APPalachian Prosperity Project

A Collaborative Model for Advancing Education, Health,

& Economic Prosperity in Southwest Virginia

Annual Report
FY2015

Virginia Coalfield Coalition

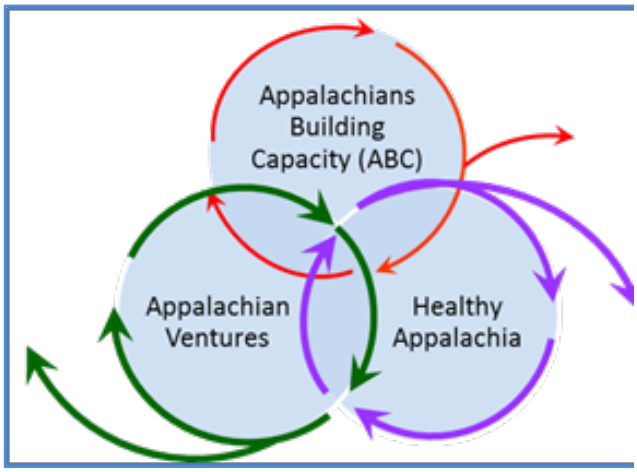
University of Virginia

UVA WISE

Southwest Virginia Economic Development Partnership: *Appalachian Prosperity Project*

UVa's Report to the Commonwealth, FY2015

The *Appalachian Prosperity Project* (APP) is a collaborative partnership among the University of Virginia (UVa), UVa's College at Wise (UVa-Wise), the Virginia Coalfield Coalition (comprised of Planning Districts 1 & 2), the private sector, and the Commonwealth. This partnership uses a systems approach to simultaneously advance the inextricably linked fields of education (*Appalachians Building Capacity*), health (*Healthy Appalachia Institute*), and prosperity (*Appalachian Ventures*).



Appalachian Prosperity Project

Whether the APP is bringing world-class executive education to Coalfield business leaders, piloting an innovative early language literacy intervention, or providing a bridge for engineering education, this multi-faceted partnership produces results. The partnership is unique and powerful because it widely encompasses disparate stakeholders while remaining coordinated and focused. The APP views issues from many perspectives by convening public, private, and government agencies that are not often at the same table. It provides the infrastructure to transform those conversations into initiatives today while maintaining a long-term commitment to the overall mission.

This mutually beneficial alliance applies academic rigor to UVa's outreach projects, expands student experiences, encourages the exchange of ideas, and creates new knowledge which will inform future community- and university-based shared research and partner activities.

The APP is an inspiring reflection of the spirit of the region's people who value trust, self-determination, and perseverance. The vision is to ensure regional collaboration, generate new ideas, and establish a process to engage the social, economic, and scientific issues that exist at the interface of health, education, prosperity, and Appalachian culture. Our collective mission is to position the region in the global economy while honoring its traditions and culture, using local assets, engagement by all partners, and true collaboration. (Website: www.APProject.org)

Leaders in the Coalfields are focused on transforming their historically extractive-based economy from one centered mainly on tobacco, coal, and timber to one built on information technology, education, health care, and energy. To attract companies, local leaders recognize that they must have an educated workforce, business acumen, and widespread access to medical care.

The *Appalachian Prosperity Project* builds on a formal commitment made in 2007 by UVa to the Commonwealth of Virginia to help stimulate economic development in Southwest Virginia. The initiative resides in UVa's Office of Strategic Initiatives; however, UVa-Wise is a critical and influential local presence. It serves as a translator, bridging the geographic distance between partners and opening the door to relationships that would otherwise not exist. The Virginia Coalfield Coalition is leveraging the resources of the APP to attain their regional economic development goals.

A unique aspect of this partnership is its foundation in a systems approach. This brings a diversity of organizations to the table to collectively solve problems. Virtually every school at the University is substantively involved, including the Engineering, Architecture, Business, Education, Nursing, and Medicine schools. Scores of regional partners are engaged from the public and private sectors. Representatives from health, education, and business are involved in every initiative since all play a role in tackling the intractable issues in Southwest Virginia.

The University's role is to listen to the needs of communities and their citizens, initiate conversations, support strategic planning, provide innovation and evidence-based research and evaluation, and collect and analyze data. The Coalfield community identifies challenges, infuses cultural understanding and history, sets the vision and strategic direction, and selects priorities. All partners are givers and receivers of knowledge; together they incubate ideas, generate resources, develop programs, lead, and execute projects. The APP has three co-directors,

representing UVa, UVa-Wise, and the Virginia Coalfield Coalition. Decision-making is shared and each partner is fully consulted before any actions are taken.

Each of the interdigitated foci – education, health, and business – has a signature project that serves as a thematic guide for activities. In health, it is the APP's *Healthy Appalachia Institute* (HAI), created to energize a regional public, private, and government coalition that addresses the region's health disparities. An example of successful shared decision-making is the creation of *A Blueprint for Health Improvement and Health-Enabled Prosperity* (*http://www.healthyappalachia.org/our-health-blueprint*), a community-developed, detailed roadmap for a healthier population with specific goals and outcomes. Similar exercises have included the creation of the *Blueprint for Entrepreneurial Growth and Economic Prosperity in Southwest Virginia,* the *Blueprint for Attracting and Sustaining Advanced Manufacturing in Southwest Virginia,* and *Prescription Drug Abuse in Southwest Virginia* (http://approject.org/reports.html).

These blueprints demonstrate to external funders and supporters that there is a vision for the region and important early groundwork has been accomplished. Since completion in 2009, the health blueprint has helped the region secure funding, develop regional health statistic data to measure progress, initiate an annual research symposium, mandate insurance coverage for telemedicine, and expand the number of telemedicine sites within the region.

The APP's *Appalachian Ventures* encompasses our initiatives to foster a robust economy. The APP has offered management training through UVa's globally-ranked Darden business program, with faculty traveling to the region and working directly with managers from the private and public sector. This allowed employers to build management capacity for their workforce, which is often promoted from within, and which has limited local professional development opportunities available.

Appalachian Ventures convened over sixty community organizations, business interests, and environmental groups as part of the Clinch River Valley Initiative (http://clinchriverva.com/) and the larger regional cultural heritage efforts, including The Crooked Road, 'Round the Mountain and Heartwood, to leverage the natural assets in the area and spur related startups. Five action groups are currently working on issues such as connecting downtown revitalization efforts with the Clinch River, developing river access points and trails, and enhancing water quality.

The APP's *Appalachians Building Capacity* (ABC) is building an educated workforce through innovative pre-K through 12 programs. ABC also teams with the Southwest Virginia

Public Education Consortium (SWVPEC) to improve the knowledge base and teaching capacity for traditional American history in the region.

FY2015 HIGHLIGHTS

FUNDING

- This past year UVa has helped secure almost $3 million in new funding to bring programs and services to the residents of Southwest Virginia. Over the past 6 years the total is $14.5 million. This includes funding for creating *UVa's Cancer Center Without Walls* to extend UVa Health System resources into the region, downtown revitalization efforts in the Town of Appalachia, community development for the Town of Cleveland, and advancing the Clinch River Valley Initiative to bring new economies to the region.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- Nulife Glass announced an investment of $5.9 million to establish its first Virginia operation in the City of Bristol, bringing approximately 50 new jobs to the area. This announcement resulted from the targeted efforts of the Commonwealth Center for Advanced Manufacturing (CCAM) Director of Economic Development, a position dedicated to bringing advanced manufacturers and related operations to Southwest Virginia. The APP worked with CCAM and UVa to create this position and secure the grant funding from the Tobacco Commission.

RECOGNITION AND SUPPORT

- APP was awarded the 2014 Excellence in Government Award for Community Enhancement by the L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs at Virginia Commonwealth University on October 23, 2014.
- APP continued to support the Southwestern Virginia Technology Council by sponsoring the Awards Banquet and Gala on June 4, 2015 in Abingdon, Virginia.

ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIPS AND RESEARCH

- APP created a research center under the leadership of Suzanne Moomaw, a faculty member at UVa's School of Architecture. The center provides evidence-based research for Planning Districts 1 and 2 to guide community economic development strategy,

inform priorities, assess impact, and create a compelling asset-based narrative that helps attract new jobs to the region. The center's goals are to:

1. Serve as an academic anchor that will encourage APP scholarly research;
2. Establish clear guidelines for working in Southwest Virginia with community partners;
3. Encourage projects that deliver immediate impact and align with the principal goal of job creation.

The following are the center's accomplishments this fiscal year:

- Creation of a Southwest Virginia summer internship program with the Institute of Public History at UVa. Meredith McCool, a doctoral student in the Curry School, and Tessa McCoy Hall, an undergraduate studying Communications at UVa-Wise are working in partnership with the Appalachian Cultural Arts Center in Appalachia, VA, to collect oral histories that will be used as the basis for a community play. Our partner at UVa-Wise is the Center for Appalachian Studies. Recent press coverage on the project includes an interview with Meredith McCool on UVa's radio station, WTJU 91.1 FM (https://soundcloud.com/wtju/appalachia) and a UVa Today article from August 4, 2015 (http://http://www.news.virginia.edu/content/uva-uva-wise-students-preserve-past-discuss-future-appalachia-va.news.virginia.edu/content/uva-uva-wise-students-preserve-past-discuss-future-appalachia-va).

- Four faculty and staff from UVa and UVa-Wise received mini research grants to further their research on the health, economic vitality, or educational outcomes in the region:

    - Tauna Gulley, UVa-Wise Department of Nursing, worked on an innovative strategy to reduce diabetes in Scott County;
    - Ellen Shrum, UVa Curry School of Education, worked with primary school teachers in Scott County to improve literacy skills of incoming students;
    - Becki Joyce, Southwest Virginia Technology Center, developed the technical skills of teens using a robotics competition; and
    - Walter Smith, UVa-Wise Biology faculty member, and his students used personal tablet technology to create guides for visitors to the Clinch River. In the process, they identified a species of salamander that was assumed by the Smithsonian Institution to be extinct.

- In March and April, the APP Research Center launched the Small Towns Design Institute *Heart of the Town* series at UVa-Wise. The Small Towns series was co-sponsored in part by the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development. With a focus on improving the economic vitality on Main Street, the APP Research Center worked with seven area towns and the City of Norton to uncover new resources, connect efforts, and develop new strategies for improving Main Street viability in the region. In addition to speakers from the Virginia Department of Transportation, Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development, and the LENOWISCO Health District, presentations included research being done by UVa and UVa-Wise faculty and students. Approximately 30 people from around the region attended the sessions. These will continue in FY2016. A research forum is planned in FY2016.

- In FY2014, APP awarded a venture grant to support a Design Studio in Grundy. UVa students from architecture, urban and environmental planning, and engineering worked with UVa engineering and planning faculty to develop a design concept for a new teen center. The work continues through two additional classes devoted to the project, numerous site visits and community conversations, and a visit from the town manager to UVa. These efforts resulted in a revised scale model of the proposed teen center and a fundraising plan for implementation.

- The APP Newsletter was developed and distributed in early 2015 to 250 recipients. The newsletter is posted on-line and can be accessed at: http://www.approject.org/newsletters/APPnewsletter03_Winter2015.pdf. APP Newsletters will continue to be distributed in the upcoming year.

HEALTH

- To address the unique challenges faced by cancer patients in rural areas, communities and organizations throughout Appalachia and Southwest Virginia are partnering with the University of Virginia Cancer Center to advance a virtual hospital — ***UVa's Cancer Center Without Walls***. This effort is designed to better provide patients with advanced cancer care and clinical trials close to home.

Funding for the center comes from an 18-month, $965,000 grant awarded by the Virginia Tobacco Indemnification and Community Revitalization Commission. Funding began January 1st, 2013.

Because of the rural nature of the region, many citizens do not have access to clinical trials and specialists available at National Cancer Institute (NCI)-Designated Cancer Centers, such as the UVa Cancer Center. In this effort, the virtual cancer center takes full advantage of the extensive broadband network in Southwest Virginia to expand telemedicine initiatives and increase access. While the region has excellent cancer physicians and centers, this partnership with UVa facilitates two key objectives:

- **Increase access to advanced care and clinical research:** UVa is collaborating with local healthcare providers, health systems, and organizations to increase the number of patients with access to screening, education, and advanced cancer care (including genetic evaluation). For example, UVa is collaborating with local health systems to offer telemedicine opportunities for breast and cervical cancer screenings.
- **Bring advanced cancer care and clinical research close to home:** UVa is working with the region's medical centers to train healthcare providers and develop a structure that improves access to advanced care and clinical trials.

- A National Cancer Institute study identified five geographical clusters in the United States with elevated levels of cervical cancer morbidity and mortality. One cluster is in far Southwest Virginia. The UVa Health System, the Healthy Appalachia Institute, and the Virginia Department of Health have continued their partnership championing cervical cancer screenings in the region. A **video-colposcopy program** has already provided over 200 women with telemedicine connections to specialty care. It has also resulted in colposcopy training for five nurse practitioners in the area, increasing the number of local health care providers qualified to perform this procedure by a factor of five. Expansion efforts have begun within the video-colposcopy pilot to two more sites as an avenue to developing a robust, nurse practitioner-guided network throughout Southwest Virginia.

- In addition to cervical cancer screening, UVa continues to be active in helping to reduce mortality from breast cancer by providing over 2,000 mammograms to women in

Southwest Virginia over the last four years. UVa's mobile mammography van is able to serve women even in the most remote areas of the Coalfields which have extremely limited access to specialty care.

- The University of Virginia Office of Telemedicine continues to provide specialty clinical services and health education throughout Southwest Virginia using an extensive network of telemedicine sites. There are now **more than 30 active telemedicine sites** in the region, with a substantial growth in mental health services. In 2015, the Office of Telemedicine continued their partnership with the Virginia Center for Diabetes Education to offer certified patient education in the region.

- With support from the Tobacco Commission, UVa has updated the aging technology at three sites to establish what is emerging as a secure, state-of-the-art, high definition network. **Clinics** offered in Southwest Virginia in FY2015 include cystic fibrosis follow-up in Saltville, wound and ostomy care in Wise and Bland, and screening for diabetic retinopathy in Wise and Laurel Forks. Additionally, sites for mental health services continue to expand with robust clinics in child and family psychiatry. Other new clinics in 2015 include surgical follow-up care and the expansion of employee assistance services through videoconferencing. The program's active pediatric telemedicine program, including services in child neurology and pediatric orthopedics, continued in the partnership with Care Connection for Children.

- Through Tobacco Commission support and the commitment of the UVa Health System, a **new mobile mammography van** has been purchased that will bring digital tomosynthesis to the women of the Coalfields by creating a state of the art, 3-dimensional image of the breast to further enhance early detection of disease. The van began work in the region in July 2015 and will be used in a research initiative led by Dr. Jennifer Harvey to explore the impact of expedited review of mammograms in securing diagnostic follow-up.

- The UVa Center for Telehealth and HAI also partnered with the New College Institute to offer the first telehealth certification program in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The **Southside Telehealth Training and Resource (STAR) Center** is a premier training program that provides basic competencies in state-of-the-art technologies and clinical

protocols. Topics include an overview of videoconferencing technology and medical devices used in the clinical setting, installation and operation of remote patient monitoring equipment in the home setting, and the roles and responsibilities of telehealth staff. Successful completion of the program results in a certificate from the National School of Applied Telehealth as either a Telemedicine Clinical Presenter/Technology Professional or Telehealth Coordinator/Technology Professional. Over 350 health professionals were trained in 2014 and 2015 with new modules in mental health and stroke coming on-line in the fall of 2015.

- The **Blueprint for Health Improvement and Health-Enabled Prosperity**, developed in 2009 in partnership with the Southwest Virginia Health Authority, outlined 20 goals and objectives, with timeframes divided into three timeline categories: Near (0-2 years), Intermediate (3-9 years), and Long-term (10+ years). The Blueprint also outlined strategic goal categories (e.g., overall health, health-related economic developments, etc.) and organizational goal categories, including development funding, advocacy, and operations. The Blueprint has galvanized the region into action, increasing awareness and progress toward improving population health.

- Beginning in 2015, the Southwest Virginia Health Authority is supporting an update of the 2009 Blueprint for Health Improvement and Health-Enabled Prosperity. Healthy Appalachia Institute (HAI) is working with the Virginia Department of Health and regional partners to develop the process for updating the regional health blueprint.

- To leverage the work of the Healthy Appalachia Institute, as well as expand fitness opportunities for both UVa-Wise and surrounding communities, a new 11,000 square foot addition to the C. Bascom Slemp Student Center's existing fitness center and renovation of the 5,833 square foot Fred B. Greear Gymnasium were funded by a generous gift from the Richard and Leslie Gilliam Foundation. The Winston Ely Health and Wellness Center was opened in August 2014. The Winston Ely Health and Wellness Center prioritizes health and wellness on campus and in the community by creating a new exercise area, a multipurpose room for yoga and dance, a conference room with telehealth capabilities for individual and group health advising and education, new locker rooms, and a dining outlet with healthy food options. The center houses offices for the

HAI and allows for community-based outreach focusing on prevention, education, fitness, and wellness opportunities.

- The University of Virginia's Faculty and Employee Assistance Program (FEAP), in partnership with the UVa Center for Telehealth, is creating a national model for the use of telehealth in a non-traditional setting, expanding FEAP services to increase access, convenience, and continuity of care for employees and their families. **Tele-FEAP** is built on a robust Cisco infrastructure, allowing for multi-point connections between users and endpoints. The standards-based system allows for multiple vendor platforms. The system is fully encrypted and compliant with HIPAA requirements for clinical encounters and high-definition technology allows a quality, seamless connection for all participants.

- The University of Virginia's College at Wise contracts with FEAP to provide employees and their families access to individual and group encounters. Located in a region with widespread disparities, both in health outcomes and infrastructure, access to mental health providers and counseling services is characterized by a lack of availability, acceptability, and accessibility. Using a workplace-based system increases access and reduces barriers to care including concerns about stigma, confidentiality, lack of transportation, limited payment options, and facility choices. In partnership with the Healthy Appalachia Institute and the University of Virginia's Center for Telehealth, Tele-FEAP at UVa-Wise is a growing program. Group workshops and individual counseling sessions are vehicles for service delivery. The program's progress and success were presented at the 2015 Mid Atlantic Telehealth Annual Summit. In the first year of FEAP programming at UVa-Wise there were five group workshops, including Psychological Readiness for Retirement, Strategies for Customer Service, Balanced Living, and Stress Management.

- Since 2008, the University of Virginia's Diabetes Tele-Education Program has served over 2,000 participants at 57 sites across the state. The program offers a series of four classes: *Basics of Diabetes and Medications*, *Nutrition Basics*, *Eat Smart - Change Your Lifestyle*, and *Glucose Control, Activity, and Stress* through a videoconferencing platform. UVa-Wise, through its Healthy Appalachia Institute, is now piloting this program for employees in the Winston Ely Health and Wellness Center.

- A planning team, the **Spring 2015 Regional Coalition Training, Restoring Health Through Community: From Data to Action**, worked to strengthen local health coalitions through increased collaboration and capacity around the County Health Rankings & Roadmaps (CHR&R) tools, resources, and data. In addition to the Healthy Appalachia Institute, the Cumberland Plateau, and LENOWISCO Health Districts, the collaborative planning team and regional training event also included a partnership with the Center for Appalachian Philanthropy and Kim Brown of TurnKey Associates who facilitated the afternoon session.

    - The Regional Coalition Training was held on Wednesday April 29th, 2015 at the Inn at Wise, in Wise, Virginia. The event included a session led by Community Coach Mary Bennett focused on the CHR&R tools and an afternoon session focused on coalition development and strategic planning. Sixty participants representing many counties, sectors, and coalitions gained a working understanding of the CHR&R, including the Model of Health, Action Center, and What Works for Health. The session allowed participants to engage in interactive discussion on the value of multi-sector coalitions, methods for engagement, and use of web-based tools to identify evidence based practices to inform their work. The session also featured discussions on coalition development and sustainability.

- The Appalachian Prosperity Project's **Small Town Design Institute "Heart of the Town" Series** took place on April 22nd, 2015 at UVa-Wise. The Healthy Appalachia Institute presented health policies and data, including an overview of the CHR&R Model of Health, Action Center and local data for LENOWISCO and Cumberland Plateau Health Districts.

- Since 2006, the **Healthy Appalachia Institute Fellows Program** has mentored 32 students who have a strong interest in solving health care challenges in the region. More than 80% of the students are now in graduate school, medical school, graduate nursing education, or are practicing health care professionals. Several are still completing their undergraduate education.

- In FY2015, two undergraduate students were selected for research fellowships in Southwest Virginia. One student focused on “Drinking Water Sources and the Importance of Water Treatment in Central Appalachia” and the other explored “Physical Activity and Depressive Symptoms Among Children in Central Appalachia.” Both presented at regional research conferences, gaining valuable experience that will enhance admission prospects to post-college education.

- In the fall of 2014 Practice Fellow Madison Ray worked with HAI to develop a communications plan, update the website and develop a presence on several social media sites, including Facebook.

- The 2015 – 2016 HAI Research Fellow, Isaac Holyfield, was selected by faculty to complete a summer research project on cancer, “Biochemical Characterization of the XPA-XPC Complex”, with faculty mentor Steven Mike Shell.

- During summer 2015, Practice Fellow Cassie Chadwell worked on several HAI projects including: Diabetes Tele-Education Program, Southwest Virginia Tobacco Free Campuses Initiative and the Faculty Employee Assistance Program. Practice Fellow Samantha Smith, a UVa-Wise alumna and a student at the UVa School of Medicine, is working to improve and expand the Med-Match Program through organizing medical student-led workshops and developing an online resource center for medical school applicants from UVa-Wise.

- In collaboration with the UVa Center for Global Health, the Healthy Appalachia Institute funded **Global Health Scholar** and UVa-Wise student Maurice Nathan McGlone for the summer 2015. His research group, consisting of UVa graduate students and University of Venda students, spent five weeks in South Africa researching ‘Community Health in Limpopo: Exploring Management of Diabetes and Hypertension in a Nurse-Led Community Based Health Center in Limpopo Province’.

- The **Med-Match Program**, launched in FY2014, pairs UVa School of Medicine students with UVa-Wise pre-med students in a yearlong mentorship program. UVa School of Medicine students assist undergraduates in navigating the medical school application

process, including MCAT preparation, personal statements, and interview skills. In FY2015, six students participated, ranging from freshman to seniors. In addition to working with a mentor, students participated in video conferencing workshops led by UVa School of Medicine mentors, faculty, and administration. Workshops were held on the following topics: the application process, making your application stand out, deciding between allopathic and osteopathic medical schools, and interview skills. Four UVa-Wise students were accepted into the UVa School of Medicine, three of which were Healthy Appalachia Institute Research Fellows and participants in the Med-Match Program.

President Sullivan with the University of Virginia's College at Wise graduates and future UVA School of Medicine students, Justin Palmer, Santana VanDyke and Helen Osborne.

- ***Introduction to Public Health: Appalachian Perspectives*** was offered for the first time in spring 2015. It is designed to introduce students to the field of public health, including historical development, foundational principles, and contemporary issues focusing on the challenges of rural public health and health disparities in central Appalachia. The course presented a broad understanding of the many factors which influence health, including behavior, history, culture, geography, society, environment, and policy, and the relationship of these to disease, prevention, health promotion, and successful public health interventions.

- Lectures focused on the core components of public health including Social Determinants of Health, Models and Theories of Behavior Change, Health Systems, Epidemiology, Biostatistics, Environmental Health and Community Based Participatory Research. Lectures also included those focused on the health disparities prevalent in central Appalachia, addressing the scientific, social, and epidemiologic background of the region. Students developed the critical thinking skills required to identify and examine a health issue, and the associated risk factors specific to a target population in the region. Students proposed an intervention using current data, literature, evidence-based best practices, an understanding of the levels of influence and the importance of change and intervention at the individual, interpersonal, community, and societal levels.

- As a member and leader of the **Southwest Virginia Tobacco-Free Campuses Initiative**, UVa-Wise, through its Healthy Appalachia Institute, is working to reduce tobacco use on college campuses. The Southwest Virginia Tobacco-Free Campuses Initiative includes representatives from all schools of higher education in far Southwest Virginia. In August 2014 UVa-Wise adopted a new tobacco policy eliminating the use of all tobacco products in all campus buildings and facilities, to include smokeless tobacco and e-cigarettes. This policy change was supported by the research of HAI 2014 Summer Practice Fellow Cassie Chadwell.

- The **Appalachian Tele-Mental Health Network** (ATMHN) seeks to expand and enhance access to quality affordable mental health services in Appalachia. ATMHN envisions a multi-state consortium of hospitals, clinics, and education institutions working to create and implement a region wide tele-mental health network. Through a variety of access points the ATMHN advances the innovative use of telehealth as a solution for improved mental health, behavioral health, and substance abuse outcomes, and increased access to providers, removing barriers of time, distance, and provider scarcities. Among the network's objectives are:
    - Establish current telehealth infrastructure and capacity
    - Support and develop regional partnerships and pilot projects
    - Provide evidence for telehealth policy change

- Develop a readiness assessment tool for mental health providers and professional
- Support telehealth and mental telehealth training opportunities for providers
- Assess market dynamics by state, including reimbursement rates, and payer source
- Create online referral network and resource center for providers and professionals

EDUCATION

The Curry School of Education has recently launched three online masters programs, increasing the accessibility of higher education in the region. The online programs consist of two master of education degrees: reading education and curriculum and instruction, and an education specialist degree in reading education.

CENTER FOR THE LIBERAL ARTS

- Professor Frackson Mumba of the Curry School of Education received a $200,000 grant from the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia to provide professional development in STEM subjects for K-12 teachers in Southwest Virginia. The Center for the Liberal Arts contributed planning, design, and a pledge of matching support for this effort.
- UVa, UVa-Wise, and the Southwest Virginia Public Education Consortium, comprised of 16 school systems, worked together for a decade to improve knowledge of traditional American history on the part of the region's teachers and children, funded by a series of federal "**Teaching American History**" grants. We continue to seek new opportunities to sustain this work.

JEFFERSON PUBLIC CITIZENS ACADEMIC-BASED PUBLIC SERVICE

- UVa's Jefferson Public Citizens, a comprehensive academic public service program that integrates students' service and research, funded a student project in FY2015 that

focused on developing designs for the **Grundy Youth Center**. The ground-breaking project establishes a unique educational model: undergraduate architecture students work collaboratively with a Southwestern Virginia community to design and build a public community center that facilitates support for at-risk teens.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

- The **Blueprint for Entrepreneurial Growth and Economic Prosperity**, published in 2012, promotes entrepreneurial activity by inspiring collective action, impacting policies, fostering regional networks, building on the region's assets, and seeking new investments. The Blueprint was cited by Virginia's Rural Jobs Council as a model for the state and the APP, through Appalachian Ventures, is leading several initiatives. The FY2015 efforts include:

  - ***Grow the My SWVA Opportunity initiative.*** Currently, My SWVA Opportunity includes Virginia Planning Districts 1 and 2 which encompass the counties of Lee, Scott, Wise, Dickenson, Buchanan, Tazewell, Scott, and Russell as well as the City of Norton. The next phase of My SWVA Opportunity is to develop and implement infrastructure to support the inclusion of Planning District 3.

  - ***Create a higher-level business competition.*** Since the publication of the Entrepreneurship Blueprint and the first Entrepreneurship Challenge held in 2013, seven additional business plan competitions have been hosted in the region. My SWVA Opportunity will design and implement a next level competition for those businesses that have competed in a lower-level challenge, successfully opened their businesses, and plan to expand.

  - ***Build community leadership capacity.*** The towns of Dungannon, Cleveland and Damascus have been selected as pilot communities for the building community leadership capacity initiative. This effort, called Rally SWVA, will build leadership skills for team members within a current project, providing local leaders access to much needed professional development. They will have the opportunity to immediately apply what they learn through their respective community development project implementations.

- ***Increase capital to small businesses*.** The My SWVA Opportunity team has identified over $5 million in micro and revolving loan funds in the region, but access to those funds continues to be a challenge for entrepreneurs. My SWVA Opportunity will identify barriers and propose options for increasing the flow of capital to regional businesses.

- ***Host start-up weekend at UVa-Wise.*** Since the 2012 creation of the Collegiate Entrepreneurs Organization (CEO), a student entrepreneurship club, UVa-Wise has held several activities to encourage the development of an entrepreneurship culture at the college. Two years after the creation of the UVa-Wise Concept Cup Competition and competing in the UVa Cup, UVa-Wise will engage the community, alumni, and current students in a start-up weekend focused on enhancing regional entrepreneurship capacity.

- My SWVA Opportunity received two grants in 2015.
    - The Building Collaborative Communities Grant (BCC) is a $50,000 one-year grant funded by DHCD to develop strategies and pilot programs focused on expansion of the My SWVA Opportunity to Planning District 3.
    - A $50,000 Appalachian Regional Commission Grant will implement the strategies and expand the pilot programs developed in the BCC grant.

PLACE-BASED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

CLINCH RIVER VALLEY INITIATIVE

- The **Clinch River Valley Initiative** (CRVI) is a multi-partner effort to build local economies in Southwest Virginia by leveraging the natural assets of the Clinch River (www.clinchriverva.com).

- The Institute for Environmental Negotiation (IEN) serves roles as convener, facilitator, recorder, administrator, researcher, fund-raiser, and advocate for the Clinch River Valley Initiative (CRVI). Informal surveys indicated that the institute's involvement has been highly valued by CRVI leadership and participants.

- Monthly CRVI Steering Committee phone meetings and quarterly in-person meetings continued to guide the future direction of the Initiative with this 25 member consensus-based Committee. Each of the five CRVI Action Group meets regularly to plan and measure progress. The Steering Committee's recent efforts focused on fundraising, potential CRVI incorporation, coordination and communication, and marketing and logo development. The CRVI Action Plan can be viewed at https://clinchriverva.wordpress.com/action-groups/action-plan/.

Five action groups continue to work to address key areas: Clinch River State Park; Access to the Clinch; Water Quality; Environmental Education; and Downtown Revitalization and Entrepreneurship.

- CRVI Action Group accomplishments included the following:
  - **Clinch River State Park**
    - $2.5 million in initial planning funds for the proposed Clinch River state park was approved by the Virginia House of Delegates.
    - Tazewell County offered the Cavett's Creek Park property as the first phase of the park. Some landowners along the Clinch River are interested in selling their properties for the park. The Action Group is maintaining contact with the landowners and keeping them informed on the status of land acquisition.
  - **Access to the Clinch**
    - Clinch River kiosks and signs have been installed in St Paul, Dungannon, and Cleveland.
    - The 3 sites for access points that are moving forward are Old Castlewood, Cleveland, and Buffalo. Other sites will be considered for additional access points throughout each county.
    - A $10,000 grant from the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF) was received by the Town of Cleveland for development of an access point.
    - The Public Access Points Best Practices document, developed and distributed by the Action Group and the CRVI Steering Committee, continues to be used effectively by localities, communities, and organizations during the development of access points along the river.

- **Water Quality**
  - Willie Dodson, who occupies the yearlong CRVI OSM/Americorps VISTA position, has been working on oral history interviews and *Save Our Streams* training.
  - CRVI has been awarded grants for water quality projects and facilitation.
  - Two illegal dumpsites were cleaned up in Cleveland. Forty-three people from 5 counties helped collect 4 tons of trash. One illegal dumpsite was cleaned up along Boozy Creek in Scott County. Over two tons were removed by 19 people from four counties. A household hazardous waste collection was completed in Scott and Tazewell Counties. The Action Group is looking at additional ways to use the CRVI map to identify and prioritize water quality concern areas.

- **Environmental Education**
  - The 3rd Annual Clinch River Environmental Education Symposium was held on Saturday, May 9th at St. Paul Elementary School. The event's keynote speaker was Wally Smith, an assistant professor of biology at UVa-Wise and a steering committee member of the Clinch River Valley Initiative. Smith discussed how the region's wildlife can be used to illustrate broader concepts in the natural sciences for students at all educational levels. Smith also highlighted several ongoing citizen science projects that allow local residents and visitors engaged in outdoor recreation to contribute to expanding knowledge of the region's biodiversity, particularly with the region's largest salamander, the Eastern Hellbender. Other presentations included regional geography, forestry, water quality, and a rain barrel workshop. New for this year's symposium were a number of presentation locations set up outdoors throughout St. Paul, including the St. Paul Farmers' Market, with food provided entirely by local farmers.
  - Environmental education materials, including a stream table and EnviroScape, have been purchased. This $10,000 investment will allow teachers and educators to bring interactive lessons into their classrooms and curriculums. The feedback and interest generated will be used to design effective programming and features for the proposed Clinch River

Ecological Center.

- Planning for the Clinch River Ecological Center is continuing. This Action Group worked with the Access Points Group to design signage that has been installed at key access points on the Clinch River. More signage is planned for installation. UVa School of Architecture Professor Phoebe Crisman has volunteered to lead a design studio for the fall 2015 semester that would assist the Action Group with design questions.
- The group worked with students from UVa-Wise to develop a Biodiversity Guide for use with local outfitter Clinch River Adventures which is available at this link: https://mapsengine.google.com/map/u/0/edit?mid=zgyLUqCYihlI.kJJupJrHjsKc

- **Downtown Revitalization**
  - The Town of Dungannon received a $30,000 award to initiate downtown revitalization work.
  - The Town of Cleveland applied for a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Planning Grant from DHCD and was awarded $799,880.
  - A series of three Clinch River ads were placed in Blue Ridge Outdoors magazine.
  - Heartwood began carrying Clinch River merchandise—hats, t-shirts, and patches.
  - A Clinch River brochure was printed with Clinch River branding materials developed by Arnett Muldrow. Over 10,000 brochures were distributed to businesses, communities and tourist centers throughout the state.
  - The My SWVA Opportunity Steering Committee continues to provide resources for emerging entrepreneurs in Clinch River Valley communities. There is an upcoming training series in the fall 2015 offered by People, Inc. at various locations throughout Southwest Virginia. The training will include an awards competition providing cash for businesses.
  - The Action Group has been researching how the river can be leveraged as an economic resource. As established in the group's Entrepreneurship Blueprint, http://www.approject.org/reports/ENT%20%20Blueprint.pdf, they are working to foster entrepreneurial efforts in the region.

For more information contact:

Pace Lochte
Assistant Vice President for Strategic Initiatives
University of Virginia
Lochte@virginia.edu
434-924-7566