

High Rocks JOURNEYS

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS

Fall/Winter 2021

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Twenty-five years of transformational summer camps meet a call to action: giving young people in West Virginia a reason to stay in the Mountain State to become leaders in their communities.



RETROSPECTIVE

THE COOK'S TENT



DOCUMENTING HIGH ROCKS HISTORY

In August, High Rocks hosted a National Civilian Conservation Crew who came for two weeks to volunteer. The crew spent their time clearing trails on our 200-acre property, harvesting produce in our high tunnels, and other acts of service.

One of the things that they did was tear down the cook's tent, an old shed on the campground that had become dangerously rotten.

In 2006, a series of small murals were painted on the Cook's Tent depicting High Rocks milestones as part of our 10-year anniversary. During the demo, the murals were removed from the Cook's Tent and rehomed to another building at the campground, preserving these beautiful artifacts from our history.

We hope to print and frame the pictures this year to celebrate High Rocks' 25th anniversary and all of the wonderful milestone events that brought us here.





ALUM SPOTLIGHT

AMBER MCCLURE



TAKING THE REINS

Exploration. Growth. Adventure. Those are words I would use to describe what High Rocks has given me. Camp New Beginnings was exactly what my anxious, unsure teenage self needed before I made my way to Pocahontas County High School in the fall of 2009. That summer, I found a safe place to be unapologetically myself. A place that accepted me, loved me, and gave me all the tools I needed to find out who I was. The encouragement that I was given during my time as a High Rocks Academy participant helped me become the person that I am today and for that, I am forever grateful.

"Because your curiosity in discovering anything new is endless and somehow still ever growing. Because you can disagree without grudges and love without boundaries. Because you realize the significance of 'taking the reins' on your own." Those are the sentences that were read to me at the last campfire of New Beginnings. The night I heard the words "You are now a High Rocks girl". I never realized what that would mean, being a High Rocks girl. And as I made my way through life, I would like to think those few sentences still represent a part of me that blossomed because of the magic only High Rocks has.

When I came back to High Rocks earlier this year as an AmeriCorps member, I reconnected with all of the parts of myself I thought I had lost. I connected with the magic and the people around me. I graduated from West Virginia University in May and with a nudge from Sarah Riley, applied to be a full-time staff member.

I always tell myself that everything happens for a reason, even if I don't know what the reason is at the time. I know without a doubt there was a reason I reconnected with High Rocks. My hope is that I can continue helping to bring the magic, the exploration and the safe space I was given, for current and future High Rocks participants. As the new Operations Manager, I want to infuse the High Rocks magic into everything I do. I am thankful to be a woman of the High Rocks. Once a High Rocks member, always a High Rocks member!

"I reconnected with all of the parts of myself I thought I had lost."



YOUTH LEADERSHIP

THE Y.A.B.



YOUTH VOICE IN HIGH ROCKS GOVERNANCE

The High Rocks Youth Advisory Board represents all student voice, and works in concert with the board of directors to guide High Rocks. This paid position is one of the many ways in which we empower our youth participants to become leaders among their peers and among adult networks.

"It's nice to come together to do something we're passionate about," – Ali Wills

In addition to offering youth voice to High Rocks leadership, they also engage the community in service projects which have included volunteering at the Hillsboro Public Library and the Greenbrier County Animal Shelter, and holding a canned food drive at the Hub.

The Youth Advisory Board includes:

- Ali, president
- Lauren, vice president
- Hannah, secretary
- Indigo, human resources officer
- Catherine, outreach officer

The YAB is currently seeking a treasurer and interns, so if you know a someone who is looking to get more deeply involved in High Rocks, we'd love to hear about them!



CELEBRATING 25 YEARS

HIGH ROCKS ACADEMY

SUMMER CAMPS AND BEYOND

This year we were able to hold two in-person camps, something in which our participants took so much joy. After a year of COVID-19-related illness and disruptions, it was so exciting for High Rocks campers to return to the campground and feel free and welcome in that magical space.

"I will take many things away from Camp Steele. I will take away the survival skills I learned in the Starlight Overnight. I will take away the persuasion skills I learned in the Dramatic Debate track. I will take away the hard working skills I learned as a kitchen fairy. Overall, though, I will take away the social skills that I gained throughout the two weeks at Camp Steele." - 2021 camper

Campers reported that after camp:

- 43% more willing to stand up for their ideas
- 50% identified more with having the ability to make a difference in their community
- 50% with the ability to make new friends and create valuable relationships in a new place
- 29% identified more with the statement, "My life has meaning."



C O M M U N I T Y

THE HUB

CAFÉ & TECH EXPRESS

Featuring the best bagels in the game

The Hub in Lewisburg is home to two student businesses, The Hub Café and Tech Express. Both of these businesses offer a community-oriented learning environment for our youth baristas and computer technicians. The Hub Café offers espresso and coffee drinks, fresh house-made bagels, and pastries from Fruits of Labor.

The Hub also offers a dinner special Wednesday-Friday, where youth 18-and-under can order a meal to go at no cost, and adults eat for \$5. The dinner special began in March 2020 in response to food insecurity exacerbated by the pandemic. In our 2020-21 program year, we served 13,106 free meals to kids and 6,330 adult meals.

"The Hub meals have been a blessing for me as I help to feed my elderly father. My mother passed away in December and he doesn't cook. Thank you!" - Hub Café customer

Tech Express continues to serve the community and our youth technicians by training them to repair malfunctioning computers, giving the community a place to have their hardware repaired while also teaching young people valuable job skills.



S E R V I C E

AMERICORPS

GETTING IT DONE

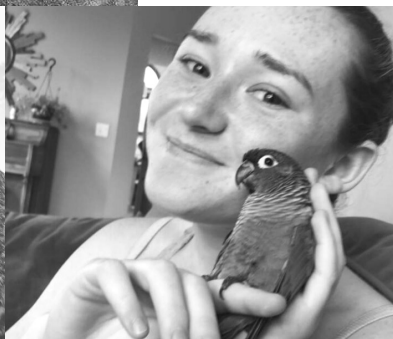
*"AmeriCorps has a saying, 'We get it done,' and this year, AmeriCorps certainly did that."
- Janet Swift, High Rocks AmeriCorps program manager*

High Rocks has one of the largest AmeriCorps programs in the state of WV. During the 2020-21 program year, we partnered with 15 organizations and placed 47 AmeriCorps volunteers. AmeriCorps volunteers help power the High Rocks, and they provide that same support to so many nonprofits and have a huge impact on the volunteers.

Last year, COVID-19 had a significant impact on the AmeriCorps program, particularly how we provide direct service to communities. Thanks to the work of our volunteers and partners, the High Rocks AmeriCorps program was awarded for Excellent COVID-19 Response by Volunteer West Virginia.

Here's a snapshot of our program:

- Over 150,000 free meals were prepared and served to communities across the state
- Over 130,000 pounds of produce were provided to West Virginians at no cost
- 33,558 hours of educational programming were delivered in safe and creative ways to 3,241 K-12 students in the Mountain State





H I G H E R E D U C A T I O N

FIRST2 NETWORK



HELPING COLLEGE STUDENTS SUCCEED

The First2 Network is another way High Rocks is supporting young people, in this case, during their college years. Funded by the National Science Foundation INCLUDES program, First2 is a collaborative partnership between High Rocks, the WV Higher Education Policy Council, West Virginia University, Fairmont State University, and Green Bank Observatory.

The aim of the First2 Network is to double the STEM graduation rate of first-generation and other represented college students by focusing on the first two years of college.

"I've learned at the national level how novel it is what we do" - Samantha Mitchell, First2 program coordinator

"At the core of our shared vision to improve student STEM success is the assumption that the students themselves should be co-creators of the solutions," says First2 program coordinator and High Rocks alum Samantha Mitchell. "At High Rocks, our big focus is on student leadership. Our ideas of working with students -- not at them, not to them, but with them -- to build a structure of support is not something people are doing anywhere, and it is something High Rocks is bringing to the table."





G R O W Y O U R O W N

LOCAL FOODS



RUBY GROW & GROW APPALACHIA

The Ruby Grow program is a project where High Rocks employs school-aged farm hands to help plan, grow, and market vegetables. We operate two high tunnels and are getting ready to build another. These youth farmers also help to host workshops focusing on Appalachian food ways.

Here's what we have cooking in 2022:

- February and March: Maple Magic
- March: Trout to Table
- April: Mountain Foraging
- May: Appalachian Honey
- TBA: Mountain Tea & Value Added Products

High Rocks also partners with Berea College to bring the Grow Appalachia program to the community. Offered at no cost to participants, High Rocks teaches would-be gardeners how to grow a successful garden through a series of workshops.

"I really enjoyed the canning workshop in person and canned several pints of dilly beans and hot pickle mix. Thank you for the class!" - 2020 Grow Appalachia participant



BRIDGING THE GAP

THE WV JOBS NETWORK

A POWERFUL NEW PARTNERSHIP

*Connecting young job seekers
to employers in the Mountain State*

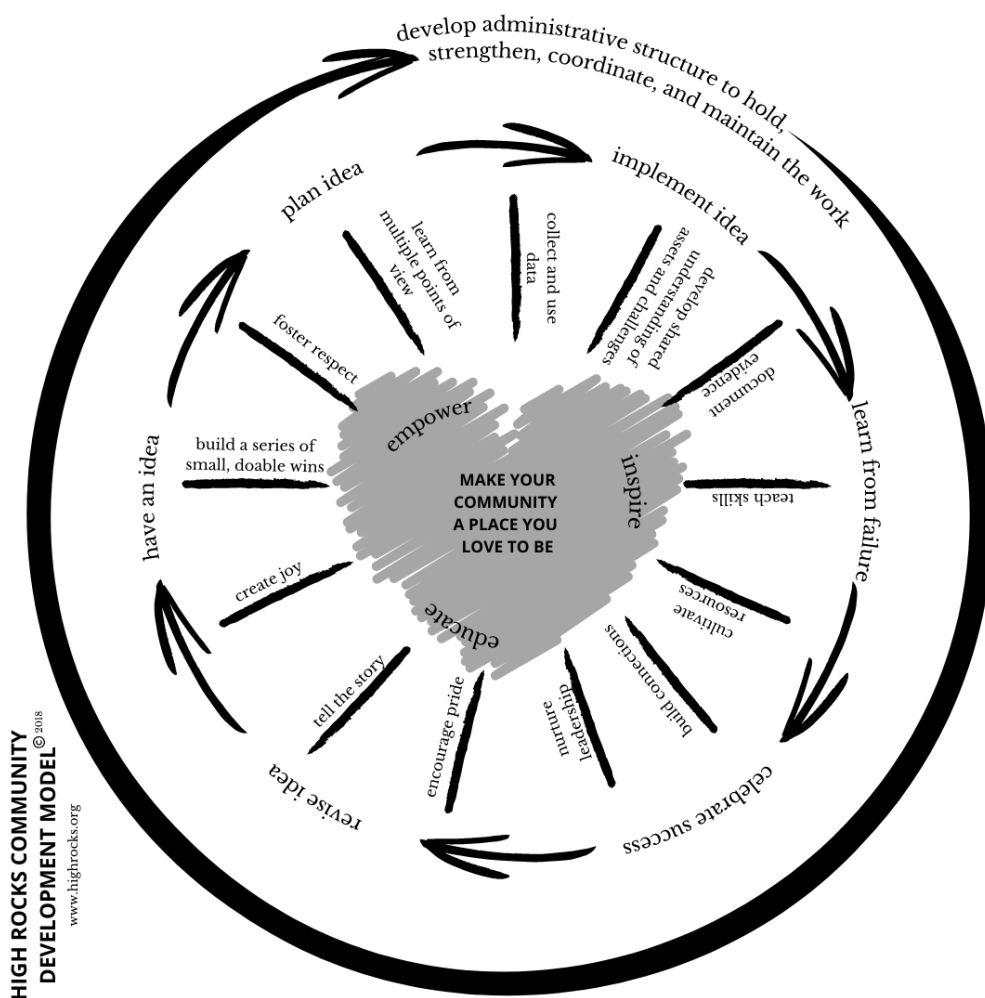
High Rocks is so pleased to announce that we have received an opportunity to launch a new state-wide network, the WV Jobs Network with our partners at Generation WV, Coalfield Development, First2 Network, and Bristol's Promise. We'll be building a network to better connect young people in search of opportunity in the mountain State with employers and entrepreneurs in search of talent. Building a competitive applicant pool continues to be a real challenge for many of us who offer good jobs doing meaningful work, and the WV Jobs Network will soon be here to help!

The WV Jobs Network will help provide opportunities for job seekers and people placed in jobs with wraparound support - the combo of essential skills and leadership that we call Power Skills - connection with peer networks, and opportunities to build professional networks. For employers, the WV Jobs Network will add needed muscle to your HR efforts, expanding your capacity for recruitment, retention, and professional development for your team. The WV Jobs Network will bring together partners and stakeholders from across the state to learn together and share what's working, as we all work to help our alums, college students, and AmeriCorps members stay, and thrive, in West Virginia.



HIGH ROCKS COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT MODEL

The High Rocks Community Development model guides
our program to create lasting change across the
Mountain State and Appalachia.



2020–2021 HIGH ROCKS PROGRAMS

3,594

YOUTH SERVED

Thousands of young people were served by High Rocks programs including youth jobs, camps, internships, AmeriCorps programs and after school programs through 37,252 contact hours



MEALS SERVED 111,536



High Rocks, the Hub, and our AmeriCorps partner sites served over 100,000 meals last year at our camps, in our café, and in communities across West Virginia. At the Hub Cafe, we fed over 12,000 free meals to 921 children.

\$222,480

STUDENT JOBS & SCHOLARSHIPS

Funds paid directly to our college-going participants, student employees at the Hub Café & Tech Express, in the First2 Network, to junior counselors, the Youth Advisory Board, and to the farm hands in our Ruby Grow program



PARTNERSHIPS LEVERAGED 129



Community change is built on community partnerships. We are committed to showing up for people, and they show up for us. From our funding partners to community supporters, we are proud to have a network of friends across Appalachia.

\$0 STUDENT COST

\$.90 of every dollar raised by High Rocks goes directly into our programs, at no cost to our participants