



High Rocks
EDUCATE  EMPOWER  INSPIRE



»» FALL/WINTER 2024 ««

JOURNEYS

195 THOMPSON RD. HILLSBORO, WV 24946

»» WWW.HIGHROCKS.ORG ««

»» EDUCATE. EMPOWER. INSPIRE. ««

WELCOME NEW STAFF!

CELEBRATING OUR ORGANIZATIONAL GROWTH

>>> AMANDA HOKE; OFFICE MANAGER



Amanda Hoke is a West Virginia native who has lived in Pocahontas County for over 30 years. She has worked as a bank teller, a daycare teacher, and a postal support employee before joining the High Rocks as the office manager. Amanda is the mother to two daughters and four dogs, and the happy wife of her husband of 14 years. She enjoys spending time with family and friends, being outdoors, and arts and crafts. Amanda loves the close-knit family that is the High Rocks team.

ANDREW LACASSE; CPA, BUSINESS DIRECTOR <<<

Andrew, originally from Australia, moved to Pocahontas County with his parents at the age of two. He spent his childhood immersed in community activities and exploring the forests and parks around the Green Bank Observatory and throughout West Virginia. Andrew graduated with a BA in Accounting from West Virginia University in 2008, earned his CPA in 2012, and served the West Virginia State Auditor's Office for 16 years. In April 2024, Andrew joined the High Rocks team as the Business Director. Outside of work, he enjoys playing the guitar, drumming, and gardening with his daughter.



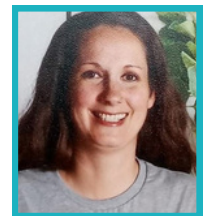
>>> MARIBETH SALEEM-TANNER; WORKFORCE STRATEGIST, WV JOBS NETWORK



Maribeth had no idea when she signed up to be an AmeriCorps*VISTA "for a year" at High Rocks in 2002 that she had just found her forever home in Appalachia. Maribeth grew up in the Adirondack Mountains of New York and graduated with a degree in English from Pomona College in southern California (also Susan Burt's alma mater - Go Sagehens!). She joined the High Rocks staff in 2004, served as High Rocks Co-Director from 2005-2007, returned as Development Manager from 2010-2013, and is now returning to the High Rocks staff as the West Virginia Jobs Network Workforce Strategist.

SUMMER MARTIN; HUMAN RESOURCES SPECIALIST <<<

Summer grew up in East Texas then attended University of the Ozarks in Clarksville, AR where she received a Bachelor of Science in Physical Education with a minor in Health. After returning to Texas, in 2018 the mountains were calling and Summer knew she must go. With 5 wildlings in tow, she moved to Pocahontas County, where her family has since grown by one more. When she's not cheering her children on in sports or the arts as their #1 fan, she enjoys foraging, hiking, and just about anything else she can do outdoors.



>>> MAGALY SUTEAU; HUB CAFE COORDINATOR



Magaly, a Chicago native, studied at the Culinary Hospitality Institute of Chicago and started her career in a French bistro, which led to an exciting role with the Four Seasons. Magaly then moved to Dallas, Texas, and was promoted to Executive Pastry Chef at a prestigious restaurant. During this time, she met her husband. The couple relocated to California, started a family, and in 2011, moved to West Virginia, which they now proudly call home. Magaly's passion for pastry making remains strong and she shares it with her family and community. She enjoys family time, walking on local trails, and raising chickens!

>>> THANKS TO ALL OUR STAFF FOR THEIR HARD WORK! <<<

HIGH ROCKS ACADEMY

VOICES OF CREATIVITY

»»» WHERE I'M FROM

I am from West Virginia,
From the soul of a tiger,
And the whispering of nature.

I'm from the middle of nowhere
Where the crickets sing a song each night,
And dragons fly overhead.

I'm from a story in Ireland,
That also has roots in Ohio,
That will always have origin here.

I'm from the rich taste of tacos,
With 90's music in the background,
As a huge family gathers around.

I'm from Nanny's dish sink,
And from the smell of cookies after school,
As I used to watch cartoons with my sister.

I am from the support from Kylie,
And the joking tone of Nicole's voice,
As they swim with me in the pool.

I'm from the wilderness,
Where the bears roam and deer graze,
And the sweet flowers blow in the wind.

I am from rejections and rejoice,
From many scars and bruises,
And from bullying and unfairness.

I'm from all of the love from family,
and the respect of my friends,
And the simple "hello" from a stranger.

I am from the heart and soul,
Of my elaborate inner feelings,
And that is where I find out,

That I am from myself.

- New Beginnings 2024 Participant



CAMPS 2024

Our camps are where it all started. in our beautiful mountain 'classrooms without walls', youth participants have been gaining confidence, leadership skills, and lifelong friendships for over 25 years. This year we welcomed **39 youth participants** from **6 West Virginia counties** to join our cadre of **70 High Rocks Academy students**.



»»» YEAR-ROUND PROGRAMS

Highlights from our year-round programming included **4 college trips**, **4 educational overnights**, **presenting at an academic conference**, **visiting the WV legislature** and **sending over 20 care packages to High Rocks alumni**.



»»» ACCEPTING CAMP APPLICATIONS NOW <<<

EARNING AND LEARNING

A HOLISTIC APPROACH

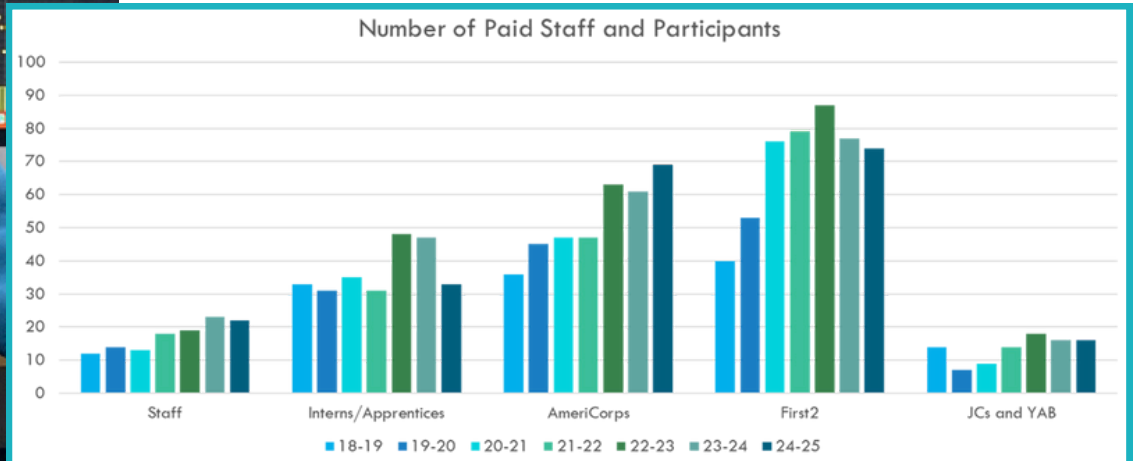


REIMAGINING WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

High Rocks Camp provides young people with valuable tools and skills to succeed in school, in the workplace, and in their lives. The first paid student leadership positions at High Rocks were Junior Counselors and Interns - motivated young leaders who wanted to help run camp, but told us they could only afford to take part in that kind of personal development if they could still earn money to help support themselves and their families. From that point on, whether it be through AmeriCorps service, First2 student leadership, or internships and apprenticeships in our social enterprises, we've been making pathways for young people to build financial resources while they learn. High Rocks approaches workforce development the same way we've been developing leaders for nearly thirty years - using our four pillars of learning, leadership, health and wellness, and community engagement to build a strong foundation for success.

WORKFORCE RESULTS <<<

For the 2024-2025 program year,
189 participants are projected to
earn **\$1,660,893**.



We are growing the world we want to live in by creating new pathways into the workforce, retaining those already in the workforce (including part-time and full-time interns and trainees), and directly funding job seekers.

During the 2023-2024 program year High Rocks social enterprises generated \$92,000 in earned income.

»» AMERICORPS ««

OPERATING THE SECOND-LARGEST AMERICORPS PROGRAM IN WV



OUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

This past year we placed 59 AmeriCorps members at 22 non-profit organizations across the state, including 18 in High Rocks programs.

DEVELOPING LEADERS

- TEAMWORK AND TRUST
- VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT
- COMMUNITY AND YOUTH LEADERSHIP
- SUPPORTIVE MENTORSHIP
- EMPOWERMENT THROUGH EDUCATION AND TRAINING
- EMPOWERMENT THROUGH COLLABORATION
- PROFESSIONAL TRANSITIONS AND ADAPTABILITY

JUST A FEW THEMES MEMBERS IDENTIFIED IN THEIR MONTHLY REPORTS ON WHAT THEIR SERVICE GAVE THEM

Hi Brooke! I hope you're doing well - I miss you and everyone else at High Rocks!

I wanted to reach out to tell you about a small world moment I just had!! I attended the office hours for my Japanese professor & during casual conversation, she mentioned that she was from West Virginia. I said that I worked at HR this summer, and she said that several of her friends did it and loved it (they later became JCs, too!) It made me smile - it was really nice to hear stories about my home-away-from-home at my actual home ❤️

- HANNAH JEWELL, 2024 AMERICORPS MEMBER



»» IN THEIR WORDS

MEMBERS' POSITIVE OUTCOMES FROM THEIR SERVICE INCLUDED:

"Being given the opportunity to continue my education."

"Allowing me to get health insurance for the first time since 2016."

"Putting me in West Virginia long-term and giving me the opportunity to fall in love with the state."

IMPROVING ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Partner sites that had AmeriCorps members rated the impact of their members on overall organizational effectiveness as 4.92 out of 5.

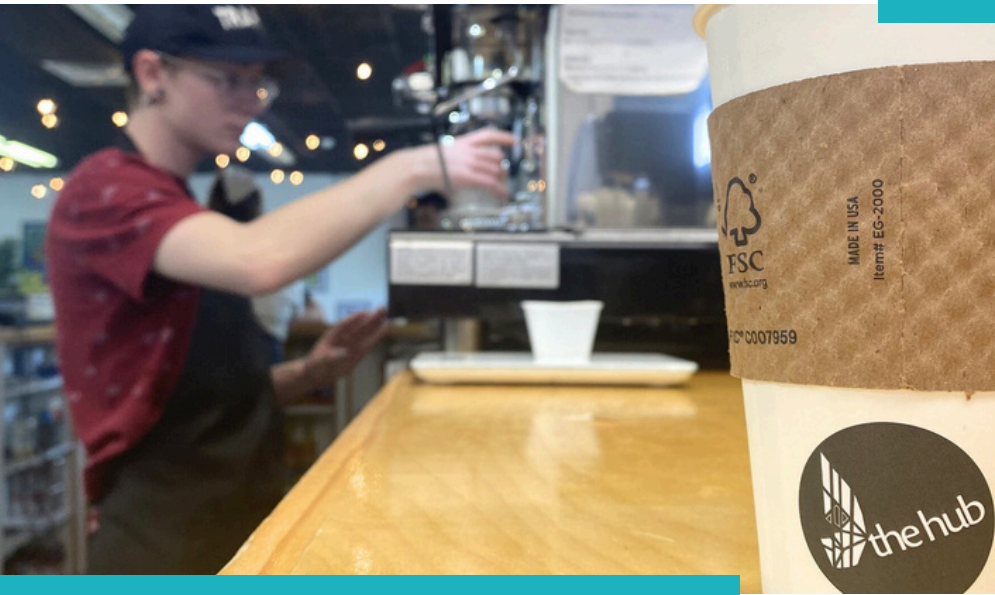
»» SIGN UP AND SERVE ««



HUB COMMUNITY CAFE



COMMUNITY CAFE AND TRAINING CENTER



OUR 23-24 SALES:

\$67,509.50

*That's a lot of coffee,
bagels, soup, salads,
and sandwiches!*

STEAM WORKSHOPS

As part of our commitment to education, the Hub offered a slew of afterschool classes, workshops, and events. A highlight of last year was our S.T.E.A.M. (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math) Workshop series. These particular workshops included activities such as soapmaking, ice tie-dyeing, fresh and dried flower arranging, teas, tinctures and salves, metalworking, robot choreography, and natural, organic beekeeping and crafts.



IN THEIR WORDS:

"IT'S A GOOD LEARNING EXPERIENCE FOR A FIRST JOB. I LIKE THE ENVIRONMENT AND I'M LEARNING BETTER SOCIAL SKILLS."

- PIERRE SUTEAU, HIGH SCHOOL INTERN

"I LIKE EVERYONE I WORK WITH AND I LOVE WORKING WITH THE TEENS AND MENTORING. I'VE GAINED CONFIDENCE IN GENERAL."

- HEATHER NAPIER, 3RD YEAR AMERICORPS



CONTACT US FOR CATERING NEEDS



TECH EXPRESS

TAKING THE "TOUGH" OUT OF TECH

23-24 ACCOMPLISHMENTS:



- Partnered with New River Community and Technical College to form a Learn and Earn internship program
- 15 interns, apprentices, and high school interns enrolled in the program
- Adopted a new ticketing system to better track customer requests
- Promoted e-waste recycling and held drives to properly dispose of e-waste products from the community
- Nearly doubled our sales from the previous program year

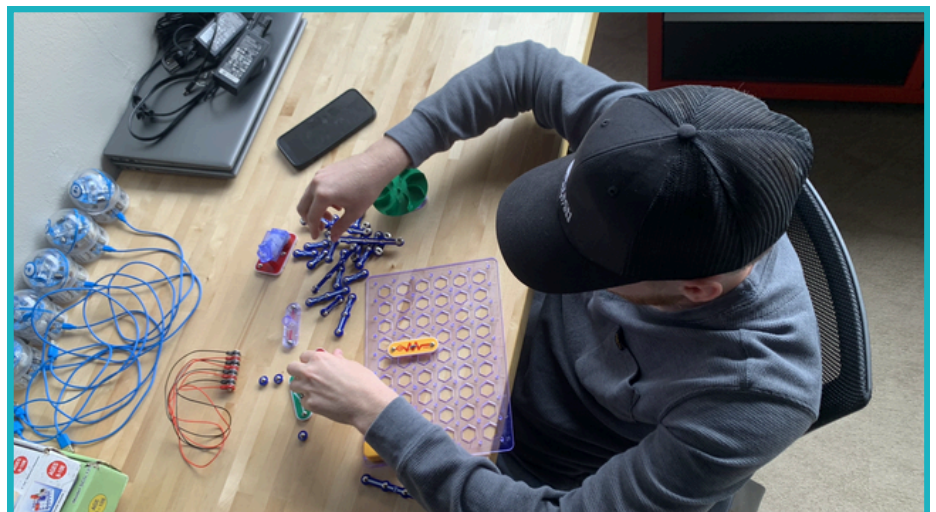


IN THEIR WORDS <<<

"About a year into my time at Tech Express, Caleb Lilly joined us as our lead technician...Caleb has been more than just a leader; he's been an exceptional teacher and a great friend. His daily lessons, whether it's installing an SSD in a customer's computer or learning customer communication, have shaped my skills and confidence in ways I never imagined. Tech Express has become more than just a workplace for me; it's a second home—a place where I can learn and grow every day...this place has not only equipped me with technical skills but has also helped shape who I am."

-Cody Wood, Apprentice Technician

180+ CUSTOMERS
served during
the 23-24 year
and
\$10,566.90 in services
provided



>>> STUCK? WE CAN HELP REMOTELY <<<



“IT WAS A JOY TO FIND A COMMUNITY GROUP THAT COULD ASSIST IN MY GROWING. THE PROGRAM PROVIDED RESOURCES FOR ME TO HAVE A GARDEN BIGGER THAN I PLANNED. EVERYONE HAD AMAZING INFORMATION TO SHARE AND I’M GLAD I JOINED.”

– TANYA TANNER,
GROW APPALACHIA PARTICIPANT

LOCAL FOODS

GROWING FARMERS AND ORGANIC PRODUCE

THE RUBY GROW PROGRAM

Ruby Grow is an agricultural business and educational market garden operating within High Rocks Educational Corporation. We focus on growing people and growing food to strengthen our community. Our program allows participants to learn sustainable farming from seed to market, developing skills in everything from planting, harvesting, packaging, and pricing to selling locally grown and value-added foods.

2023 NET SALES:
\$14,662

OUR VALUES

- We are working to expand our local food system in a rural food desert.
- We support a living wage for Appalachian Farmers based on labor and the actual cost of production.
- We believe food is medicine that nourishes the body, mind, and spirit.
- We are passionate about learning, leadership, health, wellness, and community engagement.

ENGAGEMENT:

10 Folk Arts workshops with 120 total participants

6 Grow Appalachia workshops

25 Grow Appalachia participants

55 elementary school farmers



WV JOBS NETWORK

GOOD PEOPLE. GOOD JOBS. GOOD WORKPLACES.



OUR PURPOSE:

Founded in 2021, the West Virginia Jobs Network is an active learning lab that hosts training opportunities, promotes best practices, and encourages collaborative development and dissemination of tools, projects, and programs that shape workforce-related policies and goals.

➤➤➤ POWER SKILLS

Each partner in the WV Jobs Network brings their own set of skills, talent, knowledge, and expertise. A High Rocks contribution to the network is the development and implementation of the Power Skills Certification. This workforce development tool is a three-part online course that takes professional skills to the next level, helping individuals excel in their workplaces and their lives, as community leaders, entrepreneurs, and valuable team members.

OUR PARTNERS ARE:

COALFIELD DEVELOPMENT
GENERATION WV
FIRST ASCENT
APPALACHIAN PROMISE ALLIANCE
FIRST2 NETWORK

“I FEEL LIKE THE COURSE PUSHED ME TO RETHINK THINGS I DO IN MY DAILY WORK, AS WELL AS TO TRY DIFFERENT TACTICS I HADN'T PREVIOUSLY CONSIDERED. MY WORK HAS BECOME MORE MEANINGFUL SINCE DOING THIS.”

- A POWER SKILLS PARTICIPANT

**34 INDIVIDUALS
PILOTED THE POWER SKILLS COURSE
DURING THE
23-24 PROGRAM YEAR**



➤➤➤ JOIN THE NETWORK <<<



FIRST2 NETWORK

COMMUNICATING OUR VALUE PROPOSITION

>>> RETENTION IS GOOD BUSINESS

First2 Network is working in true partnership with student leaders to double the graduation rate of rural, first-generation, low-income and other underrepresented STEM students in West Virginia and beyond. We are starting to see the true impact of our change work on these student populations, and how increases in STEM student retention benefit both students and colleges.

27%

of WVU STEM students persisted through graduation in 2019

compared to

47%

of all WVU STEM students who participated in the First2 Network through programs, running clubs, and testing change ideas remained enrolled in a STEM major

67%

of WVU first-generation and underrepresented students who participated in First2 two-week summer research immersions persisted in STEM (2018-2022)

72%

of all First2 Network STEM sophomores and higher persisted fall-to-fall (65 of 90 students, fall 2018-2022)

First-generation STEM undergraduate students at WVU have fall-to-fall persistence rates between **49%** and **64%** (2005-2018). The STEM persistence rate among all First2 Network first-time freshmen is **71%**, and among First2 Network sophomores and higher, **72%**. Based on the 2023-2034 tuition rates, in-state residential students pay \$22,668 a year for tuition, fees, and housing at WVU.

If 100 WVU STEM students participate in First2, 72 students persisting (**72%**) vs. 49 students persisting (**49%**) at WVU could equal

\$521,364

in income per year for retaining an additional 23 students.

>>> PERSISTENCE RATES FOR THOSE IMPACTED BY FIRST2 CHANGE IDEAS:

- WVU Tech - **48-54%** to **93%**
- Marshall University - **53%** to **100%**
- Fairmont State - **34-46%** to **92%**
- Shepherd University - **50%** to **95%**



FROM A NEW BOARD MEMBER

Dear Sarah Riley,

I am writing to be considered as a board member for High Rocks Educational Corporation. Originally from Wheeling, WV, I am a first-generation college student who graduated from Wheeling Park High School in 2017 and continued on to West Virginia University where I received my Bachelor's degree in Biochemistry (2021) and my Master's degree in Plant Pathology (2024). I recently relocated to Athens, GA to begin my PhD program in Forest Biology.



Education aside, I began my tangential work with High Rocks back in 2017 by participating in the NSF DDLP First2 Network pilot program. First2 became a hallmark of my undergraduate career, and I continued to serve as a Student Network Lead and later on as a Student Director for the program. It goes without saying that I would certainly not be where I am today without the support of First2 Network and the invaluable experience I gained from the program. I have learned how to be an effective leader and mentor – someone who people can look up to and look to for advice. I have learned how to persevere in the face of adversity and navigate the unique challenges faced by first-generation college students. I have learned how important it is to create a supportive and sustainable community of peers and colleagues.

After graduating with my Bachelor's from WVU in 2021, I continued to stay connected with this vast network by serving as a First2 Mentor during Camp Steele at High Rocks Academy. I guided rising college freshmen through a "crash course" in forest health and entomology. This opportunity allowed two facets of my career to converge into one in a meaningful way.

As a board member for High Rocks Educational Corporation, I am committed to carrying out the legacy and impact of First2 Network and also wish to stay involved with High Rocks Academy during the summertime. Being a first-generation college student and a native West Virginian has become a hallmark of my identity. Despite moving away from WV, I can't help but feel something is missing – home! Serving as a board member will allow me to maintain my WV roots while also providing for those that have provided so much for me at a pivotal time in my life. I know that I can bring creativity, ambition, compassion, experience, and so much more to the table if given this opportunity.

Thank you for your consideration and continued support,
Hannah Petronek (former First2 Student Director, current High Rocks Board Member)

THE CRAIG SAN PIETRO STEM CENTER AND CAMPGROUND KITCHEN

FROM CONCEPT TO REALITY

➤➤➤ TRANSFORMING THE HEART OF OUR CAMPGROUND

The High Rocks community has been excitedly watching as our long-dreamed of plan for a commercial kitchen, technology center, camp office, and picnic pavilion have transformed from sketches to models to concrete and wood in only a matter of months. This new space will allow us to provide food, fun and fellowship to High Rocks Academy campers and participants across all of our major programs for years to come.



**THIS PROJECT
MARKS THE
LARGEST
CONSTRUCTION
ENDEAVOR AT HIGH
ROCKS SINCE OUR
LODGE WAS BUILT.**

Ground was broken this past spring and our local contractors have been working tirelessly to get the main facility under roof before the snow flies. The first floor of the building will house a commercial kitchen and camp office while the second floor will house a technology center complete with smartboards, laptops, media equipment, and 3D printers to enhance and augment STEM learning at camp and beyond. Wood from the trees that were cleared from the campground building site will be used to fashion all of the exterior beams and posts. The structure will also include a covered pavilion to provide additional seating space (with 6 new picnic tables built by our construction class participants at Camp Steele!).

JUST AS THE KITCHEN IS THE HEART OF THE HOME, WE LOOK FORWARD TO THIS NEW SPACE BEING THE HEART OF OUR BELOVED MOUNTAIN CAMPGROUND.



➤➤➤ **GIVE NOW TO HELP FINISH THE BUILD** <<<<