SCCF

South Cumberland Community Fund

10 YEARS

Spring 2022

ANNUAL REPORT & NEWSLETTER

The mission of South Cumberland Community Fund is to improve the quality of life across the Plateau by increasing philanthropic giving and providing community leadership to build on the strength of the area's people, communities, and natural setting; enhance community capacity and collaboration; and support innovative ways to solve community problems.

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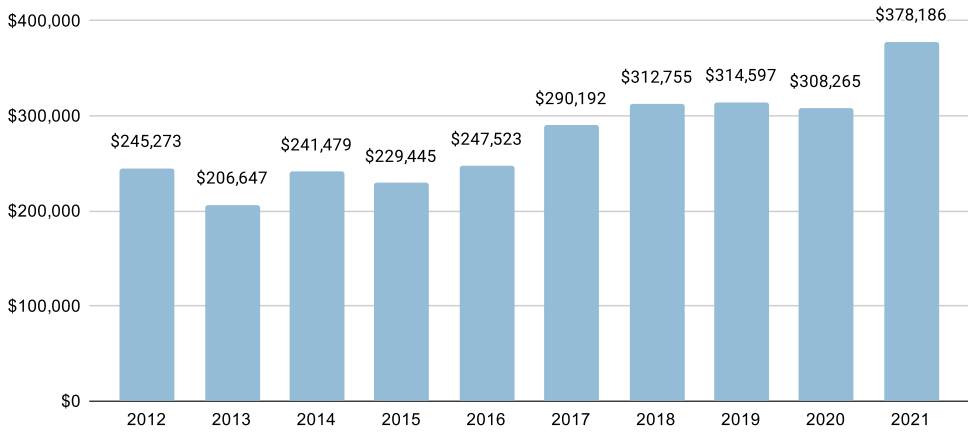
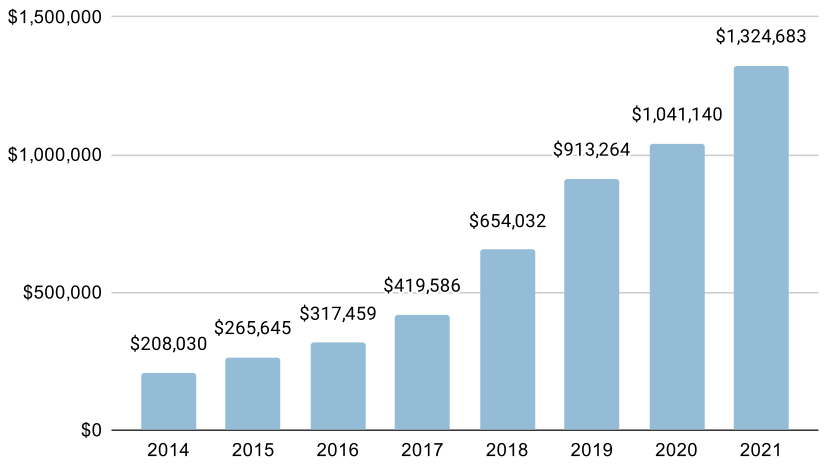
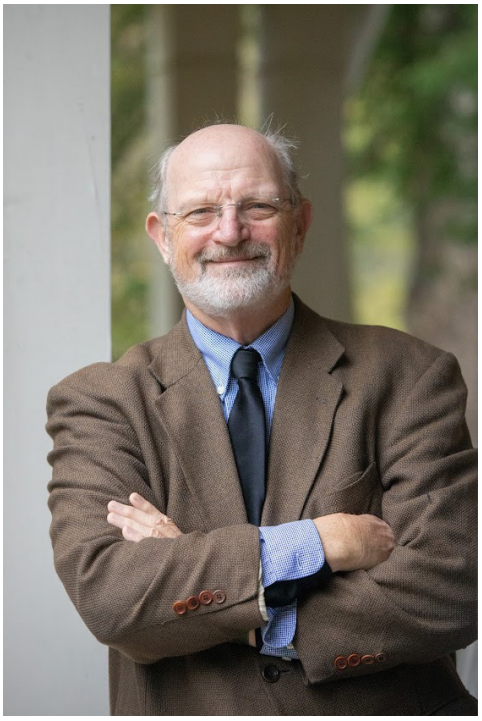
Annual Fund Performance 2012 to Present



Value of Endowment



A Message from the Executive Director



At the beginning of December 2021, after a 42-year career, mostly in higher education, I accepted the position of executive director of South Cumberland Community Fund (SCCF). While interviewing for this work, one board member asked me if I had learned anything about SCCF that surprised me. Having worked to help launch much of the partnership between SCCF and the University of the South, I was at a bit of a loss to answer that question. Two months later the answer comes easier. SCCF is genuinely an organization that connects with remarkable care and effectiveness, tapping talent inclusively and providing opportunity for many to contribute in many ways.

The public celebrations of grants and partnerships that are held twice a year are a visible sign of this effectiveness and care. At the celebration in November, the keynote speaker was Alex Gibson, executive director of Appalshop, an iconic community development organization in Whitesburg, Kentucky. Gibson reminded us that building networks of philanthropy can become a kind of glue, holding our society together. While individual acts of kindness are meaningful, networks of kindness build common purpose across communities and across superficial differences.

At the end of 2021, SCCF finds itself in a strong position. Effective fundraising and good management by a dedicated board give it a strong foundation to nurture and energize connections in our community for years to come. In 2022, we will be celebrating the organization's 10th anniversary, and volunteers are working hard right now to develop plans that will tap the genius of the community and provide appropriate recognition for the many hard working men and women who are building community on the Mountain. The theme of our celebration will be "Making Lasting Connections." That phrase is not just words. It is also a marker of well-being both for individuals and communities. Science shows when we make lasting connections as individuals, we live longer, happier lives. When we make lasting connections as a community, those individual benefits are multiplied.

"When we make lasting connections as individuals, we live longer, happier lives. When we make lasting connections as a community, those individual benefits are multiplied."

When I think of making lasting connections, I can't help but think about my closest group of friends. We meet almost weekly as a "kitchen table band." Our connection is the music—but not just the music. Making music is emblematic of a connection that involves, first, listening to others and then joining in common purpose. While our individual talents are honored, it is singing itself that unites us. In fact, our group's motto is "music is too important to leave to musicians."

If you are reading this, you have had a role in making the lasting connections that are coming more and more to characterize the reality of SCCF. Our gratitude to you for your role comes with an invitation to continue making connections with SCCF and with each other.

Our kitchen table band always ends the evening with a good-night song, and one of our favorites is "To My Old Brown Earth" written in 1958—about the time he was making regular visits to Monteagle and the Highlander Folk School—by Pete Seeger. The song ends like this:

Guard well our human chain, / Watch well you keep it strong, / As long as sun will shine. / And this our home, / Keep pure and sweet and green, / For now I'm yours / And you are also mine.

While Seeger wrote the song to celebrate the life of a friend who had recently passed away, the closing is clearly for the living—and for us as we think about our lives together as people who pay attention to "our home, our mountain, and our future." Community is too important to leave to the few. It calls us all.

- Thomas Sanders, *Executive Director*

The Power of Conversation — Speaking and Listening about Community

South Cumberland Community Fund began with conversations, and that back and forth with community stakeholders remains central to the work of the organization. It is really part of the DNA of the organization. For the past several years, those conversations have taken place specifically with the leaders of organizations that are working toward social change and community development. In 2021, the community development program, which is conducted through a distinctive (if not unique) partnership with the Office of Civic Engagement at the University of the South, determined that a new round of conversations needed to happen, but this time with the people those organizations served, rather than the staff doing the day-to-day hard work.

With plans formed in the summer, university staff and people in the community began training to learn how to facilitate great conversations, but new waves of COVID, from Delta to Omicron, slowed the rollout.

In January 2022, the first of those conversations came to fruition, with Sherry Hamby, an award winning scholar on trauma and how people process it, facilitating conversations with parents and supporters of Monteagle Elementary School. The conversation ranged from the effect of SCCF's grantmaking to what the group (parents and supporters) loved best about their school, and what needs they particularly hoped would be filled (or addressed) in the future.

The core message from the parents was "we love our school," and Hamby helped guide the conversation to those areas needing improvement.

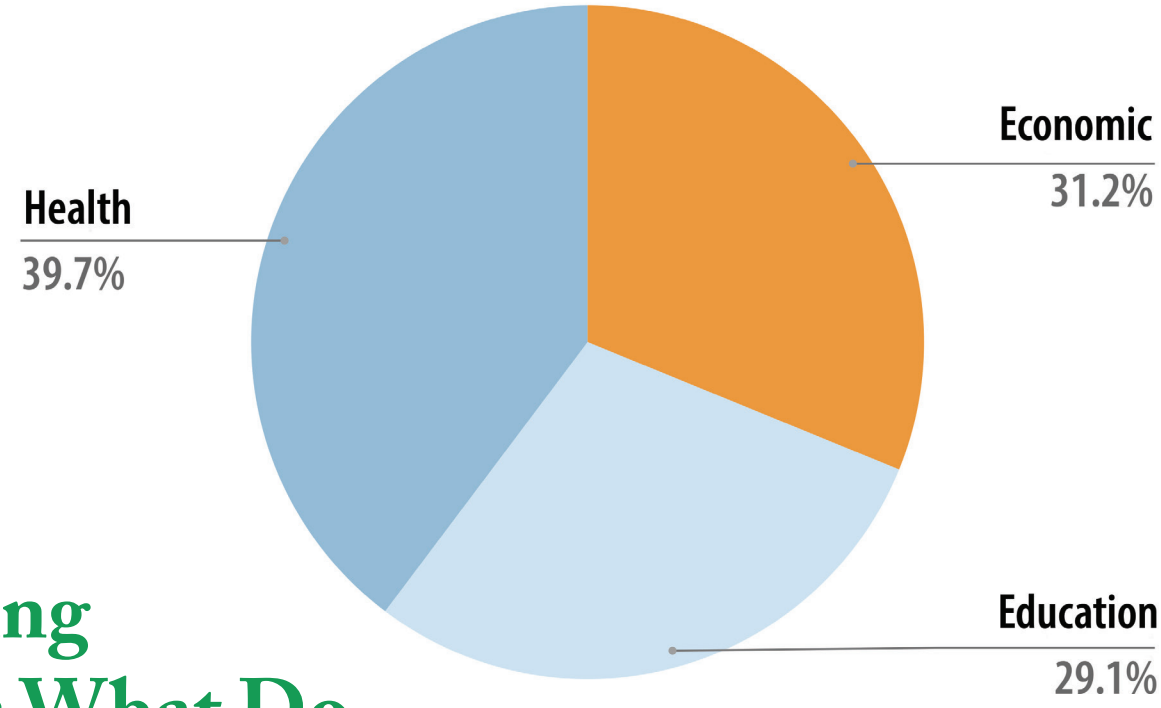
Interestingly, an abiding interest of the parents was to build the school's capacity in the performing arts. Recently, teachers have put on plays and musical performances, and some of SCCF's grantmaking has gone to infrastructure related to the auditorium. School volunteer Pam Maloof (to the right of Hamby in the photo) conducts a bell program for the school. "I am not a musician," Maloof said afterwards, "but I can tell you that the students really respond positively to the bell program."

"Community Conversations will always be a part of SCCF's work, as our model of philanthropy is to follow the strength and wisdom of the community," said Katie Goforth, director of community development. "We look forward to expanding the conversations to other communities and to other areas of emphasis for our grantmaking."

Sherry Hamby, a research psychologist who studies trauma and how people deal with it, facilitated a conversation with parents and supporters of Monteagle Elementary School. This is the first of a series of conversations to be held across SCCF's service area.

Making Lasting Connections Symposium and Grant: Look for news of a 10-year symposium later this year that will celebrate the accomplishments of the past ten years and provide inspiration and technical know-how for the next ten years. A core part of our celebration this year is a new grant round that has a strong emphasis on what is the best about our region: our ability to work together. Partner organizations will form collaborative teams that are looking to make big changes by working together. The community development committee looks forward to moving through this process by walking alongside our partners as they develop their compelling visions.

10 YEARS



Considering Priorities: What Do We Most Value?

For the past several years, SCCF has focused its grantmaking on three strategic priorities: education, health, and economic development. But even before those priorities were set through the advice of community members in community conversations, much of SCCF's grantmaking followed along those lines. Here is a look back at what SCCF has helped accomplish through grants.

Health - 30.5%: Included in grants for health are grants to organizations providing medical assistance as well as organizations that address widely known social determinants of health: behavior, social circumstances, and environmental and physical influences, and actual medical care. More than 30% of SCCF's grantmaking has focused on this priority, and, by a small margin, this is the largest category of giving for the Fund. Health is a fundamental need for all people, and SCCF's grant committees have been drawn to appeals to improve the health in the South Cumberland region.

Education - 30.3%: Everywhere, communities with strong educational systems are those communities where people thrive. In rural areas, schools are often the center of community life, and the school's health is a reflection of the community's health. Over the years, SCCF's support for education has followed close behind support for health, and 2021 was no exception, with grants going to Monteagle Elementary, Tracy City Elementary, and Sewanee Elementary Schools. Grants supported those schools' educational programs, increased safety for students, and better access by the community for school events. In an environment where teachers often have to purchase their own supplies, support from SCCF and its network of donors is more critical than ever.

Economic Development - 29.6%: From supporting a nascent tourism program to building out infrastructure that contributes to placemaking to focusing on serving and educating the unbanked, about a third of SCCF's grantmaking has focused on building a thriving community that benefits people both personally and economically. While that work can seem incremental, our partners are clearly doing great work and members of grants committees have recognized their attention to a forward looking, aspirational approach. In 2021, grants went to creating assets that will accommodate residents and attract visitors to the area, with grants to Friends of the South Cumberland Park, the Mountain Goat Trail, and the ambitious placemaking now taking place in Tracy City.

Almost every grant made by SCCF could fall into multiple categories. A grant to improve recreational opportunities, for example, is clearly pointed at both economic development and health. A grant to a school to assure safe drinking water is both health and education. Grant seekers are diligent in crafting projects that fit our priorities, but many of them really have missions that work, at some level, in advocating for individuals who have a difficult time advocating for themselves. Grants to organizations such as Isaiah 117 House, which provides shelter for children transitioning to foster care, or Arts Inside, which provides art therapy for the incarcerated, exemplify this kind of grant.

At SCCF, we salute our partners, and we celebrate the connections they are making with one another to meet the challenges the community has identified in community conversations.

Philanthropy Internship Grants Make Impact on Education, Health, and Economic Development

Above: Seth Layne, whose project to fund a music program at Tracy City Elementary School was funded through the Philanthropy Internship grant round, sang "Speak to the Mountains," by Chris McClarney, a song that gives voice to resilient people. The grant will purchase instruments and the equipment to ensure that students at the school have access to a vibrant music program. Music programs at public schools in the region have been defunded for a generation, and SCCF hopes to help build them up through partnerships with the Paul S. McConnell Fund and other generous donors.

In 2021, the Philanthropy Internship Program departed from pattern by delivering grantmaking through Sewanee's first year program called "Finding Your Place" (FYP). FYP introduces new students to the Plateau in a course beginning with a 10-day immersive experience in the area. Students learned about philanthropy, particularly focusing on the grant practices of SCCF, which draws from local knowledge about priorities and directions.

In November, that experience came to fruition when the students announced $30,000 in grants at the annual philanthropy internship celebration. Projects supported by the grants met needs for transportation, medical care, housing, education, and public safety.

Students participating in the program were Madison Spann of Dickson, Tennessee; Christopher Le of Hanoi, Vietnam; Clara Rominger of Birmingham, Alabama; Becket Bowz, of Los Angeles, California; and Lucy Cheney, of Atlanta, Georgia.

Gibson Raises Up Networks of Kindness

Alexander Gibson, executive director of Appalshop, an iconic arts and community development institution in Whitesburg, Kentucky, gave the keynote address, telling the audience that philanthropy was institutionalized kindness and critical work in a time when society is increasingly divided. He drew particular attention to the process of building networks of kindness, as exemplified by SCCF.

The philanthropy internship program is an innovative collaboration between SCCF and the University of the South. Students at the University shadow SCCF's grant-making process in the spring and then do their own grant round in the fall. Along the way, they learn about theories of philanthropy—especially the growing importance of community-based philanthropy—and learn to evaluate grant proposals.

Details of the grants

Mountain T.O.P.: $5,000
As an anchor institution that provides housing improvements to many on the Plateau, Mountain T.O.P.'s operations have been limited by COVID-19. Recognizing the impact the pandemic would have on nonprofits in our area, the SCCF board approved grants that would cover operating expenses for applicants who requested such assistance. This grant helps an important anchor institution continue its vital mission.

Isaiah 117 House Coffee/Franklin/ Grundy Counties: $3,039
A new organization on the Plateau that provides a temporary home for children transitioning to foster care, Isaiah 117 House has been awarded a grant for start-up funding. The philanthropy students were particularly moved by stories of children in need of a safe place while they await foster care.

Beersheba Springs Medical Clinic: $3,250
The clinic requested and received funds to build a secure area for storing prescription medications. This project will have a significant impact on the ability of Beersheba Springs Medical Clinic to provide much needed prescription medicines to patients.

Growing Roots: $5,000
Growing Roots is a vibrant new community partner that provides innovative opportunities for meaningful wellness engagement while simultaneously lowering barriers for access to healthy food. The grant will help Growing Roots build out a native plant garden as well as educational activities.

Tracy City Elementary School: $4,946
This grant allows TCE to create a music classroom that recognizes the influence of the local Appalachian heritage, accessible to all students. The new space will support the passion and enthusiasm of TCE staff to provide important music education to students.

Town of Tracy City: $4,600
The Town of Tracy City is in the process of developing an ambitious placemaking program. New signage will direct visitors' attention to important community assets and improve responsiveness of emergency services.

Monteagle Elementary School: $2,350
In an effort to provide safer ways to provide water to students, Monteagle Elementary is installing water bottle filling stations, supporting the school's efforts to provide a safe learning environment while addressing students' basic need for easy access to safe drinking water.

Folks at Home: $1,815
This grant supports continued funding of the Folks at Home "Essential Medical Transportation" initiative established during the pandemic and follows a similar grant awarded during the SCCF 2021 spring grants cycle. These grants ensure that at-risk members of the community have safe access to transportation for medical care and other basic needs.

Below: Alex Gibson (center), executive director of Appalshop, met with community leaders to discuss pathways to building thriving communities through the arts. Appalshop has a tradition of raising up authentic voices in Appalachia, through music, film, theater, and other arts.

Celebrate with South Cumberland Community Fund during our Ten-Year Anniversary Celebration in 2022: "Making Lasting Connections"

Founding donations in 2011 launched our grants and community development projects in 2012, and we are celebrating this milestone with our partners, the people of the South Cumberland Plateau. We are planning these celebratory events in the coming weeks, with times, dates, and locations identified:

- a Spring Grant Round with awards of up to $10,000.
- the "Making Lasting Connections" Symposium and a new "Making Lasting Connections" grant round with up to $50,000 for projects involving two or more partner organizations.
- community service days and public celebrations featuring community art installments and musical performances.

Also in 2022 will be our annual fundraising dinner in October and the Philanthropy Internship grant round in November. Celebrate with us!

10 YEARS

SCCF

From left, Tom Sanders, Eddie Krenson, and Lynn Stubblefield. The Business Outreach Initiative, the brainchild of Krenson, took place in the fall of 2021. Stubblefield donated a percentage of her commissions for the month of November to South Cumberland Community Fund. Look for new business partnerships in 2022.

Local Businesses Support South Cumberland Community Fund

In 2021, SCCF launched a business outreach initiative through the leadership of Eddie Krenson, board member and development committee volunteer. Seven local businesses, five in Sewanee and two in Monteagle, combined forces to raise more than $3,800 to support community philanthropy on the Mountain.

In launching the project, Krenson consulted with Jimmy Wilson, proprietor of the Blue Chair and a member of the Sewanee Business Alliance. "Look, my dad taught me to give back 10 fold," said Wilson. "I've seen the good that SCCF has done, and I wanted to be part of something productive on the Mountain, and I wanted to help launch this effort."

Participating businesses contributed to the fundraiser by either collecting donations at point of sale or contributing a percentage of net revenue over a defined period of time. For the pilot, that span was the week of Sewanee's Homecoming.

"We are thrilled with the results of the pilot," said Krenson. "The generosity of the participants was really inspiring, and we also learned a lot about how to organize an effort that will help build our community of donors." Krenson is planning next steps for the initiative in 2022 and beyond. "We are deeply grateful to the businesses that helped us in 2021 on this proof of concept. We learned a great deal, and are eager to build on the project in 2022." Krenson plans to have an annual business outreach initiative and plans to expand it to other communities on the Plateau.

For information about the business outreach initiative, call Tom Sanders at 931-313-1663.

The following businesses contributed to the 2021 business outreach project:

Blue Chair Café, Bakery, and Tavern; Bodyworks Youniversity; Taylor's Mercantile; Shenanigans; Oakes & Oliver's Modern Mercantile; Tower Bank; Lynn Stubblefield with University Realty

Letter from the Development Chair

Thank you for your tremendous support for SCCF in 2021! For the past two years, I have had the opportunity to serve as the development committee chair for SCCF. Our hard working committee is charged with raising the funds that cover the annual operating expenses of our organization–the grants, the community development work we accomplish in partnership with the University of the South, and the project of creating good will on the Mountain.

One of the joys of this work is that we know that for every dollar we raise, historically there has been three to four dollars of economic impact in our service area. That impact is truly remarkable, welcome, and joyful—and it starts with our amazing donors.

In 2021 annual fund donations totaled $378,186 compared with $303,330 during 2020 and compared with the budget of $300,000. Because we also worked hard to secure donations to an endowment, we raised more than $110,000 toward endowment, bring total donations to just over $520,075. This wonderful work gives us the resources to expand what we can accomplish in the community in 2022, including a new grant round for collaborations added to the two grant rounds we already support.

Our work is relational. Our committee communicates directly with donors and also helps SCCF staff expand the donor pool. In 2021, for example, committee member Eddie Krenson launched the Business Outreach Initiative through a pilot conducted in the fall. We learned a great deal from this work and hope to be more intentional about being a connector between the business community and community development. We are enormously grateful to the first businesses who are showing us the way.

Our work is far from complete. Much more remains to be done. We will continue to ask donors to cultivate an interest in our community and ask you to act on that interest with time, talent, and treasure. This work takes all our contributions.

—Carol Titus

Carol Titus, here with her husband, Bill, is chair of the development committee.

Communication is the Key

In late 2021, Janet Cooper, who had been director of South Cumberland Community Fund for more than five years, stepped down from the role in semi-retirement. While she is no longer involved day to day with the operations of SCCF, Cooper has agreed to serve as a coordinator of the 10th anniversary celebration, working with a hardworking committee of board members and volunteers.

"I have very much enjoyed working with dedicated people to build this organization up," said Cooper. "I'm proud that we made the fundraising goal every year I was director."

Cooper attributes the success to effective communications, and board chair Rich Wyckoff notes that Cooper was good at "scheduling our communications, composing articles, and securing photos for effective communications with our constituents."

Past chair Sheri Lawrence agrees, noting that "our content has become more polished" and praises her for last-minute work when volunteer participation did not materialize. "She even decorated an ATV and did a one-person float at the 4th of July parade," says Lawrence.

"Janet is a great person to help ensure our celebration is successful, as she has important institutional memory," notes Tom Sanders, executive director. "I am grateful to her for helping with the transition to both our new roles with SCCF."

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18. Katherine Wiley
19. Ms. Ann Nelson
20. Sydney & David Shipps, Sr.
21. Mrs. Louise Shipps
22. Elaine Goleski & Howard Smith
23. Nancy Anness
24. Mark & Melissa Webb

The Incomparable Sheri Lawrence

from left, Mark and Sheri Lawrence

In December, Sheri Lawrence, immediate past chair, reached the end of her second three-year term on the Board of South Cumberland Community Fund. But that is not stopping her from being part of the Community Fund community. She is still hard at work as a volunteer on the development committee. “Sheri is a really productive and generous volunteer,” notes Rich Wyckoff, current chair.

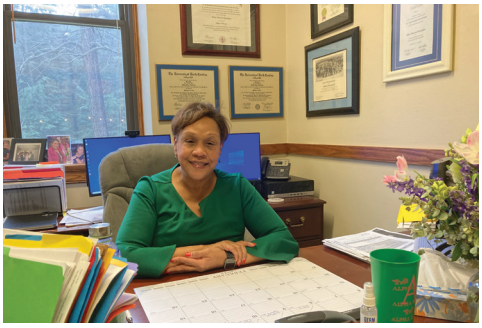
Lawrence's many contributions include mastering the Fund's donor management software, developing policies and procedures that keep the organization in compliance with best practices and financial accountability, and leading the organization through the challenges of community development during COVID.

“At the beginning of the pandemic, she encouraged us to provide funds for PPE to first responders, and she really kept the board engaged while we needed to meet remotely,” Wyckoff adds.

Lawrence's leadership took place during a period of renewed interest in the Fund and renewed financial support for the causes on the Mountain that are important to the founders' vision and the guidance of the community.

We thank her for all she has done and for her continuing interest and support of South Cumberland Community Fund.

New Board Members:



Sibby Anderson-Thompkins is vice provost for diversity, equity, and inclusion at the University of the South. In that role, she is committed to understanding and building strong connections with the community. Her understanding of diversity, equity, and inclusion is expansive, and she is committed to serving the communities where many Sewanee employees live. Anderson-Thompkins has a long career in higher education and some of the nation's top schools, and she has been deeply connected with service to the community wherever she has lived.

Julie Keel has made Grundy County her home for the past 15 years serving in various capacities with Mountain T.O.P., a housing nonprofit. During her tenure, she has brought Mountain T.O.P. into connection with other social service agencies. Her passion for the intersection of housing affordability and community development is fueled by the inspiring people and places of this little pocket of Appalachia. With more than 20 years of experience with nonprofits, Julie holds a certification in Nonprofit Leadership from the Center for Nonprofit Management and is currently working on a Doctorate of Ministry in Organizational Leadership.

Bran Potter and his wife, Cindy Potter, residents of Sewanee, are lifelong educators. Bran taught geology at the University, enjoying field studies with students on the Cumberland Plateau, St. Catherine's Island in Georgia, and the Colorado Plateau. His “Walking the Land” course encompassed the coves, cliffs, and human history of our local Plateau. Folk and traditional music are a continuing pleasure, and he is section-hiking the Appalachian Trail. Bran and Cindy were raised near the Adirondack Mountains of New York State, and with their three children and six grandchildren they reconnect regularly with family roots there.

SCCF
South Cumberland Community Fund
P. O. Box 1301, Monteagle, TN 37356

About South Cumberland Community Fund:

We are a 501(c)3 non-profit that began in 2012. In our nine years of existence we have awarded 156 grants to non-profits on the Plateau totaling just under $1 million. We have also spent over $500,000 in community development work and co-sponsor with the University of the South a national award winning VISTA program that places up to 16 VISTA volunteers at non-profits on the Plateau to assist with capacity building. The VISTA program also manages and leads the summer meals program that this past summer gave over 60,900 meals to children in our area, helping alleviate food insecurity. Our investments in direct grants, support of community development, and partnership with the South Cumberland Plateau Americorps VISTA program has yielded nearly $4 million in resources brought to the plateau over our history.

About the cover: "Music makes community" is the idea behind a documentary being produced by Betty Carpenter and Maryetta Anschutz with the important input of local talent. Local photographer and artist Allie Cahoon documented the filming last summer. The project has been generously supported by SCCF through a partnership with the Paul S. McConnell Fund.