



WUNDERLY STRENGTHENS LCBD COUNCIL EFFORT

The Little Cities effort has been graced with the addition of Ohio Stream Restore Corps Americorps member Jeff Wunderly. Jeff is serving his second term with OSRC, with his first being at Hocking Hills State Park. Jeff is focusing his efforts on the Tour de Forest Bicycle Ride, LC web site, social media and Little Cities Archive. A native of Clark County Ohio, Jeff came to southeast Ohio during the 1980's to attend Ohio University. Like many others, he liked the area and stayed. Jeff's past occupations include skilled carpentry and grants management at Hocking-Athens-Perry Community Action. He currently lives in Athens with his wife Deb Dreifort and says, "I love history and the outdoors, so this is a perfect place for me to be more deeply involved in my community. Jeff underwent two hip replacement surgeries this winter and we are excited to have him back in full commission this Spring!

SHARING THE STORY (Continued from pg. 1)

The organization's strong utilization of the arts to share our story has been made possible with consistent funding from the Ohio Arts Council whose commitments to bringing arts to underserved audiences is heroic!

Social Media & Web Presence

The long standing Little Cities web site that grew to add the Little Cities Archive site has been at the heart of providing wide public access to the region's story via collections of pictures, documents and artifacts. Pioneering efforts by volunteer Joe Winnenberg date back to the 1990's in this arena. These electronic-based materials have not only inspired popular interest in the historic boom-to-bust coal mining communities of our region, they have spurred a swell of research that continues to surprise and delight those in the Little Cities community. More recently, keeping pace with the rage of social media has been addressed by utilizing the popular Facebook platform where LCBD has a regular presence, utilizing social media's potential to publicize events and reach new audiences through the sharing of pictures and promoting activities in the region. This activity is enhanced by prolific posts from others who have collections of historic pictures of the region and those with a love for our communities.

Print Publications & Documentaries

The Council's capacity to research, write and publish books and other print pieces such as a quarterly newsletter has declined as John Winnenberg's community organizing focus has changed over the years. Yet, others have been drawn to the region's story. Three authors are currently in the process of having books on the region published (story page 3) with local historians Blosser and Winnenberg assisting them in various ways. These join with the previously produced documentaries *Devil's Oven: Fire in the Heart of the Little Cities of Black Diamonds* (Valda Lewisa) and *The Forest Returns* (Jean Andrews, Ohio Landscape Productions), and various local history publications including *Agents of Change: The Pioneering Role of Miners of the Little Cities in the Nation's Labor Movement*.

Events, Thematic Exhibits & Interpretation

LCBD's calendar of events includes LCBD Day (21 Years), Appalachian Spring (13 Years) and Tour de Forest Bicycle Ride (11 Years). These events call positive attention to the region and reinforce a "sense of place" around the series of communities that form our cultural district. Interpretive programs and exhibits at these events are interlaced with entertainment, recreation, food and children's programs. Over the years we have witnessed the power of regularly exposing audiences to snippets of local history and regional identity to influence the reputation of our communities changing from places of decline and decay to a region with a rich history, beautiful nature and caring people.

Collections, Information & Referral, Maps

The organization's archive housed in Shawnee and on-line contains nearly 2,000 items, as well as the Registry of the Miners of the Little Cities. These resources draw interest from researchers and family genealogists. (Story Page 3). Office manager Blosser is a faithful servant to fielding daily calls and e-mails requesting information. Maps developed by the Wayne Forest and in-house assist visitors in finding sites of interest.

Historic & Interpretive Sites

Members of the Little Cities Council and the organization's non-profit sponsor Sunday Creek Associates are stewards of a variety of historic buildings and interpretive sites scattered through the region. It often feels like a David and Goliath battle to save the dozens of buildings and interpret the various sites that tell the region's story and connect with our natural landscape. The Council does not directly play a role in owning or managing physical sites, but serves to support those who do with information and programming. A regional strategy for physical restoration, interpretive signage, and interpretive sites is needed. Experience tells us that the political and economic influence to guide this level in our microregion is questionable at the Council or Sunday Creek Associate level. Thus, we have been investing in a larger regional effort for such activity.

Regional Collaboration & The Winding Road

The LCBD Council started as a collaboration of small remnant mining towns sharing their history. It grew to include those interested in the microregion's natural history and environmental recovery via the Little Cities of the Forest Collaborative. Today, we have played a participating role in the formation of a larger regional effort known as *The Winding Road: Ohio's Rising Appalachia* in southeastern Ohio counties in the Hocking and Muskingum Valley watershed. This collaboration is working to build a critical mass of influence and activity around the history, culture, nature, arts and local foods that can gain the attention and support of investors as we attempt to build a sane tourism strategy that respects and shares unique authentic resources and stories. You will find Little Cities at the forefront of many of the products that are being shared via this brand, including events that you see shared on these pages. Visit www.ohiosappalachianwindingroad.org for more details.

In conclusion, the Little Cities microregion and Council holds a unique story, natural environment and series of communities in the heart of the Wayne National Forest that will continue to benefit from sharing our story and assets while maintaining an identity that strengthens this place that we love. We must continue to adapt to find the best ways to do this as we move forward. We hope that this summary helps you to understand how we are doing this and engender your continued support!

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the Little Cities
of Black Diamonds Council

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SHARING OUR STORY - 2016 STYLE

Meeting The Challenge of Engaging The Public in Contemporary Society

As the Little Cities Council launches its 21st year, we reflect on the opportunities and challenges of keeping the rich story of our microregion alive and available in a media saturated society. Capturing the attention of the public requires a multi-faceted approach that goes well beyond the written word and community gatherings that helped establish the Council. Despite limited resources, we are proud that the Council and our many allies are keeping pace in this lively arena by establishing new media and

presentation formats while honoring our past traditions. Staying faithful to our tradition of deeper exploration of the region's iconic stories of labor, race, immigration and environmental recovery, we overview here the many engaging strategies associated with our organization's mission.

Guided Tours

The Council's experimentation with guided tours has evolved into one of our key activities and income sources. Though selling tickets to thematic tours has met with limited success, group tours booked by educational, civic and tourist groups are now a regular occurrence creating heightened awareness of the nationally significant story of our region across diverse audiences. LCBD Historian and Office Manager Cheryl Blosser spends significant time fielding requests for tours, setting itineraries and arranging amenities for these groups. Local communities have become accustomed to hosting tour busses and vans packed with university students. Increased interest in research and community service projects follow the tours. For example, Dr. Michael Kopish's Social Studies education students at Ohio University visited the Little Cities and New Straitsville History Group archives during the past year for research projects, and in return volunteered at Little Cities of Black Diamond Day and Rendville's Emancipation Day this Fall.

The Arts

From the earliest years of the Council live music has been a staple at LCBD events featuring contemporary and period music. The Boys of the Hock, Rich Greenlee, Charlie & Celia Lewis and dozens of others have helped add depth to the region's story and culture. Graphic arts have been equally important with well designed images gracing posters, t-shirts, books and exhibits, most often designed by Shawnee artist Chad Seurkamp.

Under the leadership of Kathy Devecka, Little Cities Living History Troupe has been bringing the region's stories to life for over a decade, including her role as Corning civic leader Bertha Levion and Murray City boarding house operator Alice Mae Holt. She has been ably joined by Ron Luce portraying union organizer Chris Evans, Ken Bowald as industrialist Peter Hayden, Bob Garbo as Nelsonville opera house owner George Stuart and Matt Johnson as Rendville's Richard L. Davis, an African American pioneer in the labor movement.

Whether it be appearances during

guided tours or at public events, audiences place these characters at the top of their favorites list. Experimentation with stage shows during Appalachian Spring, and the arrival of Dayton Willison via the Ohio History Corps, allowed LCBD to take performance arts to the next level. This tradition continues with the *Curtain Up to Encore!* show developed at LCBD Day last Fall that will be performed again during Appalachian Spring at Nelsonville's Final Friday in April (see story page 2). Further experimentation on tap with the WoodSongs! event to be held during Appalachian Spring on April 2 (story page 2) and Brian Harnetty's *Shawnee, Ohio (2016)*, a soundscape event at the Wexner Center for the Arts in October (story page 4).

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Living History Character Peter Hayden at Sustain by Clay Exhibit during Nelsonville's Final Friday

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14TH ANNUAL APPALACHIAN SPRING

The 14th Annual Little Cities Appalachian Spring Season is about to blossom. The event has evolved from a one-day event at Eclipse Company Town begun in 2003, followed by a move to Nelsonville in 2010 for a series of events centered around Nelsonville's Final Friday. Most recently the event has turned into lively calendar of events celebrating Little Cities heritage and the arrival of spring in the returning forest lands of the region. The 2016 Little Cities Appalachian Spring calendar follows:

WoodSongs! • April 2 • 1-5PM • Shawnee • Free



WoodSongs! is a unique collaboration where local and natural history come to life through song. Join Columbus area singer-songwriter Jesse Henry for this free guided experience that will take participants on an walking tour through historic Shawnee and into the Wayne National Forest which surrounds the town. This guided experience will feature picturesque Tecumseh Lake and a hike on the Buckeye Trail led by forest and trail experts who will share the natural history, flora and fauna of the area. After a 1-1/2 mile hike the group will kick back at the to enjoy a short music concert put on by Henry, who is known for his lead singer role in the Columbus area band known as the Spike Drivers. Following the concert Jesse will lead the group in a collective songwriting session that fosters lyrics and creativity to complete a song about the shared experiences and inspiration of the day through the words of participants. The day will be documented on video and audio, shared online and be sharable with your friends. Gather at the Tecumseh Commons at 1PM. The event is free and open to the public. Sturdy walking shoes, imagination and good mobility on uneven ground are needed.

Little Cities Bus Tour • April 9 • 9AM-5PM • Baker Center-Ohio University • Free



The *Region As A Classroom* effort being led by Sunday Creek Associates/Little Cities Council will host its second annual Spring Tour Campus-Community Tour of the Little Cities. The guided bus tour begins at Baker Center in Athens and travels through Nelsonville, Haydenville, the Ora Anderson Trail/Rutherford Wetland, New Straitsville, Shawnee, Rendville and Glouster, before returning to Athens. The tour is open to community members and faculty and student at Ohio University. The tour includes a complimentary lunch and mid-day discussion. Its intent is to nurture campus-community learning engagements and service projects. Community participation will assist in advancing this cause. The tour is made possible with support from the 1804 Fund, The Patton College of Education, The College of Arts & Sciences and the Center for Campus and Community Engagement at Ohio University along with community partner Rural Action and SCA/LCBD Council. The event is free, but pre-registration is required via e-mail to martinj8@ohio.edu.

Curtain Up To Encore & Exhibit • April 29 • 6-10pm • Nelsonville Final Friday • Free



The Little Cities theme *Curtain Up To Encore* will continue its run at Nelsonville's Final Friday. An outdoor stage show on the Public Square Green featuring an Opera House Revue at 6PM and 7:15PM. The show will feature opera singer Bonnie Hall, Dayton Willison and Kata Jones in a scene from Shakespeare, and Ken Bowald as the Opera House janitor who reflects on the history of these icons of coal town communities. The Opera House of the Little Cities exhibit that premiered at LCBD Day in October will be on display in the windows of the Foundation for Appalachian Ohio that evening along with a table featuring LCBD information and souvenirs.

William Condee: Coal & Culture - Opera Houses in Appalachia • May 7 • Shawnee • Free



Opera House authority William Condee will speak at the Tecumseh Theater in Shawnee on Saturday evening, May 7 at 6:30pm. Condee's book *Coal & Culture: Opera Houses in Appalachia* (Ohio University Press) will be the basis for his conversation sponsored by the Perry County Historical Society. Condee provides a critical appreciation of the opera house in the coal-mining region of Appalachia from the mid- 1860s to the early 1930s. *Coal and Culture* demonstrates that these were multipurpose facilities that were used for traveling theater, concerts, religious events, lectures, commencements, boxing matches, benefits, union meetings, and - if the auditorium had a flat floor - skating and basketball. The event is free and open to the public.

11th Tour de Forest Benefit Bicycle Ride • May 14 • Hocking College • Nelsonville



LCBD's ever-growing fund raising event has found a new home at Hocking College. Three roadway routes of varying distances, a gravel route and Hock-Hocking Adena Bikeway routes take riders through the forested hills of southeastern Ohio on both level and challenging courses on Saturday morning, May 14 beginning and ending at Hocking College Student Center. Included in registration is a Tour de Forest T-Shirt and a "start your ride" Homemade Granola Bar from Fullbrook's Cafe on Nelsonville's Historic Public Square. A hearty complimentary lunch will be served upon return at the Student Center between 11:30am and 3pm. This is a non-competitive ride that raises funds for the Council. New in 2016 is group registration which provides a reduced registration rate and social perks! Even more exciting with this year's move is rider access to the Student Recreation Center's facilities, including pool, climbing wall and disc golf. Registration for this year's ride is \$30 for adults and \$20 for youth (6-17 years). Registration for groups/teams of 5 or more riders will be \$25/rider and \$15/rider for youth. Non-rider rec passes are available for \$10 for those who wish to attend the event but choose not ride. Departure times begin at 7am and run until 10am and are the choice of the rider, though they should be calculated to insure return in time for lunch between 11:30AM and 3pm. For more information and to register on-line visit www.tourdeforest.wordpress.com. Please note that helmets are required on this ride.

Appalachian Spring updates @ www.littlecitiesofblackdiamonds.org

INVEST IN THE STORY: Membership Makes The Difference!

Sustaining our work means that a child on a school field trip understands the story of his ancestors who came here during the coal boom, the issues of labor that for which they fought and the legacy of the unregulated coal mining era on the streams where she lives. It means developing pride in the place where we live--a place that often gets labels as undesirable. It means logging on to the Little Cities Archive web site when working on a research paper, it means developing a job for oneself as an interpretive guide for tourists. It means extra funds in a businesses' cash drawer at the end of the day because guests on a tour ate the local restaurant, stayed at a local b & b, purchased gasoline and shopped at the local gift shop

Membership is a critical component of our annual budget and grows in importance with each passing year as resources for heritage education and preservation shrink. Please find enclosed a membership card with this annual BD Press. **We ask that you return it with your contribution and/or pledge of voluntary assistance!** We have been averaging a budget of about \$15,000 each year to operate the Council, which includes our office manager/research/information & referral position held by Cheryl Blosser who works for a very modest stipend. Our only regular grant funding comes from the Ohio Arts Council which is about \$4,800 this year. After that, we rely on earned income from tours, events and memberships. In addition to Ms. Blosser's position, key costs go to putting on events, tours and maintaining an office and archive space. This year, Cheryl desperately needs a new laptop, and the utility and connectivity bills continue to rise. Trust us, we do a lot with a little! Please consider a generous contribution!

2015 LITTLE CITIES SPIRIT AWARD WINNERS: Wilson, Dishon & Hughes

Three well deserving individuals were recognized at Little Cities Day in October for their contributions to the regions history, culture, natural environment and civic life. This year's recipients are: Kevin Wilson of Congo for his work in saving Congo history and supporting civic life in the former company town; Rob Dishon, Shawnee for his countless dedication for collecting and sharing Shawnee history and his role in keeping the Shawnee Homecoming alive; and Anna Hughes, Columbus a faithful volunteer Little Cities events and saviour of an at-risk historic building in Shawnee. Their dedication to keeping the story and spirit of the Little Cities alive is not to be underestimated!

NEW BOOKS & MEDIA: Research & Publication Continues!

In recent years, more writers have begun to spread the word of the Little Cities of Black Diamonds microregion. An increase in writers, scholars and journalists visiting the area, have resulted in new publications being in the works. A photo book, *Nelsonville* by Lorinda LeClain was released last fall, by Arcadia Publishing. Lorinda is the local history librarian at the Nelsonville Library. On the heels of that book, documentarian Evan Shaw released a documentary, *Our Town: Nelsonville* which was produced by and premiered on WOUB-Public Television in early March. Interview with Dr. Ivan Tribe and John Winnenberg gave strong representation to the Hocking Valley Coal Boom era and its impact on the Athens County "Little City."

Area labor leaders and stories continue to draw interest. A book on the life of Rendville's Richard L. Davis by Ohio University Professor Frans Doppen has been accepted by McFarland & Co. publishers and will be in print later this year. Also under development is a publication on Christopher Evans by Ron Luce, the man who has so ably played his character as a Little Cities Living History characters. *Company Town* by Curt Yehnert tells the story of boom mining town San Toy and is expected to be in print this year as well. David and Elise Meyers Walker and Nyla Vollmer are currently writing *Carrying Coal to Columbus*, a history of the promoters, developers and the circumstances for building canals, railroads, coal mines and town development in Southeastern Ohio. We greatly appreciate the effort that goes into research and writing. We look forward to the finished products!

USE OF ARCHIVES IS BRISK: Preserving the Stories

The Little Cities Archive has been steadily growing for years, but through the efforts of volunteers Joe Winnenberg and Lil Winnenberg the amount of information readily available to the public has greatly increased. Today the archive has 1197 digital clips, 438 documents and 1,300 photos. An average of one hundred and seventy five visitors look online every day. This collection is posted online at www.littlecitiesarchive.org, and available free to the public at 127 W. Main in Shawnee. These items are what we draw from for displays and exhibits throughout the year, as well as occasionally lending pieces to other historical groups and organizations for the same. Countless hours of volunteer labor and many generous contributions of items have made possible this outreach and educational tool which is so central to our mission.

Cheryl Blosser is constantly adding to the collection, and the Miner's Registry, through her daily contact with the public. LCBD AmeriCorps member Jeff Wunderly has been able to spend time during the winter 'slow' season learning archive procedures and making progress organizing and processing our backlog of items waiting to enter the archive. Recent notable contributions from George and Nancy Bain, Michael Tharp, Rodney Galentin, Albert Siemer and Matthew Seigfried have helped us fill in missing pieces of our stories. The donations include photocopies of payroll records from the Columbus and Hocking Coal and Iron company from the late 1800s, copies of mine maps, newspaper articles plus photos from Corning, Comly, Hemlock, Shawnee, New Straitsville and Jobs. These items have already helped us add to the Miner's Registry (now over 7,000 entries) collect accounts of epidemics in the region and added to our knowledge of women's lives in the Hocking Valley. Please keep sharing and watch us grow!

LABOR & OTHER GUIDED TOURS: A Ticket to Ride, International Interest...

Stay tuned to our web site for announcements about this summer's labor history tour. This tour and general Little Cities tours are available upon advance request for groups of 8-12 in the organization's van. Portions of these tours, as well the full tour, are also available to larger groups providing transportation. The organization also expects to host international-oriented Ohio University tour groups this summer. As has been the case the past four years, the State Department's *Study of the United State Institute* is expected to visit. New this summer will be a visit from *Global Communities: Past & Present*, a two-week workshop that will study international melting pot communities of the past (the Little Cities) and present (Columbus & Athens).

PROHIBITION & SPIRITS: LCBD Day October 16

Mark your calendar for the 22nd Little Cities of Black Diamonds Day set for Sunday, October 16 in Shawnee. Per usual, the event launches the Council's latest thematic effort. Still in planning, this year's theme will focus on Prohibition and the role of alcoholic beverages on life in the Little Cities.