



APPLI

Appalachian Learning Initiative

The background of the cover is a photograph of a sunset over a forested valley. A vibrant rainbow arches across the sky, its colors transitioning from blue and purple on the left to orange and yellow on the right. The valley below is filled with dark green trees, and a small stream is visible winding through the lower right. The sky is filled with dramatic, dark clouds that catch the light of the setting sun.

Annual Report Fiscal Year 2024

April 2025

Appalachian Learning Initiative
Annual Report, Fiscal Year 2024
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Letter from the Executive Director

At the end of each calendar year, I like to take time to reflect on the work that we've done and the impacts that we've made on the lives of people living in the 13-state, 423-county Appalachian Region. During these reflections, I ask myself, "What is the purpose of this organization? Whom do we serve? Whose lives are we dedicated to improving?"



The end of 2024 brought some of those answers into sharp focus for the Appalachian Learning Initiative (APPLI, pronounced like "apply").

As most will remember, the last quarter of 2024 was marked by the landfall of Hurricane Helene, and some of the hardest hit counties were in the Appalachian Mountains. When accounting for wind, storm surges, freshwater flooding, and tornados, Appalachian states suffered some of the worst impacts of the hurricane, including the total destruction of roadways, the devastation of towns and cities, and the tragic loss of 215 lives in Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia.

In mid-December, I received a phone call that caught me by surprise. A director in charge of coordinating responses in Tennessee for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) reached out to inform me that she had been utilizing our data and infographics to train her teams working in the counties hit by Hurricane Helene.

One of the primary ways she was using our work was to help her teams have a better understanding of the existing disparities that Appalachians living in those counties faced before their lives were upended. Using our literacy and numeracy data, she and her team were able to better hone their outreach efforts by revising informational and contractual documents to be clearer and easier to understand by people of all levels of literacy. This allowed FEMA workers to create documents that were less complex and easier to read, which resulted in her team reporting higher levels of cooperation, understanding, and trust than in previous endeavors.

This, for me, was likely the moment that I knew our work was not just going out into the ether for nobody to read. "This," I thought, "Is why we put countless hours into ensuring our data are timely, accurate, and applicable to the lives of Appalachians."

I truly hope that this anecdote serves as a powerful reminder that the work we're doing is important, and that it is worth continuing to support in 2025.

Marcus J. Hopkins
Founder & Executive Director

Our Mission

APPLI’s mission is to work toward a world in which every adult living in Appalachia, and across the United States, has equitable access to:

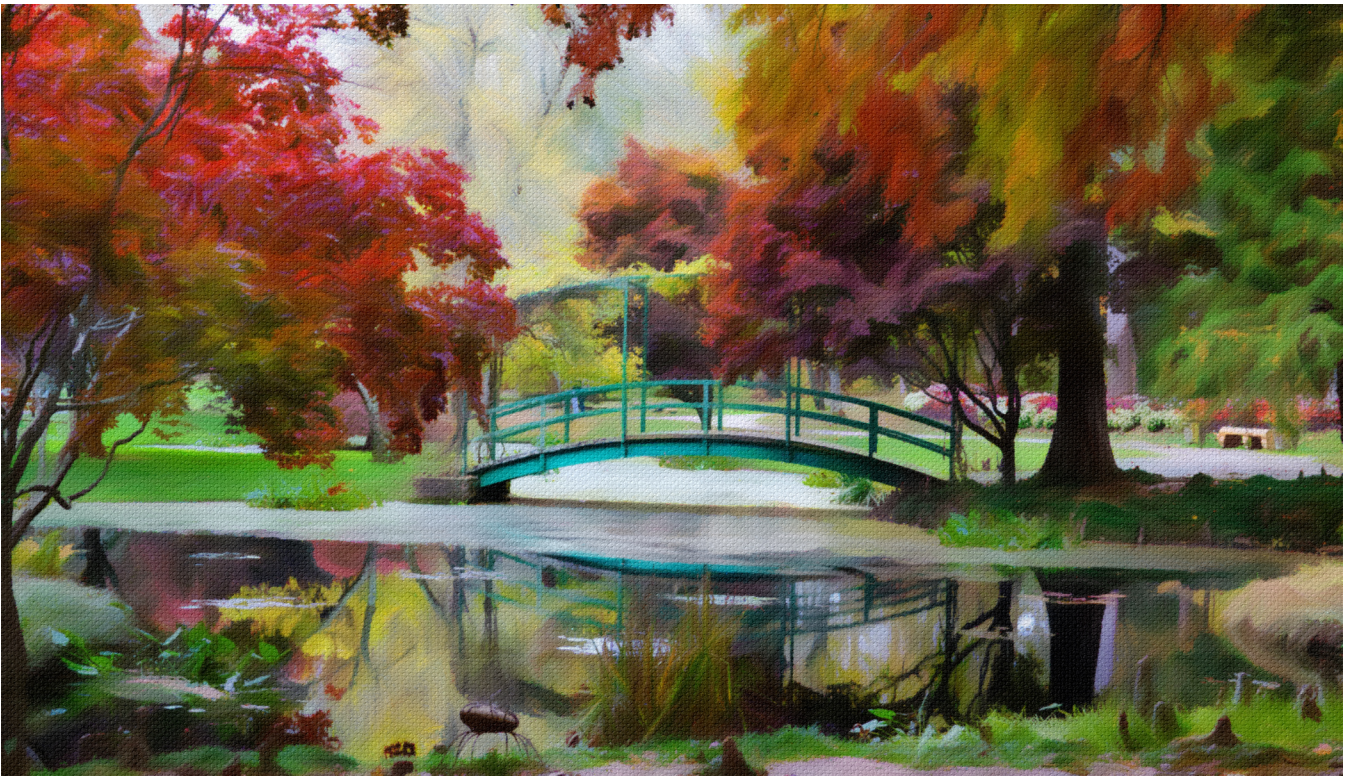
- Free or low-cost educational opportunities to improve their ability to read and perform basic mathematics
- Information about public health and infectious diseases that is timely, accurate, and easy to understand
- High-quality, affordable, and accountable healthcare and social services to improve their quality of life



APPLI believes that all people have the fundamental right to robust, equitable, and accessible education, healthcare, and social services regardless of:

- Race, ethnicity, or national origin
- Sex (including gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation)
- Disability
- Age
- Religious beliefs (or lack, thereof)
- Income
- Health status

Our Impacts



1,600

Over 1,600 new followers across 6 social media channels

56

56 informational & promotional short-form videos

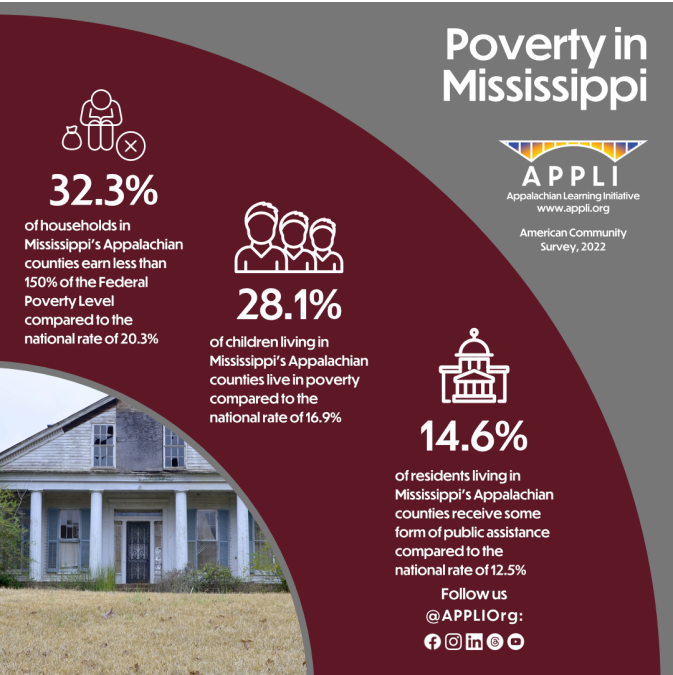
36

36 books recommended

In our third year of operation (2024), the Appalachian Learning Initiative has:

- Expanded our research to include the Social Determinants of Health & Learning
- Developed 65 new region-level infographics highlight social determinants in Appalachian states
- Created 56 informational and promotional short-form videos, receiving over 425 views
- Recommended 36 books across 5 reading lists
- Operated 6 social media channels with over 2,000 followers, garnering over 25,000 impressions, and an average engagement rate of 21.2% (up from 10.6%)

Our Research



Expanding Our Data

In 2024, APPLI expanded our research and reporting to focus on the Social Determinants of Health and Learning—the systemic, experiential, and structural circumstances and issues that may have fundamental impacts on the ability of a person to learn and to stay healthy.

Beginning in January 2024, we began focusing on roughly one Appalachian jurisdiction every four weeks, with occasional breaks to account for vacations, scheduling conflicts, and illnesses.

This new approach allows APPLI to better plan our content for the year by creating a predictable flow of graphics, videos, and blog posts. We are working to ensure that each state is featured in a blog post during the year, and have developed infographics covering the social determinants that are more easily adaptable to video format. In total, we created 65 new regional infographics focusing on measures of poverty, food insecurity, health insurance, housing, and transportation.

Similar to our treatment of health conditions and behaviors, we have utilized the Pearson Correlation Coefficient Formula to determine if these determinants are correlated with lower literacy proficiency levels.

In 2025, we are further expanding our coverage of social determinants by featuring these data on each state's respective page on our website as part of site-wide redesign to centralize each state's information in a thoughtful, easier to find manner.

We look forward to bringing more content throughout 2025.

Pearson Correlation Coefficient Formula

$$r = \frac{\sum (x_i - \bar{x})(y_i - \bar{y})}{\sqrt{\sum (x_i - \bar{x})^2 \sum (y_i - \bar{y})^2}}$$

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Financial Reporting

Statement from the Board of Directors



As of October 31st, 2024, in Fiscal Year 2024, the Appalachian Learning Initiative received income from donations totaling \$9,329.87 and expenditures totaling \$8,236.09. This represents the second Fiscal Year that APPLI received individual and corporate donations from persons and companies other than its Executive

Director, and also the second Fiscal Year ending in positive figures. No new debts were assumed in FY 2024.

Donations

In FY 2024, APPLI received donations from the following individuals:

Wanda Brendle-Moss
Caitlin Chapman
Rachel Hamer Lawson
Crystal Harper
Lisa Hayeem Carver
Sandy Hiortdahl
Marcus J. Hopkins
Jennifer LaGuardia Cooke

Michael McKenna
Marie Moien
Audrey Peters
Tina Rizor

Expenditure Totals by Category

Category	Total
Operational	\$3,892.40
Office	\$1,054.39
Transportation	\$846.20
Software & Licenses	\$2,443.10
Utilities	\$0.00
Equipment	\$0.00
Total	\$8,236.09

What's Ahead in 2025

Looking ahead to 2025, the Appalachian Learning Initiative is dedicated to continuing our research, reporting, and advocacy for people living in the Appalachian Region.

At the time of this report's publication, we are a little over three months into 2025, and there is little evidence that the local, state, and federal institutions that are responsible for addressing the educational, health, and social needs of people living in our region will fare well under the current presidential administration.

Tough times appear to be headed our way.

It is unclear whether or not the federal funding for adult education will continue to be appropriated, properly allocated, or disbursed by an administration that has made no secret of its disdain for public institutions and the rule of law.

With the stroke of an autopen, the president has decreed the dissolution of the federal Department of Education—an action that is very likely wholly illegal and outside the authority of the Executive Branch.

Additionally, a rogue “department” promising to make government “more efficient” has been given seeming carte blanche to eliminate expenditures, jobs, and entire divisions without our federal government.

These are dark times.



With that in mind, APPLI has launched its Appalachian Advocacy Toolkit.

This new resource allows users to find the contact information for the elected officials who represent us in Congress and the Senate.

On the main page, users can search by state. On each state's respective page, they are able to search by county.

It goes without saying that APPLI stands firmly in the corner of people living in the Appalachian Region. Part of our obligation to our constituency is to provide them with the contact information and data they need to make informed arguments when reaching out to their elected representatives.

We humbly ask that you continue your support of APPLI's mission throughout 2025, and work to build our community and demand your voices be heard.



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