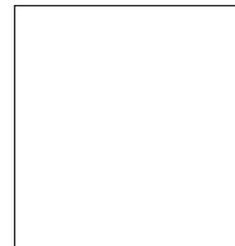




Women and community development: *growing individuals and communities*

by Helen M. Lewis



Ivanhoe was once considered a dying community in southwest Virginia. Local mines and factories had closed and the economy was collapsing as residents left the town to seek employment in nearby cities. Through the efforts of the Ivanhoe Civic League led by Maxine Waller, the citizens of Ivanhoe have stood to meet the challenges faced by their town. The development efforts in the community have been led largely by women. In the following excerpt from *It Comes from the People*, a documentary of the rebirth of Ivanhoe, sociologist and writer Helen M. Lewis discusses the role of women in community development. Of course, not all women behave in one way, but Helen points out some characteristics based on the traditional role of women in our society.

Community development has become a social movement largely led by women. Ivanhoe's Civic League, like most community development groups, is led by women. The organizations they found and the work they do differ from the more male-dominated emphasis on industrial development and recruitment. From their own economic experiences, the women tend to define development more broadly than jobs and income to include education, democratic participation, and dignity.

Women's experience in the domestic economy has given them a different perspective on community development. Women's work, in contrast to mainstream and men's jobs, is more life-sustaining, life-

. . .most community groups led by women take on a different style and pattern, based on women's family roles and patterns of working together with other women.

producing, family- and community-based. It is part of "livelihood," reproducing and working for children, grandchildren and a better life to pass on. The domestic economy deals with people and their needs,

treating people as human beings, not as raw material or commodities, not just labor force.

Women's work is conserving. Women "make do," patch, recycle, emphasize reclamation and maintenance. Women make things last. Preservation, not exploitation, of resources is women's style. As gardeners they understand the need to care for water and soil. They work to meet basic needs.

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Although practical and useful, they have time for the beautiful, the aesthetic. There are flowers in the garden, designs in the quilts, and songs when they work. Women also pay attention to history, tradition, and stories, and they encourage creativity.

Women's community development projects draw from these kinds of experiences and values, and female leaders tend to recognize both community and individual needs and combine education and development to link personal and community growth.

Women have developed some innovative, experimental projects within the region: community-owned businesses, worker-owned co-ops, self-help projects, and other subsistence and small income-generating projects. They have started community-controlled educational programs: basic literacy, general equivalency diploma (GED), and college programs. Their community-based organizations tend to be more democratic, more participatory, seeking to develop and use local skills and resources to involve everyone.

Although there is some attempt to copy the usual men-directed style of leadership, many of the women have not had much work experience with offices or bureaucracies. Therefore most community groups led by women take on a different style and pattern, based on women's family roles and patterns of working together with other women. Work is organized like a potluck dinner, through informal planning and sharing through a network, and involves different contributions. A visit to the Ivanhoe Civic League office is like coming into a big family gathering. It is crowded; people come and go, work together, prepare and eat lunches together. Visiting and community potlucks are a big part of the agenda.

Sally Helgesen writes about the special skills that women, as leaders and managers, bring to organizations. From motherhood they gain skills in organiza-

tion, pacing, balancing conflicting claims, teaching, guiding, and monitoring. As children, girls play games that require more cooperation: taking turns, role playing, improvising, devising scenarios for dolls, and being more aware of relationships. The family circle is inclusive, with flow and movement.

Women bring these skills and patterns into the community organizations. Women also pay more attention to cultural activities, celebrations, sharing food, making things beautiful. They are the ritual leaders in families and kin groups. They also pay more attention to personal relationship and personal growth and development. They work to build self-esteem, good feelings, and a friendly atmosphere. The rules are more flexible; there is space for creativity. They can "make do" and shift priorities, swim with the flow.

Problems and conflicts often arise in groups when women are pushed into "director" roles and try to be the "big boss." They sometimes overdo as they try to copy their male counterparts or the bosses they have experienced in their work situations, usually authoritarian factory bosses. Maxine admits to ranging in style from "big mama" to straw boss at the sewing factory where she once worked.

The more permissive, informal "living room syndrome," as Maxine labels it, that exists in the office is not task-oriented enough, so working out leadership styles that can get the work done becomes a problem. In most of these community groups, women are struggling to understand how they can develop a more humane, democratic leadership style, building from their own experience and considerable skills a style that allows for both cooperation and individual creativity.

Women's experience in the domestic economy has given them a different perspective on community development.

Excerpted from *It Comes from the People*, pages 130-131.

Reprinted by permission of co-author Helen M. Lewis.

It Comes from the People: Community development and local theology by Helen M. Lewis, Mary Ann Hinsdale and S. Maxine Waller. Temple University Press, Philadelphia, PA 19122, 1995. 400 pages. \$19.95.

Eastern Kentucky Women's Leadership Program Starts Up

The Eastern Kentucky Women's Leadership Program is part of the Appalachian Regional Commission's regional leadership development initiative. Available to women throughout eastern Kentucky, the program is being administered by the Kentucky Council of Area Development Districts.

The leadership program is a result of discussions by women at the East Kentucky Leadership Conference. The program will provide training opportunities for women who want to further develop skills that will enable them to be more effective in their jobs and in their communities.

In addition, women in leadership positions will participate in the various training workshops and will be available to provide support and guidance to the participants on an ongoing basis.

The first activity will be a gathering of potential participants and mentors in conjunction with the East Kentucky Leadership Conference on April 26, 1996, in Hazard, Kentucky. For further information, contact your local area development district or Linda G. Gayheart, (606) 785-0606, PO Box 105, 100 Foxrun Ridge, Hindman, KY 41822.

LDP teams receive Seedling Grants

Seedling Grants have been awarded to two county teams from the 1995 Leadership Development Program.

The Riverside Park group from Clay County, Kentucky, received a grant of \$1,000 to use for the purchase of trees, shrubs, wildflowers and landscape timbers. The team will use the materials to landscape the area around a river that visitors cross as they come into the county seat.

The site is currently hard to maintain and the small brush that grows there holds trash during floods. The team will work with the county and city to clean up the area, landscape and develop a park with walking trails, a bike path and a playground.

The Generating Ritchie County Opportunities from Within (GROW) team also received a \$1,000 Seedling Grant for a landscaping project. The group will use the funds to purchase trees, shrubs and materials to improve the appearance of the Ritchie County Middle School/High School complex.

As well as landscaping the entrance to the school, the team intends to develop a memorial circle that will contain a single tree, a large rock and a plaque. The circle will honor the life of a student who would have graduated with the class of 1995.

Congratulations to these Brushy Fork teams!

Associates Directory note

New area codes instituted in southwest Virginia and east Tennessee

Callers who want to reach Brushy Fork Associates in southwest Virginia and east Tennessee will have to change their dialing habits. The area code for southwest Virginia has been changed from 703 to 540. In east Tennessee, the area code has been changed from 615 to 423. Happy calling!

Next *Mountain Promise* will address sustainable development

Mountain Promise, the newsletter of the Brushy Fork Institute, is published quarterly. Our next issue will examine sustainable development in Appalachia. We encourage readers to submit articles, reports, photos, lineart or story suggestions. If you have an article or a story idea, contact:

Mountain Promise, attention Donna Morgan
Brushy Fork Institute
CPO 35, Berea College
Berea, KY 40404

Phone: (606) 986-9341 extension 6838
FAX: (606) 986-5510
e-mail: Donna_Morgan@bera.edu

Teamwork for Tomorrow

Seventeen organizations will receive mini-grants

Thanks to state Appalachian Regional Commission funding from the Office of the Governor, seventeen Eastern Kentucky organizations that participated in the Teamwork for Tomorrow program will receive mini-grants for community projects.

To qualify for mini-grant funds, each organization sent three members to a one-day and a follow-up two-day workshop. The workshops featured sessions on strategic planning, project planning and grant writing.

Using grantwriting training from the workshops, the organizations submitted written proposals for their projects. The mini-grants awarded will be matched on a one-to-one basis with cash raised from other sources.

Brushy Fork's Peter Hille noted, "These grants are a particularly exciting use of Appalachian Regional Commission funds. The money is going directly to the communities where it will be used."

The community projects funded by the grants address topics from education to the environment to historical preservation. The amounts awarded ranged from \$880 to \$1900. Due to the fact that Brushy Fork received nearly \$30,000 in requests while there was only \$25,000 available for mini-grants, none of the organizations received full funding for their projects. Organizations were required to submit a revised budget to demonstrate how the change in funding affected the implementation of the project.

Organizations and Their Projects

Appalachian Compassionate Ministries (Bell County)

Peer counseling program for breast-feeding mothers

Two local women will become counselors through the La Leche League International Program. The counselors will create and distribute posters and pamphlets, provide public service announcements through the media, make hospital and home visits, and start support groups for breast-feeding mothers.

Casey County Community Ministries

Expansion of county services

Through a three-month campaign, the ministry plans to enhance church support of their programs. The ministry will work through the churches to offer services in each church's community.

City of Flemingsburg (Fleming County)

Establish a county historical museum

The City of Flemingsburg plans to adapt a local historical building as a museum. Currently the county library collects and stores historical items that are donated by area residents. Renovation of the building will provide a place for these items to be viewed by the public.

Cumberland County Arts Council

Program to provide arts experiences to young people

Fifty students will benefit from arts programs offered in a week-long day camp. Another eighty students—forty who are special education students and forty who are gifted and talented—will learn about arts in a one-day festival.

Flatwoods Mill/Spring Park Committee (Morgan County)

Develop a community park and historical museum

In hopes of attracting visitors to their community, the Flatwoods Mill/Spring Park Committee plans to reconstruct a local grist mill and landscape the area to a park setting. As well as adding to their museum collection, they will design publicity materials and place signs to advertise the museum.

Fleming County AG 2000

Educate farmers about alternative crops

With the unstable tobacco industry, farmers may turn to alternative crops. Fleming County AG 2000 plans to provide training and demonstrations by experienced producers and marketers of such alternative crops as cut flowers and landscaping plants.

LKLP Community Action Council (Perry County)*Renovation of the LKLP Central Kitchen.*

As a service to the elderly, the LKLP Community Action Council provides home-delivered meals. The group will use mini-grant funds to renovate a new kitchen and expand the nutrition program.

Menifee Co. Family Resource Youth Service Center*Initiate a newsletter published by parent volunteers*

In a community that has no home-based newspaper, the Menifee County FRYSC sees a need for a communication medium for youth and family-related news. As part of the newsletter, parents will learn production techniques from professional journalists.

Menifee Information Group (Menifee County)*Forestry education and landscape enhancement project*

As part of a larger urban forestry project, Menifee Information Group members will educate residents and various community groups on using trees and shrubs to enhance a landscape. The county groups will coordinate their efforts in replacing damaged trees with plantings that are more suitable to the area.

Morgan County Historical Society*Historical resource center*

The Morgan County Historical Society plans to restore an old jail constructed by WPA workers in 1938, so that it can be used for a historical museum. This grant will fund restoration of two small rooms which will be used as a resource center. After the rooms are restored, historical documents, literature and other materials will be made available to visitors.

Natural Bridge/Powell County Chamber of Commerce*Build a playground for Slade/Natural Bridge Rest Area*

As well as providing service to the over one-million tourists that will visit the Slade area every year, the playground will provide a united community effort for the county.

Owsley County Forward in the Fifth*Arts education program for children*

Owsley County Forward in the Fifth will use their grant to bring theater performances and workshops to students in the county. The group will also supplement art supplies in the schools.

Perry County Black Mountain Improvement Association*Micro-city government youth project*

As part of the micro-city government youth project, young people will learn how local government works by shadowing an elected official. In addition, youths will participate in career and entrepreneurial development and will organize recreational activities.

Perry County Humane Society*Offer pet care/humane education program to school children*

Matching their methods with KERA goals, Humane Society volunteers will teach children about proper pet care. The group will also offer a spay/neuter assistance program.

Project Worth and Outreach Program (Menifee County)*Offer a self-help job awareness program*

Participants in Project Worth's program will work with volunteer tutors to increase literacy levels, enhance GED scores and develop job skills. The program will also feature trips to area businesses and a speakers bureau.

Russell County Arts Council*Arts education enhancement*

The Russell County Arts Council will develop drama clubs in each school system in order to bring students into the arts experience. Each drama club will write, produce, direct, costume, set, publicize and manage an original production. Performing arts groups from outside the county will provide productions and theater workshops.

Somerset-Pulaski County Humane Society*Education campaign for pet adoption and animal control*

Working through local civic clubs and local media to reach adults and through the schools to reach children, the Somerset-Pulaski County Humane Society will attempt to educate local citizens about the problems with abandoned pets. The humane society will promote adoption and spay/neuter programs.

Entrepreneurial networks:

Building a business culture of trust

by Diane Browning

When asked to write about my work with women entrepreneurs, what comes to mind is not smart marketing strategy or the woman who keeps great financial records. I think of something not readily associated with business development. I think of trust—what it takes to build it, sustain it and spread it.

In a recent paper on networking firms, (Malecki and Tootle, *Networks of Small Manufacturers in the USA: Creating Embeddedness*, 1995) the researchers cited that “among firms, trust permits informal, mutually obligational relationships to function, in contrast to formal, arms-length relationships. One of the major functions of networks-as-policy is to encourage trust-based interactions among firms which have had little previous contact, or contact only as competitors.”

In our competitive business culture, trust doesn't come naturally. I don't see trust as something that women necessarily do better than men, but since most new microenterprises are started by women who are relatively new to business, there may be more opportunity for this group to shift our business culture. Such is the vision that inspires the work of Appalachian By Design (ABD).

My first belief, and the core of my work as President of ABD, is that people need to work together for business success. The idea of the Lone Ranger, the talented

“do-it-all” small business owner is an entrepreneurial fallacy.

Indeed, the need for the small business to reach out and form working relations with other people is much greater than for larger companies. That is why promoting networks of small businesses has become an important economic development strategy. My own experience is that networks are profitable and reap long lasting results only when a high degree of trust has been developed.

Developing a high degree of trust presents challenges in itself. Trust is something that we cannot just turn on and off. It should not be awarded to anyone and everyone. To make matters worse, this intangible variable is very hard to cultivate in a culture like ours that discourages it in institutions.

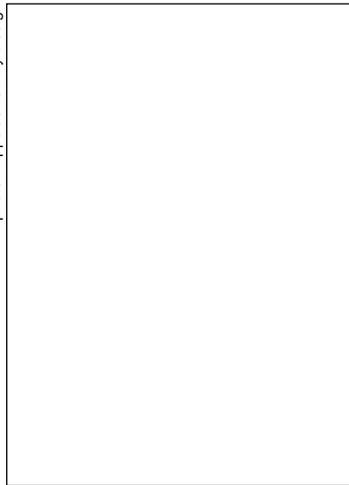
So why should entrepreneurs consider networking as a viable option for a successful business? That question is perhaps best answered by examples of some working networks.

Networks exist for a score of purposes: for market intelligence, for joint promotion, for sharing costs and for bringing together complementary skills. Despite the reason for networking, trust lies at the core of successful collaboration.

Appalachian By Design

Appalachian By Design is an example of a network whose purpose is to aggregate production. At ABD we are constantly working to cultivate mutual trust with two groups—our network of knitters and our network of customers.

photo: Appalachian By Design



Entrepreneur Yvette Shafer operates her business out of her home through the Appalachian By Design knitting network.

Diane Browning is the director of Appalachian By Design, Inc., a nonprofit business training and development organization that works mainly with women entrepreneurs in Appalachia. Diane's work emphasizes the value of networking for successful entrepreneurs and small business development. For more information on Appalachian By Design, see page 10.

Since 1992, we have been working with machine knitters to produce fine sweaters for the apparel industry. What began with eight knitters has grown to a network of over 50 rural women who knit in their homes all over the mountains.

Our networking strategy of grouping knitters' production allows them to participate in a layer of the market they couldn't enter alone. ABD is able to secure large orders, generally for no less than 200 units.

To manage this form of distributed production, we have worked hard at setting up systems and processes infused with an implicit trust that we will do the best we can and the knitters will do the same. It has not been easy.

We have a steering committee of knitters that meet quarterly to review issues that affect them, such as pricing, quality, distribution of orders and market outlook. The steering committee gets a close look at the operation, then communicates back to the knitters who must trust their views.

In turn, we must trust the knitters to deliver a quality knit product on time, and if they cannot, for whatever reason, to give us plenty of notice. We have purchase orders with delivery dates, and many guidelines we have jointly developed. But, in the end the network functions on the faith that we will each do the best we can.

Then there is the trust we need to develop with the companies who purchase knitwear. We have learned that there are companies we like doing business with, with whom we can negotiate and work out problems. These companies are generally those with whom we have a strong sense of mutual trust.

Appalachian Flower Network

Bonnie Tatterson of the Center for Economic Options in Charleston, WV, has worked at developing the Appalachian Flower Network, a group of West Virginians who produce dried flowers. They have held conferences, exhibitions and have done some joint marketing.

Reflecting on the challenges of developing the network, Bonnie cites our traditional business climate as an inhibitor. She says that "encouraging collaboration within a group that is familiar only with competition requires unrelenting education and demonstration of successful models, which are scarce and seem foreign to many folks."

While Bonnie sees business collaboration as essential for small rural businesses operating in today's economy, she believes "the level of trust or regulation that must exist to insure its feasibility will only develop over time."

Rivera Resources, Inc.

Candis Rivera has developed her three-year-old business, Rivera Resources, Inc., a computer systems consulting service, in Bridgeport, WV, through determined networking. She tells everyone she meets what she does, gives them a business card and "goes to lots of rubber chicken dinners."

Among many business associations, she joined the West Virginia High Technology Consortium to make contacts and nurture her business reputation. The Consortium recently awarded her the Best Originating Business Award.

Candis said she will enter formal business relations with other people if she "can bring a skill that they don't have." She does so very carefully, insuring that she knows all the players and their agendas. Currently, she is bidding on a NASA contract with eight other companies. Before she enters these "teaming" arrangements, there are signed non-disclosure and exclusivity agreements, alas, essential legal documents in operating on that level of business. Candis notes trust as very important and has learned to follow "her gut feelings" before joining a team.



photo: Appalachian By Design

Through networks like Appalachian By Design, women entrepreneurs are able to market goods like this decorative pillow to a wider area.

Mountain Women's Exchange: a lesson in nonprofit management

by Nancy Grieve, Campbell County, TN

As a member of the Campbell County, Tennessee Brushy Fork team, Nancy Grieve learned of the Mountain Women's Exchange. She went on to serve on the board of the organization for four years. Below, she writes of her experience serving with this predominately female organization.

Nancy is currently active as a 4-H volunteer leader and serves on the Tennessee State 4-H Volunteer Leader Committee. She also volunteers as secretary of the steering committee for Friends of the LaFollette Library, is a member of the Garden Club and serves with Habitat for Humanity.

I first heard of the Mountain Women's Exchange in Jellico, Tennessee, at a Brushy Fork Leadership Workshop in 1989. Three of the women in our county group were staff members and they spoke of their work with the Exchange.

The Mountain Women's Exchange was founded in 1978, with the premise "to build strong communities in East Tennessee and Eastern Kentucky, by empowering the people within, to provide opportunities for employment and education." To address this mission, the Exchange offers many programs and educational opportunities.

"The Read to Lead" program is an adult literacy class in which students can receive a GED. Five hundred adults in the Jellico area have earned diplomas through this program.

The Rural Communities Education Cooperative is a partnership with Carson-Newman College, which provides low income adults the opportunity to earn their college degree within the level of available financial aid through state and federal venues. Twenty-two adults have earned degrees through the cooperative.

The Jellico Children's Theater is an exciting program for young

people to learn dramatic arts. These young thespians write, direct, and perform their own productions. They deal with issues such as teen pregnancy, AIDS and drug abuse. In addition to these programs, the Exchange offers a summer tutoring program, a food pantry, and other projects.

A year after I met the staff members of the Mountain Women's Exchange, I was asked to serve on the board of the organization. A year after that, I was elected board chairperson, and held the position for three years.

My responsibilities as board chairperson varied. I chaired meetings, participated in fundraisers, such as call-a-thons and bazaars, and met with other non-profit chairpersons to see how they approached fundraising.

Fundraising was always a challenge. Because the Mountain Women's Exchange is a non-profit organization, funding must come from donations and corporate and foundation grants. Progress reports on grant work are a high priority and are always on the agenda for board meetings.

The hardest part of serving on the board was making decisions to downsize staff when funding was low. Often, the staff members

worked without pay during these lean times. I gained a great respect for these women for their dedication.

One of the most important principles I learned was that even a non-profit organization must be operated like a business, because there are bills to be paid, ongoing operating expenses, even when funds were low. I found that the women didn't always want to think through the financial feasibility of a given project because they cared deeply about the people the Exchange serves.

All in all, it was a pleasure to serve on the board of the Mountain Women's Exchange. I gained leadership experience, decision-making skills, and learned to work with other board members. I learned that sometimes the best solution in problem solving was compromise. Although there were the expected disagreements, I found new friends on the staff and board of the Exchange.

The Mountain Women's Exchange remains a source of help to the people it serves, and I hope that I, in some small way, helped people to gain the skills and education they needed to be responsible members of society.



On involving diverse groups in community efforts

Participants in the recent Teamwork for Tomorrow workshops spent one session mocassin-walk-ing—that is, stepping into the shoes of a hard-to-reach population to figure out what might be the best way to get them involved. Four groups were noted as particularly hard to reach. We thought our readers might find these hints helpful in recruiting these and other individuals for their community efforts.

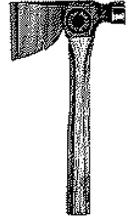
Elected officials

Ways to get me to your meeting:

- A personal invitation, visit or a phone call.
- Keep me informed of your issue.
- Send me copies of the minutes and agenda.
- Ask me for my input.
- Show me how the issue affects my district.

What you'll miss if I don't come:

- My advice/insight into local government.
- My knowledge of federal and state grants.
- Awareness of my stand on the issue and opportunity to hold me accountable for my stand.
- My support on the issue and my representation to other officials.



Youth

Ways to get me to your meeting:

- A personal invitation, visit or a phone call.
- Provide snacks/pizza.
- Invite my friends also.
- Make it fun; give me fun assignments.
- Involve me through my school.

What you'll miss if I don't come:

- A chance to develop a leader.
- My enthusiasm and fresh ideas and opinions.
- A chance to spread the word to other young people.
- My energetic contribution to your projects.

Low income people

Ways to get me to your meeting:

- A personal invitation, visit or phone call.
- Make me feel accepted, sincerely welcome me.
- Provide child care.
- Pair me up with someone I know who can offer moral support.
- Offer me a ride or hold the meeting in a close, convenient location.

What you'll miss if I don't come:

- My perspective on how to manage on a tight budget.
- A chance to change the stereotype image that the poor are dirty and uneducated.
- An idea of what low income people really need.
- A hard-working dedicated committee member.

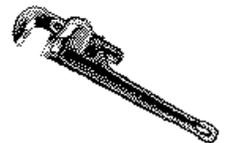
Senior citizens

Ways to get me to your meeting:

- A personal invitation, visit or phone call.
- Provide transportation.
- Advertise your meeting at places I normally go.
- Promote the meeting as a way to be socially active.
- Meet in a handicapped accessible location.

What you'll miss if I don't come:

- My time for volunteer service.
- My experience, talent and knowledge.
- My knowledge of the special needs of seniors.
- My contacts in the community.
- My knowledge of the community's history.



Appalachian women's programs

Business

Appalachian By Design

Appalachian By Design (ABD) finds markets and provides training to a network of self-employed women who do handloomed weaving and knitting.

ABD takes orders from national and international companies seeking quality knitting handwork. When an order is secured, the staff notifies the network of artisans. Members choose how much of the order they wish to take on, if any.

The ABD training staff provides training in new skills and techniques required by each order. For women who are just getting started, experienced network members called "lead knitters" provide training on the technical aspects of machine knitting and self-employment and home-based work issues.

The network members are small business owners, who set their own income goals and work schedules. Many work part-time to supplement family income. A few work full-time to generate the sole household income. Members are paid by the piece.

ABD currently serves a network of over 50 women in West Virginia, Pennsylvania and Maryland.

For information, contact Appalachian By Design, 117 East Washington Street, Lewisburg, WV 24901; (304) 647-3455; FAX: (304) 647-3466.

Social issues

Appalachian Women's Alliance

The Appalachian Women's Alliance (AWA) is a network of women from Appalachian communities in Tennessee, Virginia, Kentucky, West Virginia, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Georgia and Ohio. The Alliance was created to mobilize and unify the collective power of Appalachian women to address justice issues for all women.

Members of AWA come from both rural and urban backgrounds. The Alliance seeks individuals who are active in women's issues, who possess some level of leadership skill, and who represent some constituency in their community.

The Alliance sponsors several projects. The Rapid Action Network is a mechanism for information and regional response to women's issues. Regional Gatherings provide a space for women to share resources and information and plan for regional action.

The Alliance also publishes the Appalachian Women's Journal, in which women share their thoughts and experiences in their own words. Members have opportunities to organize regional projects and events, such as rallies, workshops and speak-outs, in cooperation with women from other communities.

For more information, contact the Appalachian Women's Alliance, 1035 Cambria Street, Christiansburg, VA 24073; (703) 381-5033.

Business in West Virginia

The Center for Economic Options

The Center for Economic Options (CEO) is a non-profit organization committed to improving the economic position of West Virginians.

The organization's primary focus is to provide for equal participation of women in economic leadership, community development and gainful employment. CEO has a special commitment to those women who have historically been excluded from these roles.

Building on the heritage and culture of West Virginia, CEO promotes self-respect, self-determination and self-sufficiency. Its programs are designed to meet West Virginian's economic needs and improve the quality of life.

The Center's approach to economic challenges addresses many areas. Programs provide training to enhance workforce development and opportunities. CEO offers technical assistance to entrepreneurs and facilitates access to credit for small business owners.

The Center also encourages and promotes equity in leadership and participation in economic policy development. By creating networks of small business owners, the Center empowers individuals and their businesses to succeed in a challenging economy.

For more information, contact The Center for Economic Options, 601 Delaware Avenue, Charleston, WV 25302; (304) 345-1298; FAX (304) 342-0641.

address many areas

The arts

Kentucky Foundation for Women

The Kentucky Foundation for Women (KFW) was started in 1984 to support women who use the arts for social change. KFW is specifically interested in funding art that displays women's equality regardless of class, age or color.

The foundation supports visual artists, writers, photographers, playwrights, craftswomen, musicians and dancers—any woman artist whose work displays a feminist consciousness. Feminist work demonstrates an awareness of women's lives, histories and perspectives and deals with images pertaining to the imaginative, philosophical, political or daily concerns of women.

In odd-numbered years, the foundation considers proposals for visual and performing arts. In even-number years, proposals are considered for writers, scholars, filmmakers and playwrights.

Applications from writers, playwrights, filmmakers and feminist scholars will be considered in 1996. The deadline for application is October 1.

In addition to grants, the foundation sponsors Hopscotch House, a retreat place for women, and the Wolf Pen Women Writers Colony. The writers colony serves five women writers each June.

For information, contact the Kentucky Foundation for Women, 1215 Heyburn Building, Louisville, KY 40202; (502) 562-0045.

Leadership/job skills

New Opportunity School for Women

Twice a year fourteen women are selected to come to the Berea College campus for a three-week session of the New Opportunity School (NOS). The women share their stories, build self-confidence and become aware of future job and educational opportunities.

They enjoy educational and cultural opportunities through field trips, lectures, and courses in Appalachian literature, writing and computer basics.

The women take home to their communities and families a clear understanding of their personal strengths and a strong sense of direction for their aspirations.

There is no cost for attending the program. Participants should be between the ages of 30 and 55, of low income, have a high school diploma or GED but no college degree, and should demonstrate motivation and eagerness to learn.

The next session will run from June 9-29, 1996. Deadline for applications is April 19, 1996.

In addition to the regular program sessions, the NOS offers the following services: one-on-one career counseling, resume writing, interview coaching, skills identification and training, and job search.

For more information, contact the New Opportunity School for Women, CPO 2276, Berea College, Berea, KY 40404; (606) 986-9341 extension 6676.

Business in Kentucky

Women's Initiative Networking Groups (WINGS)

Organized in 1995, WINGS is the outgrowth of a brainstorm by several Appalachian women who had experienced firsthand the need for an active network to support women entrepreneurs.

Divided into three phases, the WINGS program includes: 1) a personal life assessment which helps women evaluate their ability to be entrepreneurs; 2) entrepreneurial training in skills such as bookkeeping, pricing products, advertising and creating a business plan; and 3) a network system for students who are ready to start their businesses.

Modest start-up financing is offered through Human Economic Appalachian Development Corporation. Finance decisions are made through a peer group lending process. The whole group meets to review business plans and assign funding to those that look most promising.

The network meets monthly. Every six months the program expands to a new area.

The next program will take place in the Madison/Jackson cluster area, which will include Madison, Jackson, Estill, Rockcastle, Lincoln, and Garrard Counties. Fourteen women will be selected to participate.

For more information, contact Jeannie Brewer at the WINGS office, 433 Chestnut Street, Berea, Kentucky 40403; (606) 986-2373.

Courageous Paths: Stories of Nine Appalachian Women

by Jane B. Stephenson

reviewed by Barbara Wade

“It was like a whole new world had opened up”

Courageous Paths: Stories of Nine Appalachian Women by Jane B. Stephenson is a compelling compilation of short autobiographies that depict lives of struggle and hardship but also paths of emergence from daunting situations. A native of Banner Elk, North Carolina, Stephenson has long been acquainted with women like those in

her book, women in difficult circumstances with the tenacity and determination to make positive changes in their lives.

In preparing *Courageous Paths*, Stephenson interviewed numerous Appalachian women who had attended the New Opportunity School for Women. After taping and transcribing the

nine stories in this collection, Stephenson edited them for length but kept the wording of the women themselves. Thereby she retained the rich, individual flavor of their speech and narrative styles.

These women speak vividly, yet with a matter-of-factness that has banished self-pity, about suffering and deprivation that go back for most of them to childhood. Evelyn’s impoverished family lived in abandoned houses, and the children walked to school in the winter without coats. Katie’s mother died when she was

only nine, leaving six of eleven children still at home. When her older sisters left to care for elderly people in their homes, she raised the three younger boys while cooking and keeping house.

These difficult beginnings make the women determined to make better lives for their children. Raised in an alcoholic family with parents who were gone for days and brutalized their children for minor infractions of rules, Crystal was determined always to be available to her children. When they became young adults, she realized they needed to learn independence just as she needed to follow her dream for an education.

Or if they had happy childhoods like Ada, who grew up with memories of laughter and fun in “the little holler called Crawfish,” they want to create a similarly happy family life. It was love for her daughter that finally gave Ada the courage to leave her abusive husband when she realized nothing she could do would make theirs a happy family. “I was getting desperate—I knew I had to survive for my child—I knew I had to make it for her.”

These women are no strangers to injustice and stereotyping from society. When Ada realized her husband was going to kill her one night, she escaped to the police station for an escort to a safe house. She reveals, “One of the city policemen

These nine Appalachian women generously and openly share their stories in the hope that they will encourage other women. As Bea explains, “I want every woman to know that there is a chance for her. . .”

Barbara Wade is an Associate Professor of English at Berea College and is coordinator of the Women’s Studies Department. She has also taught a course in Appalachian literature for the New Opportunity School.

said, 'You know, some women like this.'—and there I was, beat to the point that I couldn't hardly walk up the steps."

To help support her widowed mother and six other children, Evelyn began working night shifts as a truck stop waitress when she was thirteen, while continuing to go to school during the day. Instead of applauding her fortitude, her principal delivered an ultimatum: quit her disreputable job or quit school. Realizing she would be unable to help pay family bills without her job, Evelyn quit school to enable her sister to continue.

Beverly also had a negative experience with a school's attitudes towards the poor. Living temporarily in a federal housing project with her daughter Sarah, Beverly was disturbed when her daughter didn't receive a report card. She observed, "When you're in a shelter or housing project, there's a tendency for the school to treat your children as throw-aways."

While their stories reveal amazing strength and determination against obstacles and adversity, several discuss their own mistakes as well as the injustices they have faced—leaving school to marry, falling prey to alcoholism, staying too long in an abusive situation. They also freely credit those who have nudged them towards a fuller self-realization and an attainment of new-found goals.

For Katie it was her boss at a restaurant and a university professor who boosted her self-confidence and created employment and educational opportunities. For Starr it was the Director of Respiratory Therapy at Berea Hospital who helped her get schooling for a new career. For Bea, it was a grown son who offered to stay with her and help with rent when she was being pressured by her husband to leave college and get a job.

All nine women also credit their three weeks at the New Opportunity School for Women at Berea College, where they shared their stories and found they weren't alone. They also attended classes and counselling that helped develop the self-

confidence to strive for long submerged aspirations. As Crystal said, "It was like a whole new world had opened up."

These nine Appalachian women generously and openly share their stories in the hope that they will encourage other women. As Bea explains, "I want every woman to know that there is a chance for her—that they all can take that big step towards changing their lives. It's so critical for them to get encouragement, and it is so important for them if they can just take that big step."

Evelyn offers additional advice: "I've learned that even knowing the frightening possibility of failing, you have to try to move on. Somewhere along the line you have to have confidence in yourself. You can't let other people always manipulate you or blame you or tell you you're worthless. You don't have to believe that—you can prove them wrong."

Even though some family members have resisted their new-found confidence and aspirations, these nine women have continued to strive for a better life. Their recent challenges and triumphs are noted at the end of each story.

Courageous Paths is an important book not only for women who find themselves in similar circumstances but for all of us. In a time when national debate about the plight of the poor has become callous and cynical and programs for the underpaid and poorly educated are being destroyed, these women speak eloquently about the worth and potential of every human being and the vast difference a modest amount of support and encouragement can bring. I will not soon forget their stories and feel privileged to have been invited into their lives.

Courageous Paths: Stories of Nine Appalachian Women is available from the New Opportunity School for Women, CPO 2276, Berea College, Berea, KY 40404; phone (606) 986-9341 extension 6676; FAX (606) 986-5510. All profits go to the New Opportunity School. The cost is \$9.95 plus \$2.00 shipping and handling. Call to inquire about discounts to non-profit organizations.

... these women speak eloquently about the worth and potential of every human being. . .

Talking the talk:

Bridging the gender gap in communication



The patterns of communication that are different for men and women can create challenges in communication on many levels, professional and personal. Dr. Deborah Tannen sheds some light on these differences in interpersonal relations in her book *You Just Don't Understand*. **Although saying all men behave this way or all women inter-relate another way would be generalization**, Tannen identifies several basic communication traits that appear to be gender based. We thought some of her observations might help with recognizing these gender differences, and with adjusting to and learning from different communication styles.

First, a test. Imagine you overhear the following conversation between a couple:

What you hear:

Woman: So, haven't you noticed my new haircut?

Man: Yes, it's much shorter than it's ever been.

Woman: You don't like it, then? Is that why you haven't said anything about it?!

Man: (looks surprised) It looks great! I just meant that it's shorter than I've ever seen it, but I do like it.

Woman: (doesn't sound convinced) Oh.

What he interprets:

Woman: *Say something to indicate you've noticed my new haircut.*

Man: *Here's a fact:* Yes, it's much shorter than it's ever been.

Woman: (*seems irrational to him*) You don't like it, then? Is that why you haven't said anything about it?!

Man: It looks great! I just meant that it's shorter than I've ever seen it, but I do like it.

Woman: Oh. *Well, I just don't want to talk about it anymore.*

What she interprets:

Woman: *So, do you like my new haircut?*

Man: *I think it is too short, but I don't want to say that directly.*

Woman: You don't like it, then? Is that why you haven't said anything about it?! (*to avoid confronting me*)

Man: It looks great! *Well, now I've upset you, so I'd better make amends.*

Woman: Oh. *You really don't like it, but you won't admit it now.*

Can the same words really sound so different to different people? What affects the interpretation of a simple word? Is the woman being irrational or is the man being insensitive?

Tannen suggests that there is a cultural gap between men and women as they try to communicate. The gap starts when we are children learning to interact in situations. As we continue to grow and learn socially, the gap may be reinforced until men and women are truly communicating across cultures.

Test what you know about the communication game by answering the questions below. The answers to these and to some of the differences in men's and women's communication styles are on page 15.

Conversation quiz

True or False:

1. Women, more often than men, tend to offer advice to a speaker expressing troubles.
2. Men use many interactive listening responses to confirm they understand a speaker's message.
3. When settling disputes, women tend to avoid direct confrontation.
4. In mixed gender conversation, women interrupt men more often and talk for longer periods of time.
5. In general, men and women tend to be equally comfortable speaking in public.
6. A woman often undermines her credibility by using disclaimers like "I'm no expert, but. . ."
7. When a man asks a question, a woman should look for the underlying meaning of his message.
8. Men are less comfortable than women in taking the position of listener.

Talking the talk:

Answers to the conversation quiz on page 14

1. False. In conversation, women tend to stress understanding and connection with the speaker by identifying with the problem. It is men who tend to offer advice because they interpret the expression of a problem as a request for action. Women may find themselves on the receiving end of unwanted advice when they were expecting only support and confirmation of a problem. Women find comfort in sharing and connecting with their problems, even if no solution is presented. Men may not understand why a woman just wants to talk about a problem without actively seeking a solution.

2. False. In general, men offer few listening responses, reserving them mainly to express agreement with the speaker. Women, to establish a sense of commonality, use listening responses and agreement words often as a way to say “I know where you’re coming from. I understand”.

3. True. In general, women see conflict as a threat to connection because conflict can lead to isolation. With their focus on intimacy, women feel it is crucial to be liked by their peers. When dealing with conflict or criticism, women tend to do so indirectly. Men don’t tend to avoid confrontation because they see conflict as necessary for negotiating status in a relationship. They look for respect from their peers rather than connection to their peers.

4. False. In a mixed gender conversation, men tend to talk more and for longer periods of time than women. Men also interrupt other speakers more often. Men are not necessarily more rude than women, but men view communication itself as a sort of contest, an exhibition of skills and knowledge.

5. False. Men tend to be more comfortable speaking in public situations where they can provide information in a form of report-talk, a way to exhibit their skills and knowledge. In fact, men may be more comfortable speaking in a public situation than in a private one. In general, women find it easier to talk in private, where one can establish connections through rapport-talk. Report-talk lends to the masculine pattern of independence and self-reliance, while rapport-talk supports the feminine pattern of intimacy and interdependence.

6. True. Because “bragging” poses a threat to connection with others, women tend to downplay their knowledge and expertise. Disclaimers like “I’m no expert, but. . .” and “This is just my opinion. . .” serve as a link between expertise and intimacy. However, these same phrases tend to undermine a woman speaker’s credibility and she may find herself not being taken seriously. Women also tend to use tag questions to end statements, such as “It’s a nice day, isn’t it?”, as if to validate an obvious fact.

7. False. Men in conversation focus on the *message* level of communication, where they can exchange concrete information and facts. Women, on the other hand, focus on the *relationship* level of communication, where they can establish a sense of what the other person feels.

8. True. Men tend to see conversation as a contest, in which the listener is usually subordinate. The speaker tries to achieve or maintain the upper hand, many times by playing devil's advocate. Women see taking the position of listener as a give and take situation. In their minds conversation is a negotiation for closeness in which there is equality in listening *and* in being listened to.

Source for communication and gender quiz answers is *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation* by Deborah Tannen, Ph.D., Ballantine Books, New York, 1990. 330 pages. \$12.00.

Gender differences in communication can be a controversial issue. What trends do you see in your daily interactions? Is the above article an accurate description of communication habits of women and men? *Mountain Promise* invites your response to this and other articles. Look for the mailing address on page 3.

1996 Leadership Development Program

Planning is underway for the 1996 cycle of the Brushy Fork Leadership Development Program. Thanks to funding from the Appalachian Regional Commission, Brushy Fork will once again be able to include one county from each of Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia.

Staff are currently in the process of selecting the counties for the cycle, which will run from September 26, 1996 to April 5, 1997.

1995-96 annual campaign

Brushy Fork kicked off its fourth annual campaign in 1995. Our appreciation goes to the following individuals for their contributions to our programs.

John Cleveland
Shirley Cox
Deborah Garrett
Bobbie Hauskins
Robert E. Hille

Tim and Carol Lamm
John M. Manchester
Robert G. and Liz Menefee
Tommy Mullins
Charolette Sweet
John C. Willis

from the calendar

East Kentucky Leadership Conference April 26-27, 1996

The ninth annual East Kentucky Leadership Conference will be held on the campus of Hazard Community College. Sessions will include a variety of topics including women's issues, entrepreneurs, the environment, economic development, leadership development and career planning. The program also includes an intensive session on telecommunications.

For more information or to register, contact Annette Kern, Kentucky River Area Development District, 381 Perry County Park Road, Hazard, KY 41701; (606) 436-3158. The registration fee is \$25.

Berea College Appalachian Center Summer Seminar June 10-28, 1996

This year's summer seminar "Politics in the Southern Mountains", will cover the development of partisan politics in Appalachia from the 1830s to the 1990s. Local, regional, state and national issues and personalities will be examined. Contemporary regional political figures and scholars will participate in the sessions.

For more information, contact the Appalachian Center, CPO 2336, Berea College, Berea, KY 40404; (606) 986-9341 extension 5140.

**Brushy Fork Institute
Berea College CPO 35
Berea, KY 40404
606 986-9341 ext. 6838**

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