Example of successful media grant application

NOTE:
The application format has changed. This example can provide general guidance in preparing your proposal. Grant applications are now submitted electronically through the Humanities Council website at www.wvhumanities.org
West Virginia Humanities Council
Media Grant Application Cover Sheet

Mail application to: WVHC 1310 Kanawha Blvd., East, Charleston, WV 25301
Phone: 304-346-8500  http://www.wvhumanities.org

Project Title
HOLLOW: AN INTERACTIVE DOCUMENTARY

Sponsoring Organization
Name
WEST VIRGINIA FILMMAKERS GUILD
Address
PO BOX 11553
City
CHARLESTON
Zip
25339
Phone
(304) 521 - 8491
Email
WVFILMMAKERSGUILD@GMAIL.COM
CEO of Organization
David Smith, President
Signature

Project Director
Name
ELAINE MCMILLION
Address
PO BOX 804
City
PINCHE
Zip
25154
Phone
304 545 6192
Email
elaine@hallowthefilm.com

Fiscal Officer
Name
Nathaniel Hansen
Address
10 Archdale Road Apt B
City
Boston
Zip
02131
Phone
781 513 5831
Email
hansennathaniel@gmail.com
**Brief Project Description**

Hollow is a hybrid community participatory project and interactive documentary where content is created "for the community, by the community." The project combines personal documentary video portraits, resident and user-generated content, photography, soundscapes, social media, interactive data and grassroots mapping on an HTML5 website designed to discuss the many stereotypes associated with the area, population loss and potential for the future.

Having spent the summer of 2012 documenting, engaging and providing media training to residents of McDowell, this grant will help pay for the programming/development of an online community organizing tool (to work in tandem with the HTML5 website), sound design for the HTML5 website and launch of various distribution models across the state and region.

**WV House District** 23  **WV Senate District** 6  **Congressional District** 3

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**Project Budget**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Request $</th>
<th>$ 20,000.00</th>
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<tr>
<td>Cash Cost Share</td>
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<tr>
<td>In-Kind Share</td>
<td>$ 76,775.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total $</td>
<td>$ 148,981.56</td>
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**Project Period**

| Beginning of project | 12/01/12 |
| Expected Final Report Date | 06/01/12 |

**Schedule of Project Activities**

- December 1, 2012: Meeting with developer/programmer to initiate build out of online Community Tool. Reference concept, strategy, user-experience design and interface design created prior.
- December 1–December 21, 2012: Programming begins for the Community Tool. Functionality includes social media APIs (real-time social media dialogue), local government transparency via access to documents and scheduled activity, community member blogs, ongoing calendar of events relative to community initiatives, streaming video, community forum, community wiki, community member database (requires member sign up).

During the last five years, has the applicant organization been investigated for its financial or management practices?

- Yes [ ] No [x] If yes, please explain.

Has the project director directed a previous WVHC Project?

- Yes [x] No [ ] If yes, please give date.

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**Budget Form**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenditure Categories</th>
<th>Grant Request</th>
<th>In-Kind Cost Share</th>
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<td>Supplies</td>
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<td>Promotion &amp; Printing</td>
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<td>Equipment/Facilities Rental</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other (specify)</td>
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<td>$2,000</td>
<td>$5,775</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| Totals | $20,000 | $76,775 | $52,206.56 |

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- 2 -
SCHEDULE OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES (continued from cover sheet)

December 1, 2012: Meeting with developer/programmer to initiate build out of online Community Tool. Reference concept, strategy, user-experience design and interface design created prior.

December 1–December 21, 2012: Programming begins for the Community Tool. Functionality includes social media APIs (real-time social media dialogue), local government transparency via access to documents and scheduled activity, community member blogs, ongoing calendar of events relative to community initiatives, streaming video, community forum, community wiki, community member database (requires member sign up and managing individual profiles), CMS (content management system), managing email lists, news feeds, interactive data visualizations and ongoing monitoring/maintenance.

December 1–May 2013: Programming is ongoing for HTML5 experience.

January 2013: Picture lock on first batch of short video portraits for HTML5 experience. First batch of short video portraits are sent to the sound designer and colorist.

January 2, 2013: Review alpha version of Community Tool. Test and provide feedback and changes.

January 2–January 25, 2013: Continue with development of Community Tool (see items above).

January 25, 2013: Review beta version of Community Tool. Test and provide feedback and changes.


February 2013: Picture lock on second batch of short video portraits for HTML5 experience. Second batch of short video portraits are sent to the sound designer and colorist.


March 2013: Sound designer begins working with soundscapes for overarching HTML5 website experience.

May 2013: All video portraits for HTML5 experience completed with sound design, music and color correction. Soundscapes completed.


June 2013: Enter festivals. Hold live interactive screenings across Appalachia, the state of West Virginia and East Coast of the United States. Specific locations include, McDowell County Public Library, River View High School (Bradshaw, WV), Mount View High School (Welch, WV), West Virginia University, Marshall University, DigiSo (Charleston, WV), Virginia Tech, Emerson College (Boston, MA), American University (Washington, D.C.).
## Expenditures from December 2012 to June 2013

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<tr>
<th>Expenditure Categories</th>
<th>Explanation Grant</th>
<th>Request</th>
<th>In-Kind Cost Share</th>
<th>Cash Cost Share</th>
<th>Total Matching Funds</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tr>
<td>Salary</td>
<td>Elaine McMillion [Project Director] to edit up to 30 individual portraits, direct/supervise editors and sound designer, direct storytelling/editorial approach for HTML5 experience and strategize for Community Tool. 625 hours @ $40/hr = $25,000</td>
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<td>$25,000</td>
<td>$0.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Salary</td>
<td>Jeff Soyk [Interactive Art Director] to concept, strategize, design user experiences and interfaces and direct developers for HTML5 experience and Community Tool. 625 hours @ $40/hr = $25,000</td>
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<td>$25,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Salary</td>
<td>Nathaniel Hansen [Project Manager] to strategize and manage team and tasks for HTML5 experience and Community Tool. 300 hours @ $40/hr = $12,000</td>
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<td>Salary</td>
<td>Tricia Fulks [Associate Producer, Story Director] to assist with storytelling and copywriting for HTML5 experience and Community Tool. 175 hours @ $35/hr = $6,125</td>
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<tr>
<td>Salary</td>
<td>Megan Bowers [Associate Producer, Videographer] to assist with video editing for HTML5 experience. 175 hours @ $35/hr = $6,125</td>
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<td>$6,125</td>
<td>$6,125</td>
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<td>Salary</td>
<td>Sound Designer 190 hours (up to 30 short portraits + soundscapes for HTML5 experience) @ $35/hr = $6,650</td>
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<td>Expenditure Categories</td>
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<td>Cash Cost Share</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Salary</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Promotion</strong></td>
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<td>$0.00</td>
<td>$0.00</td>
<td>$0.00</td>
<td>$2,748.56</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Other</strong></td>
<td>WVFG fiscal sponsorship fee = $800 Jeff to create graphics - 50 hours @ $40/hr = $2,000 Website VPS Hosting = $480/yr for 5 years = $2,400 User Testing - $750 Web maintenance - 75 hours @ $35/hr = $2,625</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<td>$52,206.56</td>
<td>$128,981.56</td>
<td>$148,981.56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PROJECT NARRATIVE: HOLLOW

A. What Hollow wants to accomplish & why this project is needed.

The 10 incorporated communities in McDowell County, W.Va., are only years from extinction. Over the last several decades, businesses, schools, churches and families have left at alarming rates causing the county to lose more than 80,000 people. Located in the coalfields, the area has experienced the effects of a boom-and-bust economy, but its experience is similar to many rural towns. Over the past 25 years, more than 700 rural counties, from the Plains to the Texas Panhandle to Appalachia, lost 10 percent or more of their population. Rural development in the United States does not receive as much attention as urban issues by the government or media, and when mainstream media has portrayed these people, they are shown as one-dimensional characters in issue-driven films about environmental destruction, coal mining and drug abuse. Hollow is an interactive documentary and participatory project that presents media created by the community, for the community. The stories focus on the lives of residents who have stayed in McDowell County during this turbulent time and allow residents to reclaim their history and future through media production. The final interactive website will combine personal documentary portraits, interactive data, maps and user-generated content to address the issues stemming from stereotyping and steady population loss. Hollow will offer a platform for decision-making, collaboration and encourage change in the region. The documentary portraits, created by the community and production team, will provide a multidimensional viewpoint that will demonstrate how special and universal these people, their problems and their options can be.

B. Clear statement about the humanities content of the project;

Hollow focuses on the human experience of McDowell County residents. From their strong ties to history, culture, religion and their hopes and dreams for the future, the residents—not issues—are at the core of this project. Ethics, and particularly media ethics, are also at the core of Hollow’s mission. The creators of Hollow believe that there is more than one side to every story. We also believe that the people who experience the stories are the ones who should have the power to tell them. As a result, Hollow gives McDowell Countians a chance to tell their story as they live it, as opposed to an outsider’s perspective of the area, its issues and experiences. There is a transparency throughout production of Hollow. Filmmakers have held storytelling workshops to discuss the stories that need to be told and increase media literacy. Through an increase of media literacy the community has become empowered and taken the creation of images into their own hands. Through traditional documentary techniques and new media access, Hollow will combine these personal oral and visual portraits, interactive data, maps and user-generated content to address the issues and offers ideas for future improvement of the human condition of those in the area.
C. A list of scholars involved in the project.

Jean Battlo
McArts Fine Arts Organization, Inc.
304-585-7107
emilyd@frontiernet.net
Member of community advisory board
A native of McDowell County, West Virginia, Jean Battlo has produced an eclectic body of theatrical, literary, and historical work and founded McArts Fine Arts Organization, Inc. in 1979. McArts is a nonprofit organization established to foster arts, culture, education, and history in and for McDowell County, West Virginia. As a poet, Battlo has won awards in 1997-1999 for her books of haiku, Bonsai and Modern Haiku. Professional, community and college theatrical groups in several states have performed her plays. Battlo has a B.A. and M.A. from Marshall University with studies in history, dramatic arts, English literature and a minor in philosophy. She has also completed 35 hours of classical studies at William and Mary College.

William H. Turner, PhD
Berea College: Appalachian Studies
(859) 985-3724
William_Turner@berea.edu
Advisor of African American experience and representation
Dr. William H. Turner was appointed to the National Endowment for the Humanities Chair in Appalachian Studies at Berea College, beginning fall 2007. A sociologist whose work focuses on Appalachian African Americans, Turner brings more than 30 years of experience as a researcher, teacher, and administrator. In 1988-89 he was a distinguished visiting professor of Black and Appalachian Studies at Berea College. Turner serves as an advisor on Hollow to ensure the African American story is told properly and with justice.

Dr. Christiadi (PhD)
West Virginia University
304-293-1801
christiadi@mail.wvu.edu
Data usage advisor
Dr. Christiadi serves as a liaison with the U.S. Census Bureau with regard to population estimates and projections. He oversees the production of West Virginia population projections. He specializes in urban-regional and labor-demographic economics, with a primary focus on migration. He has also conducted a variety of economic impact and labor market studies. He is advising on the impact of demographic exodus from McDowell County.
PROJECT NARRATIVE: HOLLOW

Eric Gordon (PhD)  
Harvard University: Berkman Center for Internet & Society  
617-824-8828  
eric_gordon@emerson.edu  
New Media Advisor  
Eric Gordon is an associate professor in the department of Visual and Media Arts at Emerson College where he focuses on the design and research of digital games and social software that foster local civic engagement. He is the co-author of a new book about location-based media called *Net Locality: Why Location Matters in a Networked World* (Blackwell Publishing, 2011) and the author of *The Urban Spectator: American Concept Cities From Kodak to Google* (Dartmouth, 2010). Gordon has a BA in Sociology and Literature and a PhD in Cinema-Television Critical Studies from the University of Southern California. He is currently a fellow at the Harvard University’s Berkman Center for Internet & Society.

John Gianvito  
Emerson College: Visual & Media Arts  
617-824-8828  
john_gianvito@emerson.edu  
Documentary Portrait Critique  
John Gianvito is a filmmaker, curator, critic and associate professor at Emerson College in Boston, Ma. He has a B.F.A. from California Institute of the Arts and a M.S. from Massachusetts Institute of Technology. His films include the feature films *The Flower of Pain*, *Address Unknown*, and *The Mad Songs of Fernanda Hussein*, winner of multiple awards including being cited as one of the top ten films of the year by critics in The Chicago Reader, The Boston Phoenix, and Film Comment magazine. Gianvito will critique the visual and narrative quality of the video portraits through all stages of post-production.

D. Information about the sponsoring organization, cooperating groups, and project staff.

*Hollow* has ongoing, committed relationships with a total of five non-profits, four of which are located in West Virginia. West Virginia Public Broadcasting is a supporter of *Hollow* and will be running interstitial commercials during post-production to advertise for the May 2013 launch of the interactive and feature-length documentary in the fall of 2013. The West Virginia Filmmakers Guild serves as the project’s partner and state fiscal sponsor. The West Virginia Filmmakers Guild has served West Virginia media makers for over 30 years by providing networking and educational opportunities for its members, including sponsoring previous WVHC grant recipients. *Hollow* is also partnered with WVFREE, a reproductive justice organization. Rachel Huff, education and outreach managers, reached out to McMillion to develop a relationship and provide the youth of Keystone a chance to tell their own story through video. Another partner, The Council of Southern Mountains, whose goal is to improve the quality of life in McDowell and eradicate poverty by helping people overcome barriers to success, provides the *Hollow* team with on-the-ground resources in the county, including office space. Documentary Educational Resources, a non-profit based in Watertown, Mass., serves as our national fiscal sponsor. Founded in 1968, DER fosters cross-cultural understanding through the distribution and promotion of documentary films from

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PROJECT NARRATIVE: HOLLOW

around the world. DER handles all tax-deductible donations made toward the project. The project is also supported by the Tribeca Film Institute and was awarded a New Media fund for $65,000 in August 2012. Those funds will go toward creating the cinematic experience of Hollow. Hollow is currently in the running to be featured on an interactive panel at SXSW Film Festival in Austin, Texas in the spring of 2013.

Beyond organizational support, the team's strongest connections have been made through the community advisory board, which includes artist and painter, Tom Acosta; photographer and writer, Renee Bolden; playwright, Jean Battio, musician; photographer, Alan Johnston; and Riverview High School student and mascot Josh Clevenger.

The Hollow team includes a variety of talent all under 30 years old. A majority of the team are natives of West Virginia. McMillion assembled a team based on their skills to merge documentary and interactive media; community storytelling; workshop planning and public outreach; and cartography and balloon mapping. As the founder of Hollow, McMillion's work focuses on contemporary social and cultural issues. Raised in Southern West Virginia, McMillion received her B.S. in Journalism from West Virginia University. In 2009, McMillion produced Lincoln County Massacre, a 60-minute documentary about police abuse in West Virginia. Lincoln County Massacre premiered at the West Virginia Filmmakers Festival in September 2011 where it received the Director's Choice and Audience Choice awards. In 2010, McMillion co-directed and co-produced The Lower 9, a film about the Lower Ninth Ward community of New Orleans. The Lower 9 received the Golden Circle Award from the Caucus Foundation for Directors and Producers, has shown at the Chagrin Documentary Film Festival and a distribution deal by Third World Newsreel in Los Angeles. The film will have its international premiere at the Film by the Sea festival in The Netherlands in 2012. In September 2010, McMillion entered the Masters of Fine Arts program in Visual and Media Arts at Emerson College in Boston. McMillion is an associate producer at Northern Light Productions and an adjunct faculty member at Emerson College teaching media production to undergraduates.

Jeff Soyk, Hollow's interactive art director, is a Boston-based designer/media artist, originally from Westchester County, New York. He started his design career in advertising after receiving a BFA in New Media Design from Rochester Institute of Technology in 2005. His design work has received WebAwards for brands such as Motorola, Maid of the Mist, and Nucor. His passion for meaningful storytelling has lead him to reach outside of advertising and expand beyond the web into film and sound, as he recognizes the potential for engaging transmedia experiences. He is currently an MFA candidate through the Media Art program at Emerson College in Boston, MA and seeks to work on projects that explore the possibilities of modern media and strive to address important and meaningful social issues. Through Hollow, Jeff is providing interactive design and strategy as well as the project's brand essence.

Other vital team members include Tricia Fulks, a West Virginia native, freelance digital journalist and story director for Hollow; Nathaniel Hansen, a documentary filmmaker, anthropologist, and project manager for Hollow; Eric Lovell, a West Virginia native, cartographer and PhD candidate at CU-Boulder; Michelle Miller, a West Virginia Native, community organizer in Washington, D.C. and workshop coordinator for Hollow; and
PROJECT NARRATIVE: HOLLOW

Megan Bowers, a West Virginia native, freelance videographer in Pittsburgh, and video editor for Hollow.

E. Insofar as possible, a complete schedule of activities;

Late 2011 to spring 2012 – A community advisory board was developed. The production team launched its Kickstarter campaign, which raised almost $28,000, and performed community, statewide and national outreach. The project was featured in local and national media.

Summer of 2012 – Hollow production began in May and completed in September of 2012. Filmmakers interviewed upwards of 50 individuals. The team members held three community storytelling workshops throughout the summer in which discussion surrounded issues and challenges the area needed to overcome to move toward a better future. Video training for community members was provided, and camera kits were distributed to community storytellers throughout McDowell County. Cartographer Eric Lovell held balloon-mapping exercises with area youth. Team members collected and scanned materials (such as news articles, photos, etc.) from community members. Team members collaborated on an art project with the 4-H group at Panther Wildlife Management about what they want to see for designing a community center in the county, which will be animated for the interactive experience. Tribeca Film Institute awarded the project $65,000 to put towards the development of the interactive site.

Fall and winter of 2012 – The video production editing team for Hollow will begin to edit short 2- to 5-minute portraits shot by the community and the filmmakers. The interactive production team will begin working with designers and programmers to start developing the website. Creative technologists and storytelling editors will work together to bring the stories to life online. In McDowell County, community members will continue to shoot footage for the documentary until December 2013. Team members have already been invited to speak on behalf of the project. Story Director Tricia Fulks will discus the project at the Online News Association’s conference in San Francisco in early September, and Project Director Elaine McMillion will present at Camden International Film Festival in late September and MIT’s Open Doc Lab in November.

Spring of 2013 – In April 2013, Hollow will launch its beta version. The community and Kickstarter campaign donors will test the site during the month. Feedback will be collected, and user pathways will be examined to successfully launch the full experience in early summer.

Summer of 2013 – Funding will be used for live interactive screenings across Southern West Virginia and Appalachia. Screenings will include 15 to 20 individuals who will gather at public libraries and high schools to experience Hollow, join the discussion and upload content. Throughout the summer interactive screenings will be held at campuses, labs and libraries in Charleston, Bridgeport and Morgantown, W.Va.; Blacksburg, Va.; Boston, Mass.; and Washington, D.C.
PROJECT NARRATIVE: HOLLOW

Fall of 2013 – Hollow team members will apply for entrance into the interactive competitions of festivals, such as SXSW, International Documentary Festival of Amsterdam, Sundance, Tribeca Film Festival and more.

F. Outline of promotional plans and the intended audience;

Through a combination of social media, traditional news outlets, community events, screenings, festivals and word of mouth, Hollow is sure to reach the fingertips of many. Through the team’s connections with their respective educational institutions and employers, the project will be promoted to many different audiences. The project will be pitched to bloggers and other social media outlets to drive thousands of viewers to the website. Interactive community screenings have been held throughout the summer of 2012 and will continue with the advisor board members to engage traditional media and the community as well.

The project will be submitted to regional, national and international festivals, such as Sundance, South by Southwest & IDFA, to increase the recognition and attention for the project. As the website becomes active in May 2013, the Hollow team has partnered with West Virginia Public Broadcasting to produce interstitials directing viewers to participate in the website experience. There will also be a stand-alone documentary, which will be produced, which West Virginia Public Broadcasting has agreed to partner and submit for national PBS broadcast.

All of these techniques are intended to reach the two key audiences. Hollow strives to engage and empower those locally to make the most of the communities which are seeing large members disappear, while making aware national and international audiences of the similarities between these specific instances of “rural brain drain” with their own changing demographics in their communities.

G. Plan for evaluation of the project

The project intends to evaluate itself through interactive participation through the website as well as including the WVHC surveys at local community screenings. Because of its participatory nature, Hollow is continually evaluated by the community at large. User-generated content and interactivity allows the residents of McDowell and those elsewhere to examine, input and share ideas for improvement. Internally, our advisors expertise in media portrayal, racial diversity and community organizing online will allow us to evaluate how successful Hollow is in providing a useful tool for residents. At the end of production during the summer of 2012, surveys were collected to gain insight on participants’ experience. Overall experience was positive but a lack of racial diversity among participants was a concern and we have since sought advice on how to diversify our participants.

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SCRIPT/TREATMENT for HOLLOW

"Hollow" is a multifocus interactive documentary that will feature upwards of 30 short documentary portraits about residents living in McDowell County, West Virginia. The following is a look into some of the lives of people fighting for a better community. Content described below has been shot by the community and filmmaking crew. What the Community is Saying section gives insight into the participants’ experience with "Hollow."

Shawn Penwarden stands in the middle of an old dealership in Northfork, West Virginia. His hands are stained black from a day’s hard work, his blue eyes piercing with determination. "I’m trying to do something positive here, and it seems like nobody wants to get onboard," Penwarden says into the phone. "I have people ready to invest, but they’re not going to put $250,000 in a town where the local elected officials won’t even return our phone calls." Penwarden finishes his call with a polite “thank you” and looks at his wife, Stephanie, who is sitting on the showroom floor sorting through broken tile. She places jagged pieces of the broken, multi-colored tile onto an old coffee table making a mosaic pattern. Their 7-month-old baby, Jessica, lovingly known as "Half Pint," sits quietly next to Stephanie in her stroller. The Penwardens moved to Northfork from North Carolina a year ago. After traveling to McDowell County for an ATV trip, they discovered the untapped potential for business in a town where the Hatfield & McCoy Trails system exists. Despite the growing number of tourists in the area—nearly 300 riders visit the nearby Ashland Resort every weekend—the city of Northfork and McDowell County have not been proactive in providing resources for tourists to stay, eat and play. In Northfork, there is no gas station or grocery store; a Family Dollar is the only business in town that offers any goods to tourists. As a result, most ATV riders choose to buy their supplies and stay in bordering Mercer County, West Virginia.

Peni Adams, executive director of the McDowell County Economic Development Authority, says the county is notoriously reactive and not proactive. After all, the problems of unemployment and poverty did not occur overnight. By 1950, the population of the county peaked at 100,000 and has continued to decrease with the demand of coal dropping and mechanization of mining. But the Penwardens see the potential and are infuriated by the mono-economy, sewage in the streams and complacent mindset among some residents. Their determination for a brighter McDowell County can be seen through their purchase of the largest building in Northfork—the former Oldsmobile car dealership. The couple have demolished, remodeled and continue to work to get the building in the condition to offer a possible drive-in bar and grill, a hydroponic community garden and an ATV supply and repair shop. In the meantime, Stephanie has been selling her home-cooked BBQ to riders on their business patio. The tip jar is labeled, “For Half Pint.” “I believe in the law of attractions,” Shawn says. “I think that if we show the community the potential more people will be inspired to make things happen.”

Penwarden is starting his business at a very different time than 88-year-old Ed Shepard did more than 60 years ago. In the 1950s, Shepard returned home after serving in World War II as a sniper in the Marine Corps and took over the Union 76 service station in downtown Welch. To keep up with the boomtown’s demand, the McDowell County native worked 13-hour days and had four full-time employees. In 2012, Shepard continues to wake up every morning just in time to open the doors of his business at 8 a.m. But in a town that experiences more deaths than births, Shepard goes most days without a single customer. He runs the business using a portion of his Social Security check and keeps it open to maintain a sense of
"purpose." "I come here everyday so that I have a place to go," Shepard says. "It breaks my heart to see what has happened to our beautiful, rich town. It's nothing but a damn ghost town in a welfare county now."

Across town in Kimball, Linda McKinney scurries to sort pasta, clothing and diapers to prepare for the swarm of mothers waiting to receive resources from her food pantry. The 54-year-old started the pantry several years ago after she found out about the hunger among children and families. With 32.6 percent of people living below the poverty line in McDowell County, McKinney knew she had to do something to respond to the issue. So she and her husband bought an abandoned grocery store and turned it into a food pantry and warehouse that serves two counties in Southern West Virginia. She gets a phone call in the middle of the sorting process; it's a grandmother who is raising her daughter's children in Coalwood.

McKinney calls across the warehouse to her husband, a former pastor and mine inspector, who rushes to organize a box of formula and food and respond to the need. Everyday, in a county where 24 percent of residents receive food stamps, people depend on devoted residents, like McKinney, to provide something extra to make sure their children don't go to bed hungry. In addition to providing boxes of food and necessities, McKinney is working toward opening the county's first soup kitchen and plans to build greenhouses out of old pallets left over from delivery trucks. Over the next year, McKinney will be developing a community garden in an adjoining lot next to her pantry. She believes that a garden and farmer's market will provide many residents with a sense of accomplishment, hope and pride that has been lost with empty promises, drug abuse and high floodwaters. Like McKinney, Joe Kerekkes, believes that hopelessness helps feed the growing drug problem in the county. "Give a man a job or give a man a pill and he will take the job," Kerekkes says. The Berwind residents believes that if there were more opportunities for his son and others that have turned to drugs it is likely that the community could pick itself back up.

While some stay in McDowell despite the few opportunities available, others chase their dreams elsewhere. Josh Clevenger, 17, has lived in laeger all his life but knows that in order to pursue his dream to become a filmmaker he will most likely have to abandon the mountains. Clevenger, a senior at River View High School, is among the top of the crop at the school. Staying active in the theatre club, as the school mascot and the morning news announcer, Clevenger is a positive representative for his age group.

Unfortunately, most of his peers will not throw their cap in the air with him at graduation in 2013. With only 40.9 percent of the population in McDowell County holding a high school-level education the dropout rate in the county is 28 percent, compared with about 8 percent nationwide. For Josh, the reality of pursuing his goals means to uproot. "My biggest fear, honestly, is that I will feel bad that I'm not back home doing what I can to help," Clevenger says. "But logic dictates that most people aren't going to come back."

Mary Lewis and her husband made the decision to stay through the hard times. "I'm very content and love it up here, but when we go downtown I sometimes think, 'Oh my God, we've stayed too long.'" Lewis says as she stands in her Welch home. She packs her gym bag, laces her tennis shoes and heads down the road to Gary. Lewis enters the Tug River Fitness Center where she teaches group classes. Buckets filled with rainwater line the floor under a leaking roof, and the smell of mold overwhelms the senses. "The facility is really old," Lewis says. "It was built in the 1930s, and it's got major issues; the electricity is old, the plumbing is old. There comes a point where things are falling in around you." She presses play on her CD player and out comes the vibrant South American music that has made Zumba a hit
among many. In her class are two women who have lost over 50 pounds over the past two years between diet and exercise provided with guidance at Tug River.

"West Virginia is the worst in the nation as far as health statistics. Chronic disease, obesity, high cholesterol, heart issues and diabetes is really bad in the area," Lewis says. "I think in the state of West Virginia, McDowell County is right almost at the top of that. So, we absolutely need a wellness center here. And we have probably the highest teen pregnancy rate in the nation. A lot of our young girls get pregnant because they have nothing to lose. One thing about fitness is it's a proven fact that if people have something to work toward and if they feel better about themselves then they have more pride more respect in their bodies and they don't give it away so freely." After the hour-long class, Lewis shows off success stories from gym-users and states her concern about the building's condition. "I want to scream at the top of my lungs for help, but I'm afraid the health department will hear me," Lewis says. Two months later a white piece of paper hangs on the front door of Tug River Total Fitness announcing that the center will shut down on Sept. 1, 2012 due to the hazards associated with mold and asbestos in the building. Lewis is currently seeking a new place to take the gym, but in a county that has experienced stalled development, her options are hauntingly similar to the situation she is currently in.

Infrastructure and lack of housing continue to be roadblocks for progress across the county filled with abandoned houses. But soon, three families can thank Penni Padgett for building the first houses in Welch in seven years. Padgett, director of housing for Council of the Southern Mountains, is currently building three low- to middle-income houses in Welch thanks to a $417,000 grant from West Virginia Housing Development Fund. "We're only building three houses, and if three houses at a time changed everything, then that's the change we have to make," Padgett says. "And maybe three will turn into six and six into nine, and exponentially we will get the county back to where it should be." Padgett stands in awe in the new homes off Route 52 near Welch. The Coalwood native, was emotional seeing all her nearly two-year challenge come to life. "It's been an arduous process," Padgett says. "I could have built an entire community for what it's been to build two houses in Southern West Virginia. We don't have the infrastructure in place for water, sewer—just normal things. So it brings up the cost of housing because you have to put in $12,000 to put in water, you have to put in $30,000 for sewer, which cuts down on the cost of the actual house." Before moving back to McDowell to take care of her sick mother, Padgett was selling solar panels in Chapel Hill. So when she became director of housing, her ideas revolved around building sustainable and green homes.

"When I was in Charleston the people there said something ironic—they said 'Oh, McDowell, it's so great for them that you're accepting this grant,'" Padgett says. "And I felt like, 'No, it's great for our state.' The people in West Virginia look down on McDowell, but other states look down on West Virginia. So we have to be bigger than that. I think, yeah I can improve McDowell, but we really need to improve our state and come up with a concept that works for us and move us into the 21st century on things that we could really embrace because this is a beautiful state, and there are so many things that we could be doing that are green that we're not taking advantage of." Penni is not alone when it comes to ideas of alternative energy and sustainability in the coalfields.

Across the mountain in Berwind, Simon and Jan Domingue observe and film a beaver swimming down the creek near their home. Simon, originally from Sheffield, England, discusses the potential for other forms of energy while filming the stream. "There's more to life than coal," Simon says. "I come from a city
that was built on coal and steel. We’ve moved on, it’s 2012. This is one of the most beautiful places in America that I’ve ever visited, and it’s worth a damn sight more than what it’s getting now. The beautiful irony would be, that the place that provided the coal would be the place that provided the alternative to coal when the coal dries up. That we will be ahead of the game and again McDowell would be providing the power for America by the innovations that are done here in these creeks. So if you’re a micro-hydro company and you are looking for somewhere to invest, come to McDowell County.”

Volunteer firefighter, Ron Serino, climbs to the top of Burke Mountain in Keystone to capture the perfect sunset with his camera. “Almost heaven,” Serino says. “If you don’t look down, that is.” The mountain ahead of Serino has been flattened by a strip mine. Serino, who is originally from New York, takes photos of the valley and gets back into his car. As he is driving down the mountain a group of four ATV riders zoom past him. “You know where they’re headed...the ‘stairsteps,’” Serino says with disappointment. “Stairsteps” is a reclaimed mining site in Ashland; the name refers to the terraced land left by the coal company. Over the years, the former strip mine has become a popular place for risk-taking riders who climb the steep, terraced valley on their four-wheelers. And while the land is still owned by the coal company, Serino says they have turned a blind eye to the drug use, alcohol abuse and the “chaos” that occurs on the weekends. ATV fatalities continue to increase as Serino and the Northfork Volunteer Fire Department struggle to gain access and promptly evacuate the injured without a UTV. In the past, Ron and his fellow firefighters have carried injured riders out for miles to save their lives. And in late July 2012, a rider died just yards from the stairsteps after his four-wheeler flip back onto him and over into the valley. With a $20,000 goal in mind, Serino and the 10 other determined volunteers continue to fundraise for a UTV by washing four-wheelers for $3 each and selling t-shirts every weekend. Their ultimate goal is to save lives in an unregulated area of the county.

WHAT THE COMMUNITY IS SAYING

Quotes From “Hollow” Participants

I’m not sure I can explain the hope and sense of community that Hollow has inspired. I have been able to make new friends and share with many others what is truly important to me. Hollow has given McDowell County the voice that we have never had before, and an opportunity to be seen as a people who have overcome great obstacles and keep going. I greatly appreciate the dedication and hard work that Elaine and the Hollow team have done to give McDowell County a chance for our voice to be truly heard.
Renee Bolden (Pageton, W.Va.)

McDowell County has truly been blessed to have Elaine McMillion and The Hollow Team with us during the summer of 2012. Her positive attitude and contagious spirit has truly brought a light to our little corner of WV. Her inspiration, leadership of the Hollow team and her passion for her work will truly shine when McDowell County is presented in a positive, uplifting manner when Hollow is launched 2013.
Linda McKinney (Welch, W.Va.)

I am so excited about Hollow and thankful to Elaine McMillion and her team for what they have done to show McDowell County in a positive light. Too many times, we have been portrayed negatively. But there is good going on here and great people. And it’s time the world knows that we aren’t as mainstream media portrays us. We are BETTER!
Melissa Workman Green (Welch, W.Va.)
I am anxious for the Hollow site to launch. I think it will inspire the residents of McDowell County to see the efforts of their neighbors to make changes for the better here where we all live.

Alan Johnston (Premier, W.Va.)

I can’t wait to see the Hollow Documentary. Elaine and her group of volunteers have done an excellent job getting the word out. This project is a great thing for McDowell County. It shows positive things about the county.

Andrea Echols Moorehead (Anawalt, W.Va.)

Elaine is showing what it is like to be a TRUE West Virginian

Woody Church (Pageon, W.Va.)

I’m so excited about what Elaine has done with Hollow! Our county seems to have been the go-to place to get a quick story on negative issues, but for the first time I can remember, someone is finally wanting to tell the whole story about McDowell county and all the wonderful things about living here as well. I believe Hollow will help show everyone why they shouldn’t give up on McDowell County, WV just because so many other people have.

Jessi Shumate (Premier, W.Va.)

We are very excited about Hollow, and proud that we could be a part of it in some small way. What Elaine and her team have done here in McDowell County is truly amazing; to call her “inspirational” is no understatement. In 10 years we’ve seen a lot of people come and go through this county with “projects” that leave nothing behind of value- not so with Elaine and Hollow.

Elsie Jo Goldstein-Clark (Landgraff, W.Va.)

I heard about Hollow from our local news station and contacted Elaine. I was really worried about how we were about to be portrayed and wanted to know what her “angle” was and if I could offer and help to her. I love my county, it's history, and want better for it than the treatment we have received in the past. I want people to see what I see, the mountains, the beauty, and the way we have been forgotten in McDowell County. We provide, we provide but we're left to molder away, our structures are crumbling, both in physical structures and as a community. Drugs, a poor education system, lack of jobs, and poor medical systems are killing us all, chipping away at a once proud place, still inhabited by very proud people. I want people to see that and tell us solutions, viable solutions that we can implement. I like the idea of the community itself coming together to design and implement those strategies, as well. And, we have a lot of interesting stories to tell. I'm very proud to have been a part of this project, even if it's in a small way. I feel like I have contributed to something important and it has changed the way I see the world. I can see it through a lens or I can see it in real life. Sometimes that lens brings us closer to seeing really more than when we look without a lens. Now that I’ve met Elaine and worked with her, I want to help her succeed. She is an intelligent, hard-working, and wonderful person that genuinely cares. She has made us care again and opened my eyes, at least, to just how wonderful this county is. There were places I didn't know, people I didn't know that I do now because of her. While we’ve been busy giving her ourselves and our stories she has given us a sense of pride back, and she has given us back our history that has been forgotten. She has given us our county back, our voices back, and we can never thank her enough for that.

Jan Domingue (Berwind, W.Va.)