

FALL/WINTER 2023

High Rocks
EDUCATE ■ EMPOWER ■ INSPIRE

JOURNEYS



TRIPLE BOTTOM LINE **TRIPLE BOTTOM LINE**

When organizations put people, the planet, and profit on an equal footing, they can engage with their communities, increasing those communities' sustainability and transforming lives. This triple bottom line theory (people, place, and profit) is at the core of High Rocks' youth social enterprises, where we build sustainable communities through workforce development, social well-being, environmental health, partnerships, and a just economy – all equally important to profits as measures of success.

High Rocks' mission – to educate, empower, and inspire young people in West Virginia – is rooted in a conviction that all people are gifted and that by investing in young people, we create a strong, vibrant, participatory community. We work to provide pathways out of generational poverty for our youth, giving them viable options for success in their home communities and beyond. We envision sustainable local economies that utilize our rich human and natural resources. We seek to inspire a culture of learning in our region that prepares rural Appalachian youth with the skills and ideas to drive change locally and nationally.

Known for our transformative programs, beginning with High Rocks Academy in 1996, High Rocks has developed a formula

to change the dialog in West Virginia that young people must leave the region to find successful, life-sustaining careers. By utilizing the triple bottom line theory and creating social enterprises where young people can earn and learn, we are investing in our communities and changing the lives of the apprentices participating in our programs. We offer training and personal and professional development in three workforce sectors: sustainable agribusiness, hospitality, and information technology. Through these opportunities, young apprentices gain industry-specific job experience, a living stipend, and the skills all employers seek, such as time management and workplace communication.

(see "Agribusiness" on next page for more)

AGRIBUSINESS AGRIBUSINESS AGRIBUSINESS

Ruby Grow, nestled in the foothills of Hillsboro, offers young apprentices agricultural skills on our organic farm. From planting and harvesting to markets and value-added products, our young farmers gain experience in the farming trade. Most of Pocahontas County is a food desert, and our young farmers embrace their entrepreneurial spirit by selling Ruby Grow produce throughout the region at farmer's markets, senior centers, and public schools. Ruby Grow's produce is also found at the Hub Café in Greenbrier County, where its fresh vegetables and value-added products (like ramp salt) are available to the public.

Steve Saffel, Farm Manager, comes to High Rocks with thirty years of farming experience.

"We are trying to break out of the box on how to educate young people on farming and how to make a sustainable wage in an area considered a food desert," he said. "With climate change and all the challenges that farmers face, we feel this work is important for those interested in it and the community."

The agricultural industry is more crucial than ever, as many communities in West Virginia face food scarcity. "More local and fresh produce is available to the community when farms are represented. I grew up in a farming community, and I know at least 30 people that I went to school with who are full-time farmers. Young people exposed to farming from an early age are more apt to consider the profession and even to live a healthier lifestyle."

Young farmers at High Rocks are exposed to farming best practices and encouraged to consider how to make a living, but that is not our only focus. To succeed in the workforce, young people need time management, professional development, communication, and the skills to work as a team. At High Rocks, these skills are built into the curriculum, no matter the industry focus.



Business Dir. Karline's daughter, Mazie, inspects a Ruby Grow strawberry with Farm Manager Steve Saffel.

"We are trying to break out of the box on how to educate young people on farming and how to make a sustainable wage in an area considered a food desert."

– Steve Saffel, Farm Manager

(see "Technology" on next page for more)

TECHNOLOGY TECHNOLOGY TECHNOLOGY



AmeriCorps member and technician Jaisey operates a Hass CNC mill at Marshall Advanced Manufacturing Center under guidance from Marshall instructor Steve Nelson.

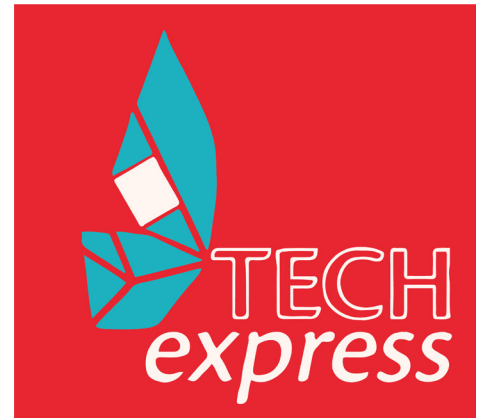
As the technology sector soars, West Virginia faces many challenges to be competitive in this industry. Among these are broadband access issues, few local options for repairing or upgrading devices, and an aging population with tech-literacy needs. In 2015, High Rocks invested in an IT social enterprise in Lewisburg to engage young techies and maximize their exposure to a field that will withstand the test of time. Teaching young IT specialists everything from computer diagnostics to cyber security and e-waste recycling, High Rocks is molding these young apprentices for a long-term position in this growing field. The Greenbrier County community reaps the benefits of computer repairs and tech support while being an indispensable part of helping our apprentices gain customer service skills.

Rusty Felty is our Program Manager at Tech Express. He is passionate about this industry, which he said is the way of the future in West Virginia.

"IT is a sustainable field globally, and even in areas with broadband challenges like West Virginia, teaching young people about it is valuable for their future as technology becomes essential in every industry," Felty said. "With satellite technology like Starlink becoming more available, I think we will see better speeds in places that were never possible before."

The ever-expanding possibilities in the IT sector and the amount of exposure that young people receive from computer sciences make it a fresh and appealing field of study. "IT is often attractive to young people due to its dynamic nature and job opportunities," he explained. "Many youths are more interested in IT, or other computer-related fields because of how integrated it is in everyday life."

Tech Express offers a full menu of services that the public can use. Priced competitively, we are filling a computer diagnostic and repair niche in Greenbrier County - an asset for the entire region. "Tech Express is a valuable community resource, as it empowers young individuals with IT skills that can open doors to local employment and contribute to the region's technological advancement. It



serves as a support hub for the community by offering services like computer repair and hosting informative workshops," said Felty.

A community service for computer diagnostics is a resource anyone can access. The young technicians at High Rocks benefit from the experience they receive working on computers under the guidance of professional mentors. This training would be challenging to obtain for many young people interested in this field.

"IT is a sustainable field globally, and even in areas with broadband challenges like West Virginia, teaching young people about it is valuable for their future as technology becomes essential in every industry."

- Rusty Felty, Tech Express Program Manager



Rusty Felty, Tech Express Program Manager

(see "Hospitality" on next page for more)

HOSPITALITY HOSPITALITY HOSPITALITY

From Cyber Space to a safe space, High Rocks also features the Hub Café, a fully functioning Café and community center. Workshops are hosted weekly and are open to the public. Our events are designed and hosted by young apprentices for intergenerational interaction. Apprentices learn hospitality and food service skills, business, marketing, event planning, and overall business acumen. At the Hub, we are building community space and engaging our young apprentices to lead the way.

Hub Café Manager Keveney Bair says that young people gaining job experience at the Café come from various backgrounds and experience levels. Often, they are shy. “I have seen young people come alive within their time here,” she said. She says that besides food preparation and business know-how, young apprentices are learning to step out of their comfort zones, work with different people, work as a team, problem-solve, think critically, and think ahead. These kinds of experiences are an asset on any given career path.

For Bair, the skills taught at the Hub Café are life skills and career experience. “Being able to think critically and using that to be

proactive and lift the entire team makes people successful anywhere they go.”

Employers seek candidates with that kind of experience, no matter the industry. “If you have someone who has experience working as a team and thinking critically, then they have skills crucial to any work environment,” she said. “You have to make micro decisions at any job. Knowing yourself and how to work well with different people and succeed outside of your comfort zone builds strong personal skills which employers value.”

In addition to being a place for the community to enjoy a cup of coffee or a house-crafted bagel sandwich, the Hub offers a unique and safe space for people to gather and unwind. “The Hub is an untapped gem, really,” Bair said. “Nowhere else is like it.”

Open to collaboration with the community and always willing to host an event, the Hub adds to Greenbrier County while helping train and bring the young people in its programs out of their shells. “I have seen shy kids within a year be a role model for others.”

“Being able to think critically and using that to be proactive and lift the entire team makes people successful anywhere they go.”

– Keveney Bair, Hub Café Manager



Hub Café Manager Keveney and barista Rylee making a customer's latte.

camp to café

PARTICIPANT SPOTLIGHT:

DONNA JEAN "DJ" BARKLEY



DJ Barkley (pictured) is a new face at the Hub Café and Student Center in Lewisburg. Serving coffees and delicious treats, she is fulfilling a year of AmeriCorps service. But DJ is not new to High Rocks. She has been a camper for many years, and was also a junior counselor at New Beginnings this year.

"I think I was in seventh grade when High Rocks came to our middle school to talk to everyone," she said. "I never went to the presentation that day, instead I spent that time in the band room to study my music. About a month later, my mom kept asking me if High Rocks had come to our school, and, of course, I had no idea what she was talking about. She kept hounding me to fill out the application, but I wasn't too keen on that because I had never been away from home for long periods of time. I finally took the time to fill out the application and had the best summer of my life."

For DJ, High Rocks Academy provided the right amount of inspiration to make changes in her life.

"I think going to High Rocks made me think of new possibilities for my life and it really made me think outside the box," she said. "I did not used to like math and I thought science was boring, but after going to High Rocks, I started to value those things." She attended camp in her seventh and eighth grade years and then kept coming back. "My grades began to change - I started getting all A's, and I was able to find joy in science and math classes. High Rocks really impressed me because they made average things in life fun. They showed me that not everything has to be boring and dry."

High Rocks Academy offers young girls the opportunity to cultivate leadership skills by returning to camp as a junior counselor to mentor younger campers. Throughout the year, High Rocks Academy participants take part in overnight service events, college visits, and other activities designed to build confidence and empower personal growth.

"For the last two summers, I went

back as a Junior Counselor [at New Beginnings in June], and then I would attend Camp Steele in July," she said. "I would always try to go to overnights, and to help out whenever it was needed."

For DJ, High Rocks was the right blend of opportunity, challenge, and mentoring for long term success. "I think the thing that is the most important is teaching youth to stand up for what they want and to take initiative. Leadership is a really big role here, and it's not necessarily telling people what to do, but really it's lending a hand when people need it. High Rocks helps me understand that."

From improved grades to a college future, High Rocks is helping support the pathway to success that DJ is building. "Right now, I am doing my AmeriCorps service at the Hub in Lewisburg. When my service is over, I hope to attend a university and get my bachelors in anatomy and attend an institute for mortuary science."

DISPATCH FROM THE **CAMP** KITCHEN

Essay by Dade Lemanski

Cooking for camp is a practice in acceptance and letting go. When something goes wrong, which it will, there's no time for blame or resentment because, soon enough, people will need to be fed. For many summers, camp cooks had adapted to the trusty stoves in the picnic shelter where we keep our food hot once we pack it up the hill from the lodge kitchen. Then this past June, thirty-six hours before campers were due to arrive, camp staff discovered that the stoves had given out entirely.

With no time to waste, Sarah Riley started calling around. It was about to be the weekend, and nothing new would arrive before Monday, but campers were getting in Saturday afternoon. As we teach, and do, at High Rocks, Sarah turned to community relationships and came up with two stoves. Then, she spent all day (and late into the night) working with Devin Preston, High Rocks' Director of Programs, to get them installed.

By the time campers arrived, dinner was an easy feat: lasagna for seventy people sent from the Hub and heated in those freshly-installed ovens. Some of the campers work at the Hub during the school year and had helped to prepare the lasagna. They got to celebrate and enjoy their hard and delicious work, showing off just a little. The staff even got some relief from the stress of the previous day.

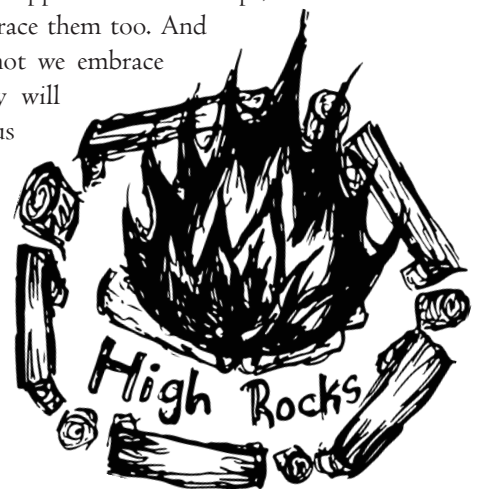
The rest of the summer we spent eating scrambled eggs in the morning – made best of all by Esther, often with eggs from High Rocks Farm Manager, Steve Saffel's chickens – and by night, rice, chickpea curry, fried chicken, macaroni and cheese, and pounds and pounds of green beans harvested by the Ruby Grow crew from the High Rocks high tunnel. The green beans were, by far, the favorite vegetable in the picnic shelter. Once, for a camper's birthday, we served pans of tomato dumplings, 'Nicholas-County-Meemaw style', of course. Every evening, Justin came around in his truck to haul away the day's trash.

But despite best efforts, and even with the stoves running hot,

there were always some campers who never quite wanted to eat what was for dinner and requested grilled cheese instead (and this Grilled Cheese Club became champion kitchen fairies), days when the Hub delivery schedule was wonky (and we threw together a hit taco bar); or days we were shorthanded (so Cindy and Arron came up from the Lodge to do dishes after lunch).

Which is exactly how the summer was supposed to go.

Without mistakes, how would we learn? What else but plans-gone-awry would give us the opportunity to ask for help? Where else but the kitchen would we keep the secret stash of chocolate (first aid for most emotional troubles) or the phone connecting us to the world outside of camp (in case we needed to find another replacement stove in a hurry)? At High Rocks, the challenges that help the young people we serve grow, transform, and build self-trust and strong supportive relationships, only work if we embrace them too. And frankly, whether or not we embrace these challenges, they will find us and force us to become more flexible, and more humble, than we sometimes believe ourselves to be.



Note: This year, High Rocks is working hard to build a new kitchen in the campground so that we can cook and serve more easily.

We really need it, and we appreciate your help to make it happen!

CELEBRATING FIRST2 STUDENT LEADERSHIP

The First2 Network is an expanding group of people and organizations working to increase the number of college graduates in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) to strengthen our communities and drive an innovation economy in West Virginia and beyond. First2 focuses on rural, first-generation, low-income, and other under-represented STEM students, making sure all our students can succeed regardless of zip code, gender, race, or income. First2 works – in true partnership – with student leaders, tests and learns with stakeholders to share and scale high-impact practices, and drives systemic change through informed policy and resource allocation.



Attendees of the First2 Leadership Training gather for a group photo before saying farewell.

On October 14th and 15th, a group of seventeen First2 Student Directors and Scholars met in Morgantown to participate in a Leadership Training program that High Rocks facilitated. Participants in this training talked about the focus areas of the First2 Network and how they relate to systemic change. They discussed the role of students within Institutional Teams and how students can help these teams be successful.

First2 Network Improvement Science and Data Manager Bridgid Brown from Fairmont State Univer-

sity said about the program, “I admire the passion and vision of the First2 students and their perspective and efforts for systems change.”

During the program, students and staff also discussed the various facilitation techniques being used and their rationales in order to further their active learning experience. They practiced their strategies for making a strong ‘elevator speech’ – a technique of quickly introducing oneself and conveying an idea in an engaging way in about the time it takes to take an elevator ride; learned tips for marketing and communication; practiced identifying and thinking critically about leadership styles (including their own leadership qualities); improved their mentoring, conflict resolution and team building skills; and furthered their understanding of improvement science and how that informs the ‘Plan, Do, Study, Act’ (PDSA) cycles they are implementing to test change ideas.

As an added bonus, those in attendance got to witness a solar eclipse; special thanks to First2 Lead Principal Investigator Sue Ann Heatherly, from Green Bank Observatory, who of course came prepared with eclipse viewing glasses! Sue Ann reflected, “We had so much



Attendees of the First2 Leadership Training marvel at the eclipse (while protecting their vision!)

fun and learned some great facilitation techniques while expanding our understanding of First2. But what sticks with me most were the nuggets of ideas and wisdom that were organically dropped in our path by our students. By the end of the weekend we all had high priority 'to-dos' that sprang directly from our work together."

First2 Student Co-chair, Callia, said about the experience, "The leadership training taught me facilitation skills that I can use as a student leader to help other students retain and understand new information more effectively." Other participants particularly valued the time spent with other leaders.. As another Student Director, Judy, said, "The training was a great way to communicate with other

"The leadership training taught me facilitation skills that I can use as a student leader to help other students retain and understand new information more effectively."

- Callia, First2 Student Co-Chair

students across the network. Considering how difficult it is to get all of us in a room together, I was pleasantly surprised by how great we all got along. I really value my other directors." Kudos to these inspiring First2 students

that pushed themselves to think big about this important work and how they are leaders in moving it forward... we can't wait to see where the network goes next!

The First2 campuses currently include Marshall University, Fairmont State University, West Virginia University, Glenville State University, WVU Tech, Blue Ridge Community and Technical College, and the University of Charleston. We hope to keep expanding to more campuses.

The First2 Network is supported by the National Science Foundation under Award Numbers: HRD-1834586, WV Higher Education Policy Commission; HRD-1834601, Green Bank Observatory; HRD-1834575, Fairmont State University; HRD-1834586, WV Higher Education Policy Commission; HRD-1834595, High Rocks Educational Corporation; HRD-1834569, West Virginia University.



SUSAN'S TOOLKIT FOR HAPPINESS NO. 2

Left: High Rocks camp staff c. 2005 on the porch of the lodge. (Clockwise from top left: Sarah Eilers (Guyette); Rachel Garringer; Christine Campbell; Elizabeth Englehart; Samantha Adler; Erica Lipps (Marks); Jolie Lewis; Joanna Burt-Kinderman; Brynn Kusic; Maribeth Saleem (Tanner); Sarah Burt-Kinderman Riley; Danielle Stollak; and Susan Burt.)

"THE TIMES THEY ARE A CHANGIN'"

Seems like going with change is hard to do.

My father was a preacher and one of his sermons I remember was, "If you don't handle change, change will handle you!"

AIN'T THAT THE TRUTH!!

The older I get, the quicker the time goes...

But some things aren't changing much...



High Rocks campers in Tilda Fork on the High Rocks property in summer 2023. Some version of this picture has been captured each summer since 1996.

Susan Burt, the founder of High Rocks, remains a dedicated mentor, advisor, and font of levity for High Rocks' staff and participants.

POWER SKILLS CERTIFICATION

High Rocks unveiled its Power Skills Certification pilot this year and invited High Rocks participants and AmeriCorps members from across the state to participate. This three-part online course aims to create a guided learning environment where participants can learn and practice the essential leadership and collaboration skills that employers want.

People who exhibit these skills are innovative, team-oriented individuals who excel in their workplaces and their lives as community leaders, entrepreneurs, and valuable members of the workforce. High Rocks provides the curriculum structure, online learning modules, participant workbook, and coaching while course participants build a powerful portfolio to showcase the skills they are acquiring and polishing.

In addition to this portfolio (consisting of a résumé, work samples, and a cover letter), participants will receive a digital certification badge to display on their résumé and social media. This badge will serve as the WV Jobs Network's official certification of an individual's Power Skills mastery and as proof that the individual completed the course requirements.

Originally planned as a single, asynchronous course, the curriculum is now split into three units of five skills each. This change gives participants more time with their coaches and cohort members. It also improves the pace of the certification to better fit the needs of our participants and to balance this course with the volunteerism and community service obligations at their AmeriCorps service sites. The first group is underway and High Rocks plans to start a second cohort in January.

Once the pilot wraps, this course will be available to anyone who wants to level up their own skills or those of their teams – staff teams, AmeriCorps members, students, entrepreneurs, individual job seekers, employers, and lifelong learners of all kinds! Call (304) 653-4891 for more information about this certification for yourself or your staff.

UNIT ONE

1. *initiative*
2. *time management and prioritization*
3. *adaptability and flexibility*
4. *focus and productivity*
5. *workplace communication*

UNIT TWO

6. *customer focus*
7. *project management*
8. *critical thinking and problem solving*
9. *teamwork*
10. *leadership*

UNIT THREE

11. *public speaking and advocacy*
12. *networking*
13. *emotional intelligence*
14. *citizenship and community*
15. *diversity, equity, and inclusion*

WEST VIRGINIA



JOBS NETWORK

HIGH ROCKS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

*(High Rocks Alum)

PRESIDENT

Julie Keehner

VICE-PRESIDENT

Stacy Thomas

TREASURER

Sean Brain

SECRETARY

Sarah Guyette*

MEMBERS

Maribeth Saleem-Tanner*

Kim Beard

Tristan Nutter*

Amy Metheny

MEMBER-AT-LARGE

Skyler McCallister*

ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS

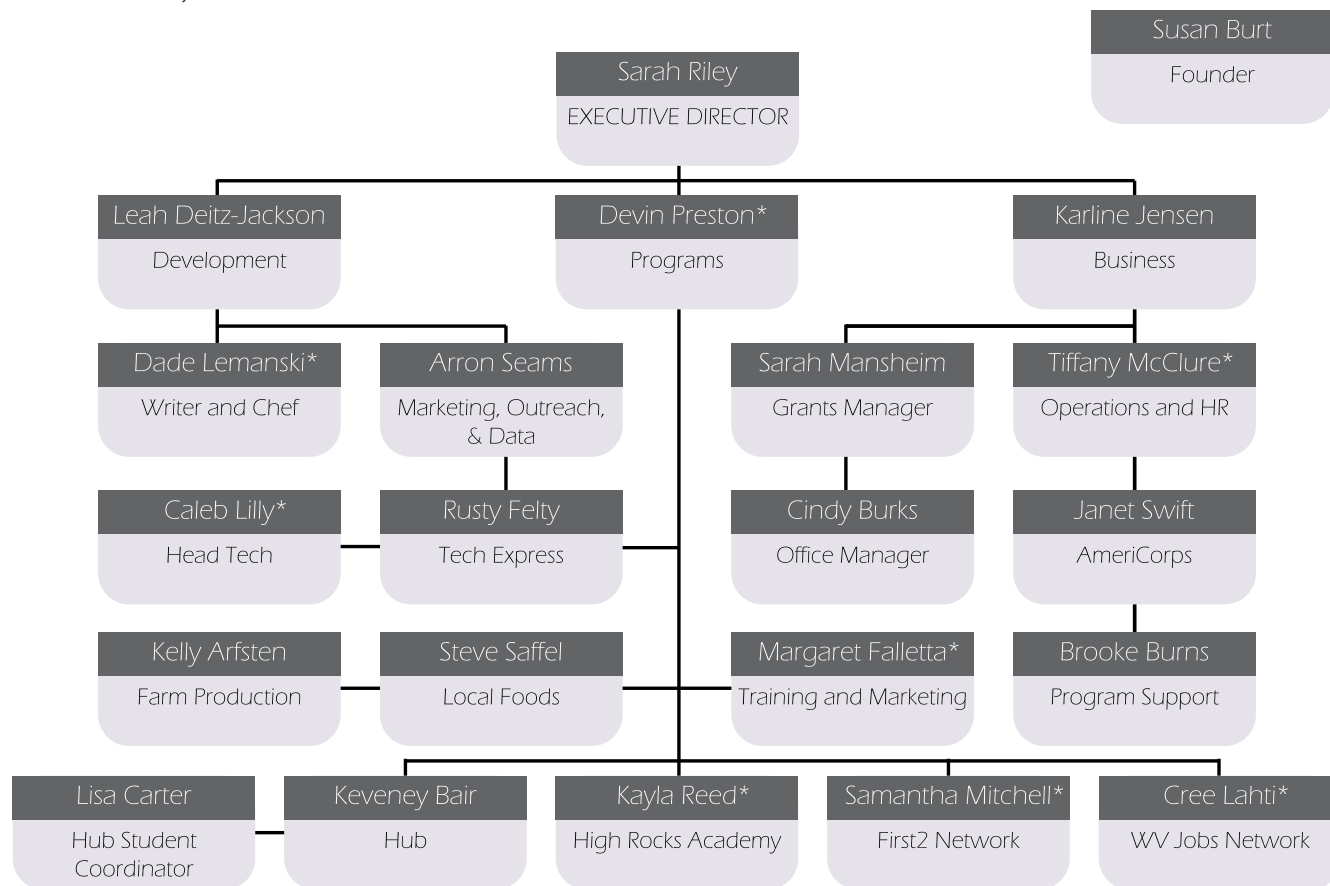
Moniefia Maitland*, President Ex-Officio

Bill Lenherr

John Norman

HIGH ROCKS STAFF TEAM YEAR-ROUND

*(High Rocks Alum)



AmeriCorps
West Virginia

HIGH ROCKS IS POWERED BY THE SERVICE OF AMERICORPS MEMBERS, SUMMER STAFF, AND EARNING-AND-LEARNING PROGRAMS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.

PARTICIPANT VOICES



I'm from Mount Lookout where the houses are still being built,
Where I can hear the cars across the woods,
Where I feel the cold breeze under the trees.
I'm from where I only have candy bacon on special days.
I'm from where I go to Bear Town for fun.
I'm from where I get to help my parents cook,
Where I get new PJs every Christmas.
I'm from where I get to hear music everywhere I go.
I'm from where my dad works till 3:00.
I'm from where my dogs make me feel safe.
I'm from where I can smell the fresh cut grass.

– Karinza, New Beginnings Camper



I am from a white house in the middle of nowhere, where my family bonds.
I am from sitting under my favorite tree reading and writing until my hand starts cramping.
I am from having campfires every weekend in the summer with my friends and family and staying up late talking to my sister about my day at school.
I am from staying at my grandparents house in the summer and riding my bike through the neighborhood listening to Taylor Swift until my ears start hurting from having my air pods in hours on end.
I am from playing on basketball teams in my small town and celebrating by going to Dairy Queen after.
I am from having buttery yeast rolls every Christmas and me and my sister fighting for the last one.
I am from hearing my principal say, "Have a good day, or not, the choice is yours."
I am from a place called Greenbrier County.

– Irelyn, New Beginnings Camper



I am from a happy place,
A place I feel safe to be me.
I am from an old farm with vines growing up the side,
A place with lots of animals that love me.
I am from a place with lots of fluffy places to go when I get scared,
A place with warm hot cocoa all year round.
I am from a place with parry grip music just for fun.
I am from a place where my mom works from home,
A place where my dad is rarely home.
I am from a place where we all play together.
I am from a happy place.

– Anna Raine, New Beginnings Camper



I am from a place that the tarts smell like apple cinnamon.
I am from a place that is hot outside and cold inside.
I can hear the AC all day and I can feel the soft blanket and my dog at night.
I love where I am from.

– Liv, New Beginnings Camper

