability for every school district.
7. Helped get and preserve funding for isolated and super-isolated schools.
8. Defeated a bill that gave the State Board power to hire and fire school district superintendents.
9. Successfully promoted a law to prevent a school's being on fiscal distress due to capital improvements and extending timelines.
10. Successfully promoted a law to allow freedom of choice to students whose school had been consolidated.
11. Chapters at Lead Hill, Bismark, Midland, and Western Yell County helped get their schools off fiscal distress.
12. Youth enterprise training for 30 youths, grants for 7.

13. Helped local chapters run members for school board, pass millage increases, improve school climate, start parent involvement projects, establish tutoring programs, recruit highly qualified leadership for schools.
14. Disincentived closing isolated campuses by blocking a bill to allow isolated funding to follow the student even if a campus is closed.
15. Taught financial literacy to over 2,000 rural youth and adults.
16. Participating in Opportunity to Learn Campaign
17. Participating in Formula Fairness Campaign
18. Participating in Arkansas Grade-Level Reading Campaign
19. Participating in Equal Voice for America's Families Campaign
20. Participating in Moving the Needle on Poverty Campaign
21. Passed a law to return unused buildings in consolidated school districts to the community.
22. Blocked a bill to allow the State Department of Education to close an isolated school without a vote by the local school board.
23. Held economic development town halls with Lt. Gov. Mark Darr at Leslie and Weiner.
24. Youth Empowerment Network in 15 rural communities.
25. Led a state-wide effort to save rural post offices. Established a website to educate and inform public. Secured support in the form of bills filed in Congress from Congressman Rick Crawford and Senator John Boozman.
26. Helped Elaine Community Opportunity Seekers form community development corporation and community theater.
27. Helped Valley Springs and Lead Hill/Diamond City form school and community foundations. Trained 25 community leaders in forming local foundations and endowments.
28. Leadership training for over 1,000 people. Board training and grant writing training for over 100 people.
29. Successfully promoted law extending timeline for schools on fiscal, academic, or facilities distress.
30. Chapter at Fox established school foundation, built building, and established ABC preschool.
31. Successfully promoted law for joint use of facilities by school and communities.
32. Laws strengthening parent engagement.
33. Held Jefferson County Parent Engagement Summit.
34. Developed models for parent engagement in low-income rural communities.
35. Blocked unaccountable Charter School Commission.
36. Blocked bill to divert state funds from education and other services to state highway department.
37. Revitalization projects in 26 chapters, two regional revitalization networks.
38. Set up Facebook page to call attention to Act 60 consolidations: **Facebook.com/arkansasruralschools**.
39. 1,576 members in 59 chapters.

We're creating a movement to renew rural Arkansas.

GET CONNECTED. GET INVOLVED.

Join us!

Download a membership form at www.thenewrural.org

Rural People Working Together

Education
Youth Development
Community Revitalization
Policy Development

RURAL COMMUNITY ALLIANCE

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