

Research Up-To-Date

The Newsletter of the Urban Appalachian Council Research Committee

May-June 2007

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The Research Committee was created at the founding of the [Urban Appalachian Council](#) thirty years ago and has always informed the council through active research. To be notified of future research committee meetings, which are open to all, please contact msullivan@uacvoice.org or phone 251-0202.

CONTRIBUTORS WELCOME!

Please send your article, announcement, or website link to Roberta Campbell at campbere@ucmail.uc.edu.



From the Editor:

Service Learning Students and the Urban Appalachian Council

The spring months have been a really exciting and productive time for the Urban Appalachian neighborhoods, the Urban Appalachian Council, and the UAC Research Committee.

On May 14, UAC held its annual kinship dinner honoring University of Cincinnati president Nancy Zimpher (to learn more about Dr. Zimpher visit <http://www.uc.edu/president/>). UAC's annual meeting was in April. UAC also sponsored a booth at the 38th annual Appalachian Festival at Coney Island (<http://www.appalachianfestival.org/index.html>) from May 13-15. Additionally, staff and volunteers participated in a neighborhood cleanup effort in Price hill on May 19. UAC's director, Maureen Sullivan, received an "Unsung Heroes" award from Sinclair College on May 18 (for the full story

see the July issue of the Appalachian Connection
<http://www.uacvoice.org/AppalachianConnection/apdec06.pdf>).

Most pertinent to the Research Committee was the sponsoring of a mini-conference on urban Appalachian needs at the Health Foundation of Greater Cincinnati on April 14.

I am especially gratified by all these events because they provided great opportunities for students in my Special Topics in Sociology class. In that class, we focused on Appalachia in general and activism in particular. Several of the students earned service-learning credit by volunteering to assist with these events as well as helping in other ways at UAC. My intention was for students to:

Learn more about a service and advocacy organization and to gain some understanding of how it operates on a day to day basis. How does it keep the lights burning? How does it interact with other agencies in the community? What exactly are the services that are provided? How are clients identified? (from *Special Topics in Sociology: The Appalachian Experience*, syllabus)

Service-learning students were required to write reflection papers regarding their experience. In this issue you hear from these students regarding their experiences and what they learned about UAC and the urban Appalachian community. Their reflections are told here in their own words.

Additionally, all students in the class wrote occasional responses to their reading assignments. One of them responded to one of the UAC working papers, and I have included her response in this newsletter.

I'm so proud of these students and energized by their enthusiasm. As you will see, they are as observant and as articulate as any other researcher. Thanks to UAC for giving them this chance to learn.

Also in this issue is a report on the UAC Research Committee's April mini-conference and the latest research notes. Enjoy reading and remember that your contributions and comments are always welcome.

Research Committee and the Health Foundation Host Mini-Conference on Urban Appalachians

On April fourteenth, a host of concerned researchers, practitioners, community representatives, and policy-makers gathered in the Rookwood Plaza headquarters of the Health Foundation of Greater Cincinnati to discuss the needs of urban Appalachians. The half-day mini-conference was organized to focus on three areas: Education, Health, and Employment.

After a brief meeting, participants broke into three groups to address the three different domains. Facilitators in each group were asked to identify problems in each area, strategies that worked, and to suggest solutions.

Then everyone came back together to discuss findings and to consider the next steps to take.

This mini-conference grew out of the Urban Appalachian Council's concern for ascertaining the ever-changing nature of the strengths and needs of the Appalachian community and to develop updated models for meeting needs. The Research Committee, which has been a component of UAC since its conception, is charged with the task of informing the Council about urban Appalachians by conducting research. In the past the Committee has hosted other conferences and developed task forces, led Board retreats, directed surveys (see the review of Working Paper 16 in this issue) and focus groups, all aimed at understanding how best the Council can serve its constituency.

A subcommittee was created to develop the program for the April mini-conference. Since then, the subcommittee met on May 2 to review the findings of the conference and to begin making plans for using the data that was generated. On May 11, the subcommittee brought its analysis to the full Research Committee. The three breakout session facilitators were present to recap and help develop plans.

Michael Maloney observed that the composition of practitioners, researchers, and community members that participated in the education breakout session was "usual" and that they were willing to talk. According to Maloney, attendees remarked that it was a provocative session. Maureen Dillon remarked that employment was a "contextual discussion" focused on the conditions that affect work, specifically experience and expectations. A representative of the Highlander Center noted that people have the right to information and to know how to use it. Becky Lee concurred that the discussion in the breakout session on health was very similar.

Based on the conference findings, Ann McCracken developed a framework/theory for change that shows the connections and overlap between areas with the bottom line being adequate incomes. For example, if people can afford good health care they will be better able to stay employed. Conversely, employment affects the person's chances for education and health care.

Data will be reported to the UAC board. Subgroups will meet again to discuss the data and the criteria that are most important. A draft of the findings will be completed by the end of June and made available at the July meeting. The final report will include notes and a request for feedback. Conference participants will receive that report in mid-summer.

Working Paper 16 Notes Urban Appalachians Can Be Counted

By Heather Craft

Phillip J. Obermiller and Steven R. Howe, the authors of Urban Appalachian

Council Working Paper 16, claim that “Appalachians are as hard to count as Florida voters”. They note in “Urban Appalachian and Appalachian Migrant Research in Greater Cincinnati: A Status Report” (2000) that the federal census data does not identify Appalachian people specifically. The Appalachian Regional Commission defines the Appalachian region as 406 counties in thirteen states. In order to obtain more accurate information there are county-wide surveys, focus groups, ethnographies, and geographically-targeted surveys.

Survey research is important because it focuses on migrants from the Appalachian region to Greater Cincinnati. The responses to the questions on the survey provide information on health concerns, environmental issues, political behavior, and other subjects of concern for the Appalachian community. To focus on issues in a particular place researchers use small-scale studies. These studies add insight to conditions among similar groups of Appalachians and are not applicable to the wider Appalachian experience, according to Obermiller and Howe. They note the various research contributed by the members of the Urban Appalachian Council Research Committee, beginning with Michael Maloney’s “Social Areas Report”.

Maloney began “The Social Areas Report” in 1970 and continued through the 1980 and 1990 censuses. The most recent edition (1990)¹ of the report found that poverty rates have increased and white Appalachians have a similar socioeconomic status as African-Americans. Obermiller and Howe (2000) noted that according to Maloney, the high school dropout rate appeared to have declined. However, Maloney noted that there were almost no white Appalachians in Cincinnati Public High Schools by 1999.

Data was gathered using the Greater Cincinnati Survey, conducted by University of Cincinnati’s Institute for Policy Research, as well. In 1980 and 1989, the UAC sponsored several questions to identify first and second generation Appalachian migrants. In 1995 summary data on county to county migration became available. This data tracks migrants from Appalachian counties to greater Cincinnati between 1985 and 1990. There were 20,894 migrants, which made Appalachians the largest social group migrating into Greater Cincinnati. Seventy-nine percent of them migrated to Hamilton County. More than half of these migrants were women and less than one percent were black. Fifty-two percent were between the ages of 25 and 54 and only eight percent were older than 54. Of those over 25, twenty percent did not have a high school diploma. Fifty-four percent of migrants were renters and twelve percent were below the 18 federal poverty standard.

The UAC is also monitoring in-school studies. In 1990 an independent task force formed by the UAC reported that Lower Price hill children were suffering from industrial pollution. The UAC has since formed a local Environmental Leadership Group which has completed an evaluation of the children’s health status. The group is now working on a women’s health study in the neighborhood.²

The efforts of the UAC research committee have provided the only reliable means of obtaining information on the Appalachian people in greater

Cincinnati. It's not clear whether this social group is overlooked because they are considered white or because they have not been legally suppressed. Many Appalachians do not know their heritage so it is unlikely that the federal government will count them.

1. This working paper was written before the 2004 Social Areas Report (Maloney and Auffrey, 2004) which is available at <http://www.socialareasofcincinnati.org/>.

2. This study was completed in 2005.

Service-Learning is an unforgettable experience

Following are the reflections of the service-learning students in the Special Topics Course: The Appalachian Experience, who volunteered so many hours to the Urban Appalachian Council and the urban Appalachian community.

Gregory Rolland:

I found that the Urban Appalachian Council works hard to promote the well-being and spirit of the Appalachian community. I was a note-taker at an UAC sponsored scholarly seminar that addressed or highlighted the positive and negative elements existing in Appalachian Communities.

The attendants were split into three groups in order to focus on issues affecting health, education, and employment; I was in the group that focused on education. I learned that Appalachians are very concerned with the education of their children. In addition, they are concerned with finding ways of working with educational institutions to address the issue of Appalachian student drop-out rates.

After attending the Research seminar, I was able to see again how the UAC works to educate people in the community. The UAC helps youths and adults pass the General Education Diploma examination and prepare for future employment. There were no color lines. The UAC was there to benefit everyone in the neighborhood regardless of whether he or she was Appalachian. I applaud this because this showed me that the UAC understands that if each person is educated in the community, the community as a whole benefits.

I appreciated that UAC members actively participate in the events that they sponsor. I could see the spirit of the Appalachian community as I worked with UAC members that mulched around neighborhood trees, removed weeds, cleaned up debris, and planted flowers.

In addition to my cleaning of the Price Hill area, I helped set up and passed out literature for a UAC sponsored Anti-Violence Picnic given by Americorps members. The Americorps members provided the Lower Price Hill community with free food, music, and information about AIDS, safe sex, abstinence, The UAC, Americorps, and educational and job training programs. (Condoms were given to those above the age of sixteen

(w/parent)). Working in the community with the UAC and Americorps members made me feel as though I was part of a much greater movement: One that worked positively in promoting changes in the complexion of the entire Cincinnati.

I feel honored to have been part of the UAC, and I thank Dr. Roberta Campbell for introducing me to the UAC, Ms. Maureen Sullivan for allowing me to be part of the research seminar, Ms. Bonnie Hood for allowing me to tutor and Ms. Donna Jones and Ms. Theresa Devine for allowing me to be part of the Anti-Violence Picnic. Because of them, I seek to continue serving the Appalachian community by working with the UAC and Americorps.

Heather Craft:

For my service learning I volunteered to work the Urban Appalachian Council booth during the Appalachian Festival. While volunteering I was able to observe and talk to the members of the council. Most of the people who I met were also volunteering. I actually found out that a few of the people had been laid off due to cut in funding, but were still very connected with the organization. The members of the organization were talking about the Kinship Dinner and how that was their major way of receiving funding. I can't imagine that the UAC made too much of a profit at the Appalachian Festival, they were selling apples for \$.25 and the \$1 raffle tickets weren't selling too well.

I asked someone how many people were actually a part of the UAC. She told me that there were only a handful, I think sixteen, paid employees. They relied on the Americorps workers. I thought this was interesting that an organization that does so much has to rely on volunteers and can't afford to hire more people.

I enjoyed my time volunteering. The people around me were like a huge family, and I mean HUGE. Everyone knew everyone and they spent their day together like a family would. I guess organizations work better when everyone gets along and appreciates what each individual has to offer and the outcome of their efforts.

Alicea Martin:

The Urban Appalachian Council is a strong vital agent of advocacy and service headquartered in the Lower Price Hill neighborhood of Cincinnati, Ohio. I volunteered at the East Price Hill Community School as a tutor and with the after-school program. Aside from educating the community with the Graduate Equivalency Degree programs and literacy programs; the community school often assists with the financial needs of the community as well. The after school program is also an important piece to this vital agency.

During my time around the people who help keep the UAC humming, I experienced the dedication, the love, respect and pride that these people had for their community as well as the children and families who came through their doors. Nothing could have prepared me for the warmth of the

family like atmosphere I experienced. I was automatically included and considered family after just coming in and sitting down. In the UAC family you get sisters and cousins and a "Big Mama" who protects and looks over you as if you were her very own. The children who attend the after school program couldn't be in more capable hands. After you meet the children you leave the experience wondering whether if it weren't for the caring people of the UAC who would they have? Of course, they have families of their own but it still "takes a village" and Price Hill isn't always the safest one. These children have a place to go that will forever be a home away from home and they have people who genuinely care about them. There isn't enough money that could have paid for the type of experience I had that I will forever carry with me.

Kyle McGeorge:

I did my service learning hours at the Urban Appalachian Council Community School in East Price Hill. I was able to help people in different subjects, allowing them to prepare for their General Education Diploma. While there I noticed that a lot of the students needed a great deal of help in basic math and geometry. Most of them were on welfare and had struggling families. I talked with one lady for a really long time after helping her study. We studied a lot of basic math for her GED test she had on June 2nd. She was very appreciative of my help, and I believe that she was actually learning the things that I was teaching her. We talked about her kids and how she wanted to attend Cincinnati State after she received her GED and get a degree. Her youngest son is just now turning 18 and her oldest is in the military and going to attend college after active duty (she is the only person in her immediate family that doesn't have a GED or Diploma).

Many of the younger people (18-20's) that we were helping didn't want our help because they were forced to be there due to the welfare program that they were on. A number of the students enjoyed being there and would try and come to the sessions even though they were not even supposed to be attending. It gave me a great deal of satisfaction to help people who actually wanted to better their lives. Even though it was in a rundown place in town I felt very comfortable around the people and the staff was all very nice and very helpful. It was a very unique experience and I'm planning on going back in the future to do more volunteer work at the UAC.

Max Fledderjohn:

When I first saw that this course was a service learning course I really did not know what to think. But after experiencing what a service learning class is like I can honestly say that it is a great idea. When I was a senior in high school, in order to graduate we had to take a government class which required us to volunteer 10 hours for any company we chose. So I have had a previous experience with a class that asked for volunteer hours, but never a class that asked for those hours to be specifically related to what that class is about.

Asking students to volunteer their time for an organization that is related to what is being taught in the class is a great idea in my opinion because it

gives you a chance to meet other people and hear their perspectives on the course content. It also allows the student to do something that helps others which is one of the greatest feelings. But the best thing about service organizations is that they are non-profit and only make money through donations. This is a tremendous aspect because it allows the organization to focus primarily on helping the people it is intending to help rather than get caught up in profit-making which can cause organizations to lose track of what is truly important.

Research Notes

(From the Research Committee: Debbie Zorn, Chair)

Phillip Obermiller announced that Maureen Sullivan will receive the Bob Evans Humanitarian of the Year award on May 18 at Sinclair Community College's 11th annual "Unsung Heroes" awards breakfast. (see the July issue of Appalachian Connections for the full story.) Also, Phil told us that the findings from a panel on Migration at the 2007 Appalachian Studies Association conference will be submitted to Journal of Appalachian Studies for consideration (www.appalachianstudies.org). An issue is how to identify Appalachians in research. There is no coherence among quantitative researchers on how identity is measured.

Michael Maloney noted that the St. Michael's facility and Oyler Elementary School have merged their efforts in the concerns over development in Lower Price Hill. Mike is writing some historical notes for the Urban Appalachian section of the Northern Kentucky Encyclopedia.

The committee welcomed Marianne Beard from the American Cancer Society, and Becky Lee, the Health Foundation of Greater Cincinnati's Robert Westheimer intern.

John Besl has gotten Kentucky and Ohio birth certificate files from 2004 to use in his research.

Kay Russ announced that the East End Heritage School is moving to Fairmount. She has a job working with Lindsay-Wilson College in August in counseling and the college is negotiating with Cincinnati State Technical and Community College and with Hillsboro.

Additional Links

Center for the Study of Gender and Ethnicity in Appalachia
<http://www.marshall.edu/csega/index.asp>

The Appalachian Connection (newspaper)
<http://www.uacvoice.org/AppalachianConnection/apdec06.pdf>

East Tennessee State University Center for Appalachian Studies and Services

<http://www.etsu.edu/cass>

The University of Kentucky Appalachian Center
<http://www.research.uky.edu/Appalcenter/index.html>

Berea College Appalachian Center
<http://www.berea.edu/appalachiancenter/>

The Center for Appalachian Studies, Appalachian State University
<http://www1.appstate.edu/dept/appstudies/>

Appalachian Studies Association
<http://AppalachianStudies.org/>

Social Areas Report of Cincinnati
<http://www.socialareasofcincinnati.org/>



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