

Patchwork Income

Coalition for Jobs and the Environment

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About the Author

The Coalition for Jobs and the Environment (CJE) is made up of groups and individuals working for environmental quality and economic justice in northeast Tennessee and southwest Virginia. The office for CJE is located in Abingdon, Virginia.

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Abstract

How can rural communities progress within global economic pressures? How can we better understand the forces leading to economic growth in today's rural communities? The Coalition for Jobs and the Environment (CJE) conducted research to explore ways to increase economic activities that combine natural resource use with environmental stewardship.

This study identifies alternatives to recruiting large corporations and industries for rural economic development. Many jobs that work well in rural areas are not the ones that immediately come to mind. The project compiled reproducible models of income-producing activities that provide a livelihood whereby people can stay in and preserve their rural communities. This traditional Appalachian approach to livelihood circumvents the trap of securing out-of-area mega-employers with no ties to the local communities. The study proposes to strengthen rural communities by developing native skills and entrepreneurship within a culture that respects the traditional lifestyle of the mountains. Furthermore, CJE affirms the ingenuity of residents who patch together many activities to produce a sustainable income while preserving and using the abundant natural resources.

Project Goals

Phase One: Conduct the Study

The project studied the ways and means people in the region are successfully patching and partnering various activities that collectively provide adequate income. The study identified skills needed, time and capital requirements, and market niches. The report also includes a list of local resources for education, skill development, business management, financial resources, and marketing. The information compiled includes several key sectors: technology; agriculture, food, greenhouse, and forest products; services; nature and heritage tourism; sewing; and arts and crafts.

Phase Two: Disseminate the Results

The research was designed to both enhance entrepreneurial/business development *and* support innovative community change. The researchers set out to create a tool to augment

existing resources and technical assistance to communities as they launch their visions. The tool provides examples of workable alternative employment opportunities for which skill training is readily available. The tool will provide information to the economic renewal communities and also be disseminated through community fairs and conferences and marketed to CJE members.

CJE will go to local rural communities and hold an event that will provide the needed information for interested parties. The outcome will be that local rural residents will have the model and information to implement and get support to successfully initiate sustainable, income-producing activities. Partnerships will be explored such as educational institutions, centers for business and economic development, and small business development programs such as Appalmade and BusinesStart. CJE has been seeking financial support to secure the resources to disburse information throughout the region. CJE has grant applications pending with Abelard-East Foundation and the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation.

Background Information

Who is the Coalition for Jobs and the Environment? Deep in the heart of Central Appalachia in the 1980's, isolated groups of local citizens organized in response to environmental crises. Across the mountains of northeast Tennessee and southwest Virginia, residents combated acid mine drainage, private landfills, wafer-board mills, and similar threats to nature. After the crises which catalyzed various grassroots citizens' groups had passed, many organizations remained intact to address future challenges in the region. Grassroots leaders grew to learn about each other through personal connections and local media. Individuals and groups began to focus on creating environmentally-friendly jobs within local communities. Several people and organizations formed a network in 1990 to collectively promote environmentally sensitive economic development in the mountain region. The network initially formed under the wing of the Appalachian Peace Education Center and incorporated as an independent organization, Coalition for Jobs and the Environment, Inc. in

1992. In 1995, the IRS awarded 501(c)3 status to the Coalition for Jobs and the Environment. Today's coalition includes 10 member groups and over 500 supporters, primarily low to moderate income residents of Virginia and Tennessee. CJE members nurture grassroots leaders through new awareness and organizing activities. CJE organizes regional citizen activism that promotes environmentally healthy communities through education, networking, and monitoring.

Resident Kim Greer helps illustrate the personal transformation often associated with nurturing grassroots leadership. Kim is a life long resident of Dante, Virginia, a small, isolated coal mining town. She always wanted to be like her deceased father, who could talk confidently to a roomful of people. When she started participating in CJE's economic renewal project, she said she couldn't talk in public because she was too shy and felt embarrassed. The project provided training on how to prepare agendas, make flip charts, and use interactive tools to facilitate group process, like placing dots on newsprint to indicate preferences. Soon, Kim volunteered to lead community workshops. Kim became the first President of PRIDE, People's Revitalization in Dante's Economy, a new local organization. PRIDE has recruited volunteers to build a shelter, tables and games in the old schoolyard. Kim's participation at an Appalachian Regional Commission workshop led to a \$3,000 grant for the project. Kim is now a confident and effective community leader.

Regina Warren explains, "CJE has been a catalyst for changing the direction of my life. My spirit and soul has always been in harmony and at peace in the Appalachian Mountains. But only through CJE, did I discover that I have a responsibility toward the preservation of the mountains and its resources. Having been introduced to CJE through the Economic Renewal project in Pennington Gap, I began receiving the CJE newsletter and talking with some of the board members about local environmental issues. I attended CJE conferences, and networked with other environmentalists in the region. It soon became apparent that my actions count. I am now an active board member of CJE, the editor of the CJE newsletter, and educated on the environmental impact, both positive and negative, that people and jobs have on our

mountain resources, and I do not hesitate to tell others about what I have learned."

CJE is a membership-based organization. Ten organizations, primarily local groups, are members: Appalachian Office of Justice and Peace, Citizens of Lee Environmental Action Network (CLEAN), Dickenson County Concerned Citizens, Friends of the Clinch and Powell River, St. Charles Development Authority, State of Franklin Sierra Club, Powell Mountain Grotto Club, Clinch Coalition, Devil's Fork Trail Club, and Rural Resources. In addition to organizational members, hundreds of individuals from across the region have joined as CJE members. CJE is a regional effort with a strong local membership base. CJE accomplishments include developing grassroots leaders, building sustainable community development, holding corporations accountable, and changing public policies.

- **Residents become leaders.** CJE organizing increases public awareness, action, leadership and participation in policy decisions. CJE activities include a regional newsletter, an annual award, hikes, forums, roundtable discussions, petitions, rallies, economic renewal projects, demonstrations, research studies, video production, workshops and lawsuits. Over 500 households subscribe annually to *CJE News*. CJE's 1999 Real Forest Health Conference attracted over 100 participants. Residents working through CJE have launched new nonprofit organizations, including People's Revitalization in Dante's Economy (PRIDE), Appalachian Sustainable Development, and Virginia Forest Watch. CJE established the annual Arthur Smith Award in 1990 to honor long-term leaders that inspire and empower others to work for social justice, economic progress, and environmental soundness in their own communities.
- **New enterprises, like Ruby's Restaurant and Java Jen's Coffee House and Art Gallery, emerge in small, rural communities to help bring about local economic renewal.** CJE coordinated a three-year rural economic renewal project involving four impoverished communities with populations under 5,000. CJE spurred town meetings and workshops.

Over 250 residents participated in the project. Participants launched new businesses, strengthened existing enterprises, established new local grassroots community organizations, renewed community pride, increased activism, and continue on-going endeavors. CJE also helped study, write, and distribute a fact sheet series on the economic potential in this region for non-timber forest products, including vines, medicinal and herbal plants, and edible fruits, berries, nuts and mushrooms.

- **The Commonwealth of Virginia and the United States turns the tide on a coal company which had flagrantly abused people and ignored the environmental protection laws for years.** CJE volunteers helped organize citizens and recruited an expert volunteer attorney to hold the Lone Mountain Coal Company accountable for two blackwater spills which contaminated miles of Virginia streams. In 1998, CJE filed an intent to sue which led to state intervention. In 1999, both Virginia and the United States took action against Lone Mountain for violations of the Clean Water Act. A U.S. District Court judge ordered the company to pay \$1.5 million in connection with the two spills. Lone Mountain agreed to pay Virginia an additional \$1.4 million. The federal penalties and state fines will pay for water and sewer improvements in St. Charles, the poorest town in the poorest county of Virginia.
- **Virginia passes legislation to study the environmental and economic impact of the chip mill industry.** CJE helped organize grassroots action across the state around forest issues. In conjunction with the Southern Appalachian Forest Coalition and others, CJE helped create a statewide Virginia Forest Watch group that recently incorporated. A 1999 CJE newsletter issue focused on chip mills. CJE reprinted the issue to meet demand for an extra 300 copies. Virginia legislators used the publication as an educational tool. The statewide action and the chip mill issue were instrumental in passage of the Virginia legislation for a chip mill study.

- **The U.S. Forest Service imposes a temporary moratorium on road building in roadless areas of the Jefferson and many other national forests.** Coalitions of grassroots groups, like CJE, are impacting public policy to better protect the national forests. In 1999, CJE worked with The Wilderness Society and 32 other citizens groups throughout Virginia to analyze and select areas in the Jefferson National Forest which merit special protection. The group released a report calling for permanent protection from logging and road building of 67 wild areas, *Virginia's Mountain Treasures*, comprising 276,000 acres of national forest. Groups are working to ensure informed citizen participation in the upcoming Jefferson National Forest management plan.

Research Approach

In 1999, the Coalition for Jobs and the Environment (CJE) conducted research to explore ways to increase economic activities that combine natural resource use with environmental stewardship. This study identifies alternatives to recruiting large corporations and industries for rural economic development. Many jobs that work well in rural areas are not the ones that immediately come to mind. The project compiled reproducible models of income-producing activities that provide a livelihood whereby people can stay in and preserve their rural communities. This traditional Appalachian approach to livelihood circumvents the trap of securing out-of-area mega-employers with no ties to the local communities. The study proposes to strengthen rural communities by developing native skills and entrepreneurship within a culture that respects the traditional lifestyle of the mountains. Furthermore, the study affirms the ingenuity of residents who patch together many activities to produce a sustainable income while preserving and using the abundant natural resources.

CJE located and interviewed rural residents who are successfully meeting their economic needs by patchworking or through informal bartering partnerships with neighbors. The project documented how each person has developed sustainable work and describes the

work in a way that others can replicate in their households or communities. Interviews compiled information regarding estimates and time requirements for production, service, and marketing. The geographical areas researched were areas similar to the coal fields and timber regions in southwest Virginia and northeast Tennessee.

CJE developed an interview instrument that allowed for a comfort level that facilitated a free flow of communication between the interviewer and the interviewee. The instrument provided the components of particular specifics CJE sought, including other sources of household income, resource capital, and skills identification. CJE approached entrepreneurs in Tennessee, Virginia, North Carolina, and Kentucky. The people interviewed have followed the rural tradition of patchworking many pieces to accomplish a sustainable family income.

Sectors Studied

The study provided information about several business sectors, including technology, agriculture and forestry, services, nature and heritage tourism, sewing, arts and crafts, and food.

The research explored a home-based enterprise available through technology, desktop newsletter publication. Such technology jobs provide services in the community. A similar enterprise provides contract services to conduct group facilitation, write small grants, and research and develop brochures. Several of the people interviewed operated enterprises in the agriculture, forest products, and food sectors. Three of the people interviewed had created their small business growing herbs. One person grows herbs for natural body care products, another grows herbs for medicinal remedies, the third person cultivates just one herb, ginseng. Also within the agriculture sector, one respondent operates an organic farm, growing fruits and vegetables. One person grows perennial flower plants. Another operates a farm which primarily produces goat cheese and other goat milk products. Service sector jobs include providing a range of personal services, such as pet sitting, house sitting, house painting, mowing lawns, and cleaning houses. Several of the people interviewed provide nature tourism services. These services include instructing and guiding fly fishers, bike rental and shuttle services, and operating a fairly remote inn. One

person interviewed operates a retail store that supports nature tourism selling fishing flies. One respondent earns extra cash through nature photography, making photo cards. One respondent operates a home tailoring business, providing sewing and alteration services. One entrepreneur provides yoga classes. Another entrepreneur raises goats, rabbits, and sheep for their wool, which is used to create hats, collars, shawls, and a few other crafts. Other craft enterprises include producing handmade wood products, and operating a craft consignment store. One respondent operates a home-based business selling environmentally friendly personal care and household products.

The respondents provided information in seven major areas: background information on the enterprise and sector; personal history and skills; facilities, equipment, and operations; labor and time; markets and customers; income; and reflections. The report will first explore the skills needed for patchworking income activities and how such skills can be obtained within the region. Second, the report will provide information about time requirements for these small enterprises and how the activities fit in an overall strategy that includes other income sources. The results also provide information on the capital requirements, assets and equipment needed to launch a small enterprise. In addition, the report provides data on the market niches developed and potential for market expansion.

Skill Needed

- ❖ Amy developed professional skills through a college education and career experience. Her services require computer, writing, editing, graphic and layout skills. Amy had majored in journalism in college and subsequently worked for newspapers and a travel magazine. Computer technology skills are available in the region through the community college system.
- ❖ Becky developed extensive skills in developing natural body care products. She studied environmental health science in college and maintained a long-term interest in culinary herbs. Becky attended herbal workshops, joined an herb club and an herb association, and completed her own research to educate herself on the therapeutic uses and health benefits of herbs. These

educational opportunities were available in Becky's region and likely operate to varying degrees around the area. The internet also provides opportunities to learn about herbs and natural body care product development. Becky reported that the most important attribute for success in natural health care products is having an intimate and intense knowledge of what herbs can be used for and finally, how to process them into an end product.

- ❖ Eileen developed writing skills and had some training in grant writing, group facilitation, and mediation/ negotiation. Eileen's work with non-profit organizations enabled her to hone these specialized skills over the years.
 - ❖ Sharon became interested in woodworking through her late husband who had learned the trade through reading books and taking a course by mail. Sharon learned to operate a jigsaw, bandsaw, skillsaw, multiple sanders, drill, and radial armsaw.
 - ❖ Sharon was able to develop the personal contacts with crafters necessary for starting a consignment craft shop through her participation in a craft co-operative.
 - ❖ Syl developed his knowledge of ginseng production by experimenting with different planting methods in different types of forest. He started to note trends in the plants' growth under these different conditions. Syl reported that successful ginseng cultivation requires extensive knowledge. Ginseng grows best only in certain forest types and is best suited to particular terrain features. Growers need to know when to plant, how to plant, when to harvest, and how to harvest. Syl believes that the best indicator for successful planting sites is a predominance of sugar and red maple trees. These trees are often located where there are calcium and limestone in the soil, which are important to the growth of ginseng. He also believes that areas with 60-80% shade are the best for planting, as well as having a 40% slope. He cautions that areas with much pine usually do not grow ginseng well. Published data on ginseng cultivation exists
- to help answer questions and much research is in progress.
 - ❖ Teresa became interested in sewing when she was nine years old. People remarked how good at it she was and this encouragement led her to continue this activity throughout her life. She had been working for a sewing company for many years before opening her own sewing and alterations enterprise. Developing sewing skills requires hands on learning and lots of practice. Another skill requirement is an intimate familiarity with sewing materials. It takes years of experience to become really proficient at sewing and alterations.
 - ❖ Sandra took a class to get started in spinning wool. She then developed extensive hands on learning to really become proficient. She later started raising mohair goats, angora rabbits, and sheep to provide the materials necessary for her craft.
 - ❖ Phoebe's bike rental and shuttle business required little or no formal education. Two main attributes required are being an avid bike rider who loves the outdoors and the ability to deal with a wide variety of people on a continuous basis. One should also be fairly well organized to coordinate the shuttle service, equipment rentals and maintenance, and deal with multiple customers simultaneously.
 - ❖ Pat and Alicia wished to be self-supporting in as many aspects of their lives as possible. They learned primarily through hands-on practice, trial and error. Over the years they have tried an wide variety of pursuits to achieve self-sufficiency: raising goats and making cheese, butter, and yogurt, raising pigs, cattle, chickens (for eggs and meat), border collies, shitake mushrooms, making quilts, soap, crafts, apple butter, raising and selling vegetables, and even running a bed and breakfast out of their home. Today they concentrate mostly on the goats and processing the milk into cheese, butter, and yogurt.
 - ❖ Elmer developed many of the skills necessary to operate an inn and restaurant

through hands-on experience. Some of the personal attributes for success in this type of business include enjoying the provision of hospitality and meeting and engaging oneself with new people. The proprietor must be a good small business administrator and become proficient in such skills as inventory management, managing a small staff, and knowing how to promote the business. With the meal portion of the business, one needs to be able to develop nutritious, health, and tasty food, which often means hiring someone full-time to cook and manage the restaurant side of the business.

- ❖ Dana began developing skills in providing a variety of personal services when an owner of a rental unit who was renovating the place let Dana stay there for free in return for cooking, cleaning, and doing some of the odd jobs. Dana gradually moved from doing mostly odd jobs to doing both house and pet sitting. Dana also mows lawns, does pet vaccinating and grooming, cleans houses, and paints houses. The most important requirements for house and pet sitting are trust and dependability.
- ❖ Cathy developed the skills required to operate an organic farm primarily through an apprenticeship in eco-horticulture. Much of her learning was hands on. Although few formal apprenticeship opportunities exist in the region, residents can pursue similar hands on experience by working for an organic farmer, perhaps bartering services for new knowledge and a portion of the produce cultivated. Several non-profit organizations across the region also provide training and technical assistance in organic farming techniques.
- ❖ Bruce reported that providing guide services for fly-fishing requires years of experience in the sport. Bruce developed his skills because fly-fishing was a passionate hobby for him for many years. This type of fishing can be somewhat complicated, especially to a beginner. The easiest way to develop fly-fishing skills is to be accompanied on the fishing excursion by an experienced fly fisherman. For the fly-fishing guide services,

having unique in-depth knowledge with the ability to instruct effectively, as well as having a pleasant personality are considered essential for success. Bruce's former professional career also helped him with the customer relation's skills.

- ❖ Anne became interested in herbal medicine and was able to study with a master herbalist. Anne developed her interest in herbal tradition, eventually turning her hobby into a new career. One of the main requirements for this type of work is an intimate familiarity with herbal medicine. Although Anne had some formal training in this field, she believes most of it can be learned from reading books on the subject and attending workshops. Anne emphasized that a sound business plan enables an entrepreneur to determine an effective pricing system and is as important as actual production development.

Time and Other Income Sources

- ❖ Time commitments are somewhat flexible for Amy, depending entirely on how much work she desires to take on. Her home-based newsletter publication business provides all the business that she wants until her family commitments are more flexible. Amy currently works around three nights a week, between 15-20 hours. Amy also teaches one class in composition and literature at a local community college. Her husband, an elementary school principal, works full-time.
- ❖ Cathy normally works on her organic farm about 50 hours a week from April to September. Working hours are normally from 7-11 a.m. with a three or four hour break at mid-day, resuming work at 2 or 3 p.m. and working for another four hours. These hours are somewhat flexible though, and this schedule is normally followed to avoid the hottest portion of the day. Cathy also works part-time jobs in the winter months at other jobs to supplement her income.
- ❖ Phoebe's bike rental and shuttle shop is open five hours a day and by special arrangement on weekdays. On weekends,

- the shop opens from sunrise to sunset. From early spring to late fall, Phoebe has fairly continuous business. During the winter, business is somewhat sporadic depending on the weather and trail conditions. Even during these lows in business, however, bookkeeping, bike repair and other down-time activities are necessary. Phoebe provides part-time work for individuals in the area. Phoebe's husband, daughter, and son-in-law also help with the business. Phoebe's husband has a full-time job outside of the business as well. Phoebe says that a family can make a modest living from this type of business. She charges \$25-30 for an eight-hour rental, \$15-20 for a four-hour rental. The cost for the shuttle (for a group of four) is \$9 per person without a bike rental and \$7 per person with a bike rental.
- ❖ Sharon's consignment craft shop is open from 10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. Monday through Saturday, and 12:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. on Sunday. Sharon is usually in the store on weekdays and has a sister and bookkeeper that come in on the weekends. She also gets help on occasion from her producers. If they help her out in the store for a particular month, she will drop the 20% commission. The store is open all year but most of its business comes between October and late December, as well as the summer tourist season. January and February are the slowest months. Altogether, Sharon works 40 hours or more per week at the consignment shop. Sharon usually spends 10 hours per week or less on her woodworking projects, mostly because of her time constraints with the consignment shop. Although the shop schedule isn't very flexible, her woodworking schedule is. The consignment shop seems to be doing well in the short time it has been in business. On a good weekend, the shop will generate \$2000-3000 in commissions. And although Sharon spends relatively little time with the woodworking pieces, she still generated around \$12,000 in sales last year. Much of this occurs at the weekend festivals she attends in the fall. Sharon's husband also does woodworking.
 - ❖ Anne works about 10-15 hours per week growing and producing the herbal medicine products. She also spends 5 hours per week conducting workshops on herbal medicine and selling products at these workshops. Anne's schedule is very flexible, one reason she decided to give up her previous job.
 - ❖ Pat and Alicia work long hours making goat cheese products on their farm. Much of their income comes in the form of bartering as well as sales from their goat products. They do multiple farm-based activities to support themselves. Pat and Alicia also maintain a very frugal lifestyle.
 - ❖ Syl points out that ginseng generally takes 5-10 years to grow to maturity; however, time investments for planting and harvesting ginseng are minimal. Syl can plant one pound of seeds in under a week and can harvest a pound of roots in a day. Harvesting season is done after the plants have seeded, usually by late August. The harvested roots sell for between \$200-900 per pound depending on the age and quality of the root. Syl reports that in general, cultivated ginseng planted in the wild will command prices similar to wild ginseng if planted correctly.
 - ❖ Bruce's fly-fishing supply store and guide service keep him busy year-round. The combined businesses take up most of Bruce's time. He usually spends three days per week working at the shop and three to four days guiding. There is one employee at the store that works the three days he is guiding. Their two schedules' are somewhat flexible in that they can swap days to work around the times Bruce must guide. He has three additional employees that work as guides. Poor water conditions, however, can adversely effect fishing and cause both the store and guiding business to slow down. Bruce netted around \$15,000 from both businesses in 1998, but this figure would have been much higher if he had chose not to reinvest profits back into the business. He does receive a small amount of income each month from an inheritance. This has enabled him to reinvest profits into the

business instead of taking cash out as income.

- ❖ Elmer's inn, restaurant, garden, and nature tourism services provide a home and livelihood, but keep him pretty busy. Elmer often works 70-80 hours per week during the summer season, but part of this is because he lives where he works. In the summer, he spends about one day per week working on the garden. Gardening time increases dramatically during planting and harvesting. During this busy season, three staff help operate the business. Two of them work full-time throughout the summer and one works part-time during the season's peak. The staff receive free room and board and a modest salary. Elmer also hires instructors to come in and lead weekend workshops, paying them between \$70-125 plus accommodations. About 15-20% of the hikers who stop at the inn work on the farm in exchange for their accommodation costs. The inn sees few guests between late November and mid-March, usually only on weekends. Elmer often uses this time to renovate and make needed repairs. Standard rates are \$18 per night per room. His meal rates are \$5 for breakfast and \$10 for dinner. For his weekend workshops and retreats, Elmer offers a package deal of all expenses for \$150-200.
 - ❖ Teresa works fairly long hours at her sewing and alterations enterprise. She spends about 50-60 hours per week with her business. The work is steady throughout the year, but her schedule from week to week is flexible. This flexibility works out well for Teresa because she can spend time with her daughter and husband, who is a truck driver. Teresa charges the following rates for some of her main alterations: shoulder (\$10), sides (\$10), waist (\$40), hem (\$40), and hem with lace (\$60). She makes roughly \$15,000 per year.
 - ❖ Becky takes about a week to prepare her natural body care products for a festival, which usually brings sales between \$500-\$1000. Most of her sales occur at festivals between May and October. Becky attends two festivals per month, on average.
- Aside from the festival dates, her work schedule is very flexible, letting her take off time to enjoy other pursuits, including spending time with her husband who is a surveyor. Becky makes between \$5,000-\$10,000 per year from the natural body care products. She also works part time in interior design.
- ❖ Dana spends about 15 hours per week, on average, doing odd jobs like house sitting, house painting, and pet grooming. The pet and house sitting services peak in the months of June, July, November, and December. Dana is often busy doing lawn mowing and other odd jobs between April and September. However, she has very little work in January and February. Christmas and other holidays can be very busy, and at other times (January and February) business can be too slow. Dana believes that if she could have located closer to a large town (population 5000 or better), she could have possibly worked full-time for herself. Mostly though, her work schedule is fairly flexible. She makes between \$5000-6000 per year with her 15 hour per week schedule. Dana also works about 30 hours a week for a veterinarian.
 - ❖ Sandra's wool and craft production work is somewhat seasonal. She spends much of the fall and winter spinning while attending craft shows in the fall. Her schedule is very flexible, except when she must attend the shows. The work fits in well with Sandra's schedule as she also works at her husband's service station and can do spinning between customers. Sandra admits that this type of work will never make her rich but she enjoys it thoroughly.
 - ❖ Eileen teaches yoga one night a week, which generally takes three hours with travel. She practices about 3 hours a week. Preparing class routines takes from thirty minutes to 2 hours, depending on how innovative the routine becomes. Eileen earns \$45 for teaching an hour and a half yoga class. Eileen leads several part-time activities to earn a living. Her other income includes part-time work directing a small non-profit organization, cultivating and selling

perennial flower plants in her home garden, making photo cards that she sells through several local retail shops, and operating a home-based business that sells environmentally friendly products manufactured outside the region. Eileen also occasionally does contract work for other non-profit organizations, writing grants, facilitating workshops, and developing brochures. Her part-time job involves three days a week and provides her “base line” salary. Eileen sells flowers in the spring. She spends an hour preparing each tray and another hour delivering 5-6 trays to the nursery. Eileen receives \$22.50-\$45.00 per tray of 15 plants, depending on the type of plant. Eileen also sells plants directly to customers, charging \$2-3 per plant. Eileen spends minimal time through scattered moments shooting nature photos. The time required to make cards and mount the photos are also minimal. Eileen points out that the photo cards offer a work of love, at \$3 per hour, this microenterprise is not a big money maker.

Capital, Equipment & Assets

- ❖ Eileen’s home based business, selling environmentally friendly personal and household products, was not expensive to start. Eileen paid \$29 for a start up kit and about \$200 for a sample kit. Ideally, one should buy a few start up kits to have ready for new customers.
- ❖ Amy’s newsletter publication enterprise requires a computer, specialized software, and a printer. A computer with at least 16 Megabytes capacity was deemed a minimum for this type of work as of the time of this study (1999). A fairly inexpensive layout program (about \$40) is also needed as well as an ink jet printer. Having access to the Internet and email is also helpful. The total investment would likely be under \$2000. Expenses after start-up are fairly minimal.
- ❖ Cathy’s organic farm is fairly typical of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) operations. Equipment for the operation consists of the two draft horses, harnessing equipment and accessories, plow, cultivator, manure spreader, irrigation system, small tractor, brush hog, small truck, and numerous hand tools. In addition to the four acres of land that she rents, she also has access to a shed-type barn that doubles as an office, as well as a portion of a large tobacco barn, and a trailer. She also built a greenhouse on the property to help get plants started earlier in the spring. Expenses for the operation include seeds, seed starting mix, feed for the two horses, row covers, organic amendments, liquid seaweed, chicken manure, soil tests, fuel for the truck and tractor, and miscellaneous repairs.
- ❖ Phoebe has a small parcel of land where her 50’ by 50’ bike/shuttle shop is situated as well as a parking lot for 15 vehicles. She keeps around 50 mountain bikes on hand for rentals, which are repaired and maintained in-house. She also has three vans and trailers to haul customers and the bikes to the top of the mountain. Phoebe built her business up slowly and never really had to borrow a significant amount of money. She admits, however, that if someone had to enter a fairly large market (such as her situation today), they probably would have to borrow to get into the business. Her philosophy is “loans take all the joy out of what you’re doing”.
- ❖ Sharon says that capital requirements to get into either the consignment or woodworking business are moderate. With the consignment business, the first necessity is an attractive and functional building. Sharon uses a small, well-decorated house for this purpose, but a more commercial-type shop would also work. She wishes that she had more space available for displays. A vehicle is also needed to pick up and deliver crafts. With the woodworking business, more equipment is needed. Sharon uses a jigsaw, bandsaw, skillsaw, multiple sanders, drill, and radial armsaw. The woodworking business is done out of her home. She didn’t require any financing, partially because the house she uses for the consignment house was inherited from her grandmother.
- ❖ Anne uses a 50’x30’ greenhouse to grow much of her herbs (as well as her vegetables). She also has a small garden

where she transplants young plants that come from the greenhouse. She uses basic gardening equipment in both the greenhouse and garden with the most elaborate piece of equipment being a rotary tiller. Good soil is a must and Anne supplements the soil with compost that is added in the fall. She believes that most of the mountain soils in this region are suitable for growing herbs with the right additions of supplements. The land was the largest capital asset that had to be purchased, but aside from that, no financing was necessary.

- ❖ Pat and Alicia have a house, full-sized goat barn, and seven acres of rough land to produce their goat milk products.
- ❖ Syl owns 42 acres of hardwood forest. He has planted ginseng on five acres in what he calls prime locations, and on 10 acres in mediocre locations. It is also possible to rent land for the cultivation of the plant but because of its long rotation this can be risky. Seed costs around \$65 a pound and he normally plants about 2.5 pounds per acre. Harvesting tools are minimal and normally consist of a stick with a 5" knife blade or a long trowel, as well as a backpack to transport the roots. A building with good ventilation is necessary to dry the roots properly. Syl uses an 8' by 8' area in an old tobacco barn on his property for this purpose.
- ❖ Bruce's fly fishing supply shop and guide services require some assets. Required assets for the retail portion of the business include the actual shop, which Bruce rents, as well as an adequate inventory of merchandise to stock the store. The major equipment needed for the guiding portions of the business includes a Hyde drift-boat and trailer, a four-wheel drive vehicle with cargo space, and fly-fishing apparel and tackle for up to eight anglers. Bruce initially invested \$30,000 to stock the shop and \$4000 for the guiding business. He did not require financing. He spends an additional \$5,000-8,000 in late winter to restock the store for the spring fishing season.
- ❖ Elmer's inn is 40' by 35' and is situated on one-acre of land. It has two stories and 14 rooms. The kitchen is well equipped and can serve 15-20 people. The other rooms are furnished with Victorian style furniture. He likes to keep the place as simple as possible; there are no TVs, air conditioners, or other items that would take away from the rustic experience. Elmer also keeps a well-stocked library for his guests to use. Two utility buildings store gardening, household and recreational equipment, such as mountain bikes and canoes. Elmer also has a van that he uses to get supplies in Asheville, 60 miles away. Years after he bought the inn, Elmer purchased 15 acres nearby to use as an organic farm that has supplied the inn with most of its food. Elmer required a 10-year mortgage to buy the house, which the previous owners financed. He has required little financing since.
- ❖ Teresa's sewing and alterations business operates out of her home in a modest-sized room. It is best if this space is exclusively devoted to sewing as opposed to multiple uses. This will help to avoid distractions. Teresa has a 14' by 12' room in her house that is used strictly for her business. Teresa uses three types of sewing machines: Regular, serger (cuts the material off and finishes the edges), and blind stitcher (used for hems). These three machines range in cost from \$250 for a used regular machine to \$1500 for a top-of-the-line new blind stitcher. She also uses a vehicle to pick up orders although this might not be a necessity in every case. Other required materials include threads, patterns, scissors, etc., and could be purchased for under \$500 in a commercial operation such as hers. Teresa built up her equipment and supplies slowly and required no financing.
- ❖ Becky develops her natural body care products at home. She does much of her processing in her kitchen, but also has a 12' by 12' workshop where she processes and stores products for sale. Required equipment and raw materials for her operation include large pots and pans, beeswax, olive and other oils, as well as tarps and tables for the festivals she attends. In the past, she has

recycled glass jars to package her products, but she now buys these containers. A computer printer is used for the product labeling but this could also be bought from a printing store. She does require a vehicle to travel to and from shows but says nothing special is needed for this. Becky grows almost all of the herbs she uses in her products but says the garden requirements are minimal. The total cost of all this is fairly minimal and Becky didn't require financing to get started.

- ❖ Dana's odd-job work requires relatively little equipment. She needs a telephone and answering machine, a lawnmower and a pickup (for firewood delivery and trash removal). She generally keeps most of her equipment at her residence.
- ❖ Sandra has five acres for the animals she raises but could probably get by on two for her wool and crafts enterprise. She built a hutch for the rabbits and has a small barn and shed for the goats and sheep. A spinning wheel is the mainstay of her operation and costs around \$300-400 new. She also uses a wool card to dress the wool out before spinning, which costs around \$30. Finally, a vehicle is needed to transport her crafts to the shows she attends. She has a van for this purpose but could get by with a car. She was able to purchase all this without any financing. Most of the crafts she produces come directly from the wool she spins but she does buy wood poles and paint from the store.

Market Niche and Potential

- ❖ Customers for Sandra's wool and craft products come from all walks of life. Her sales are about an even mix between home retail sales and at the craft shows that she attends. She often conducts demonstrations at these shows, which helps draw in customers, and gets paid by the show's sponsors. She finds much of her new business by handing out business cards and by word-of-mouth. Many of her retail sales are to people who originally discovered her at the craft shows.
- ❖ Dana's entire house sitting business is spread word-of-mouth, mostly from friends and clients. Much of the pet sitting business is also spread word-of-mouth but she also gets referrals from the local humane society and from the veterinarian she works for part-time. Dana is located in a fairly remote area and believes that she would have many more customers if she were located closer to a large town or small city.
- ❖ Customers for Becky's natural body care products are mostly women over the age of 30. She finds new customers for her products by teaching workshops, selling at festivals, distributing brochures, participating in a craft co-op, and by word-of-mouth. Becky believes that festivals are her best outlets for sales along with the co-op. However, the co-op charges a commission of 30% for the products (15% if members help out at the co-op). She doesn't believe that location is a major factor in the success of this type of product, but said it helps to be near the co-op (within 75 miles).
- ❖ Teresa sews regularly for one men's shop, two bridal shops, as well as doing alterations for the general public and making outfits for group activities. She finds customers by distributing flyers and business cards, placing ads in the phone book, and word-of-mouth. Of all these avenues, Teresa considers word-of-mouth to be her most important method of finding new customers.
- ❖ Elmer operates his inn/retreat center in a fairly remote area. The nearest urban areas are Asheville and Knoxville, 60 and 170 miles away, respectively. About 30% of his customers are hikers coming off the Appalachian Trail. Another 15-20% come from a 100 mile radius in the local area. The bulk of his customers, however, come from urban areas in the southeast such as Atlanta. Unlike most other inns, most of Elmer's guests have lower to mid range income levels. He finds these people mostly by word-of-mouth, especially with the trail hikers, but also publishes newsletters about the place. Elmer believes that variations of his inn and associated activities could

succeed in other areas that have natural attractions nearby.

- ❖ Customers come to Bruce's fly fishing shop from a three-state area. Many of his customers were initially attracted through his fly fishing schools and community college classes. Other customers are found through his web page on the Internet. However, most of his customers are found word-of-mouth through other satisfied customers. Of utmost importance in attracting a large customer base is having access to prime trout waters.
- ❖ Syl reports that while there are many ginseng buyers throughout Appalachia, the best prices for the root will come from selling directly to Asian buyers or by forming co-ops that can negotiate prices. Co-ops also provide an avenue to share information on the best ways to grow and market the plant as well as learning how to grade the product.
- ❖ Most of Pat and Alicia's business from the goat product sales comes at craft fairs and by people coming out to their small farm. Much of their home business has been found word-of-mouth but there have also been a number of newspaper articles written about the two women, which have helped attract customers. They also get some of their business from Unitarian church members who have become familiar with Pat and Alicia.
- ❖ Customers for Anne's herbal medicine products tend to be college graduates, possibly because they are more likely to be aware of the availability of herbal products. She finds many of her customers at herbal health care clinics and workshops. Most of these customers are not from her local area. Part of the reason may be that her local area is economically depressed. She believes someone could do better at this if they were located in a different area.
- ❖ Much of Sharon's craft consignment shop customers come from word-of-mouth and through fliers that she distributes to local businesses. She also got a break when the state of Kentucky created a craft-map locating and describing craft businesses, and included her consignment shop. She has just recently got an Internet site for the business. Sharon attributes part of the shop's success to the many nearby tourist attractions in the Cumberland Mountains. However, she believes the consignment shop could also be successful in areas with less tourists.
- ❖ Phoebe gets customers in her bike rental/shuttle service from within a three-hour drive on a regular basis and has customers who come from as far away as Nashville, Atlanta, and Richmond. Her customers are usually people who enjoy the outdoors, but may not necessarily be outdoor enthusiasts. With the shuttle service especially, the real outdoor enthusiasts would also ride up the hill. Even so, there are many people who, in small groups or with their families, would like to enjoy the spectacular scenery of the trail without the drudgery of peddling up the steep hill. Phoebe finds most of these people by word-of-mouth and advertises very little. She does distribute and post brochures about the business to local establishments, especially those that tourists frequent.
- ❖ Cathy markets her organic produce mostly by word-of-mouth, as well as boosted by two full-page newspaper articles from local papers. Cathy also has a farmer's market stand in a small, nearby city, which has helped to attract some customers. Most of her customers are professional types (accountants, lawyers, etc.) as well as business owners that have a desire for high-quality produce but don't have time (or possibly experience) to keep gardens.
- ❖ Amy doesn't currently advertise her newsletter publication services — she has all the business that she wants until her family commitments are more flexible. The newsletters she produces were found by leads from friends or by word-of-mouth. She believes, however, that if she did advertise she could generate substantially more business. The business location isn't a critical factor in finding business as the work

is done from home and correspondence can be mailed, faxed, etc.

- ❖ Eileen markets her yoga classes by mailing notices of new classes to past students. Former students suggested a class at the community college. Eileen spoke with the owner of a fitness center to start one class. Eileen makes simple flyers and distributes them at book stores, libraries, massage therapy offices, a health food store, and chiropractic offices — places potential students would visit.

Patterns Explored

The interviewees often displayed a common interest in flexible work schedules. Several interviewees place a high value on retaining the option to be able to control their schedule so that they can pursue family matters, vacation, or mix their various income producing activities. Some interviewees indicated that they had a strong preferential need for flexibility to provide mental and physical variety to their lives.

Several of the entrepreneurs developed professional skills through education and hands-on experience over a long period of time. Others entered a totally new career sector with little or no training and experience. Many of the people interviewed reported a major life change that led them to this type of livelihood, such as divorce, loss of a job, or the overwhelming desire to leave the corporate world. Many of the interviewees created income-producing activities from a long-term, passionate hobby or interest. Participants often spoke about how much they enjoy the type of work that they do, touting benefits like the opportunity to work outdoors or the chance to be their own boss.

Conclusions

Many Appalachian residents have pieced together several viable and innovative income-producing activities. This report provides examples of workable alternative employment opportunities for which skill training is readily available. Many of the entrepreneurs started their business using existing resources, such as using a home inherited from family for a retail shop. Often, the entrepreneurs built their business gradually, reinvesting small profits to strengthen the business over time. Very few of the small business owners sought loans to get started. People successfully started many of the enterprises with very limited capital.

Many of the examples provided reveal how residents use the land in a sustainable manner that enhances stewardship of the region's natural resources. This traditional Appalachian approach to livelihood, patchworking income together, enables local citizens to gain greater control over their lives and provides a way to live in a region with otherwise limited job opportunities.