

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WKU's Kentucky Folklife Program to host the 2017 Kentucky Rural-Urban Exchange cohort in Bowling Green,

LEXINGTON, KY – The Kentucky Rural-Urban Exchange (RUX) will gather in Lexington this weekend for the first 2017 Rural-Urban Exchange Community Intensive. Following a highly competitive application process, the Kentucky RUX program accepted 75 members representing 26 counties in Kentucky for the 2017 learning cohort. The Kentucky RUX network aligns people working across the arts, agriculture, community health and small business to work together towards the transformation of Kentucky's economies, communities and sense of self.

The mission of the Kentucky RUX is to *grow relationships across divides to build a more collaborative and connected Commonwealth*. Founded in 2014 by Art of the Rural and Appalshop, and supported by the Rural Policy Research Institute and several Kentucky businesses, the Kentucky RUX has collaborated with 52 distinct partners. Kentucky RUX's current and alumni network includes more than 160 Kentuckians from 34 counties.

Kentucky RUX programming is focused on people, places, and partnerships. In each weekend-long Community Intensive, participants enjoy a local experience of the host community, explore our common identity and culture, and contribute to place-based strategies to address our shared social and economic future. These exchange labs and their resulting collaborations are central to achieving the RUX vision: a future in which Kentuckians value each other, create common ground, and understand our interdependence.

Members from across the state will gather in Lexington June 23-25, in Bowling Green July 28-30, and in Harlan County Sept. 29-Oct. 1 for the Kentucky RUX program's fourth year. Past host communities include Louisville (2014-15), Paducah (2015-16), and Whitesburg (2014-15).

The Kentucky Folklife Program, housed in Western Kentucky University's Department of Folk Studies & Anthropology in Bowling Green, is serving as a regional host partner. Twelve Bowling Green and Western Kentucky residents were selected for this year's learning cohort:

Kristina Arnold, Western Kentucky University Gallery (Bowling Green); **Deborah Bourland**, Western Kentucky Regional Migrant Education Program (Hanson); **Chloe Brown**, Western Kentucky University (Bowling Green); **Landee Bryant-Greene**, Maiden Alley Cinema, Bricolage Art Collective (Paducah); **Kaycee Gibson**, International Center of Kentucky (Horse Cave); **Maria T. Lewis**, Western Kentucky University Libraries (Horse Cave); **Nicole Musgrave**, Western Kentucky University (Bowling Green); **Emily Owen**, freelance writer (Marion); **Neil Purcell**, PBS (Bowling Green); **Stephanie L. Self**, KCTCS – Madisonville (Corydon); **Emily Stewart**, GoBunny Media (Bowling Green); **Shannon Worden**, Sam's Club (Hopkinsville);

To learn more about the 2017 Learning Cohort and follow RUX, visit: www.kyrux.org.



ART OF THE RURAL



About Appalshop: Appalshop is a non-profit multi-disciplinary arts and education center in the heart of Appalachia producing original films, video, theater, music and spoken-word recordings, radio, photography, multimedia, and books. Their education and training programs support communities' efforts to solve their own problems in a just and equitable way. Each year, Appalshop productions and services reach several million people nationally and internationally. <http://appalshop.org/>

About Art of the Rural: Art of the Rural is a collaborative organization with a mission to help build the field of the rural arts and shape new narratives on rural culture and community. We work online and on the ground through interdisciplinary and cross-sector partnerships to advance engaged collaboration and policy that transcends imposed boundaries and articulates the shared reality of rural and urban America. <http://artoftherural.org/>

Kentucky Rural-Urban Exchange Steering Committee Members: Alexia Ault - Higher Ground at Southeast Community and Technical College (Harlan), Ada Smith - Appalshop (Whitesburg), Savannah Barrett - Art of the Rural (Louisville), Shane Barton - UK Appalachian Center (Lexington), Ivy Brashear - MACED (Berea), Landee Bryant Greene - Maiden Alley Cinema (Paducah), Nick Covault - Kentucky Governor's School for the Arts (Louisville), Stefani Dahl - Norton Healthcare (Louisville), Mark Kidd - Handbarrow (Whitesburg), Josh May (Whitesburg), Cheyenne Mize - STRIVE (Louisville), Sarah Schmitt - Kentucky Arts Council (Frankfort), Gerry Seavo James - The Explore Kentucky Initiative (Frankfort), Ashley Smith - The Lyric Theatre and Cultural Arts Center (Lexington), Richard Young - Community Development Consultant (Lexington).

2017 Kentucky RUX Regional Host Partners: The Lyric Theatre and Cultural Arts Center in Lexington, The Kentucky Folklife Program in Bowling Green, and Higher Ground at Southeast Kentucky Community and Technical College and Pine Mountain Settlement School in Harlan.



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