

Appalachian Community Fund: Leveraging Resources to Advance Equity in Rural Areas



Mission and vision

- The Appalachian Community Fund (ACF) works to build a sustainable base of resources to support community-led organizations seeking to overcome and address issues of race, economic status, gender, sexual identity, and disability.
- On the journey to justice, our vision is:
 - to work for the day when Appalachia’s land, air and water are safe from destruction and contamination;
 - **where the economy is stable, strong, and provides diverse employment opportunities for all people;**
 - **where government and industry are accountable to human needs without exploitation of people and their health;**
 - where justice, equity, appreciation of diversity and celebration of our common humanity replace racism, sexism, heterosexism and other “isms”;
 - **where wealth and resources are shared equally;**
 - where all children grow up free from hatred and violence;
 - and where justice overcomes oppression in any form.



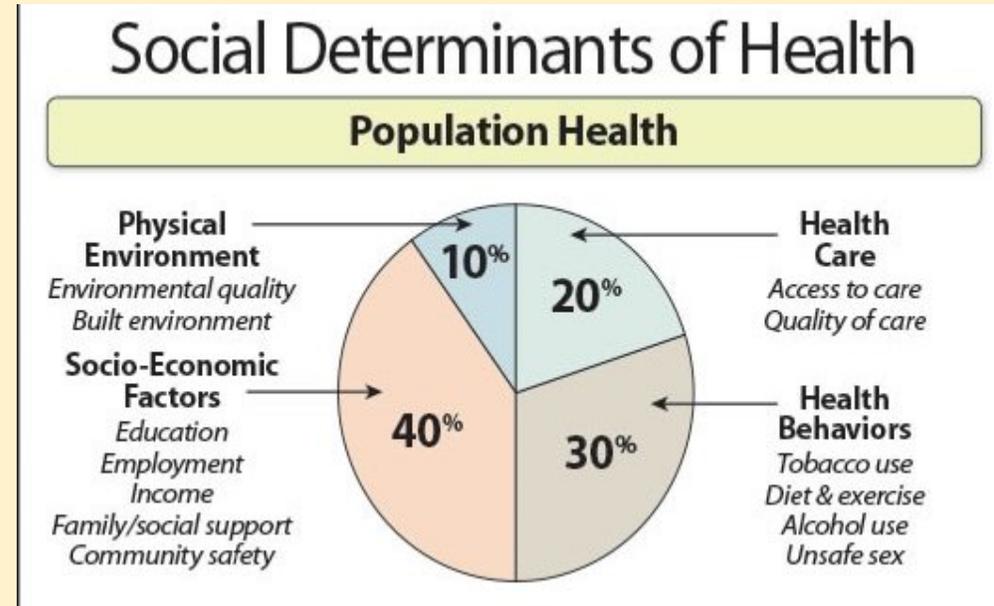
Consequences of rurality and race in Appalachia

- Entrenched, corrupt local governments and lagging public policy have not generated sustainable economic alternatives in our region.
- Racism poses a unique obstacle to the ability of groups to organize, within our communities and with each other in the broader social change movement.
- Racism in the United States exists even in communities and institutions where people of color are not physically present or are a small percentage of the community.
- Racism is communicated powerfully and often subtly in society.



Consequences of poverty and economic disinvestment in Appalachia

- Those in poverty engage in poorer health behaviors.
- Non-biological factors contribute more to health and disease.
 - Social determinants of health (SDH) are the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age AND the wider set of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life.
 - These differences include economic policies and systems, development agendas, social norms, social policies and political systems.



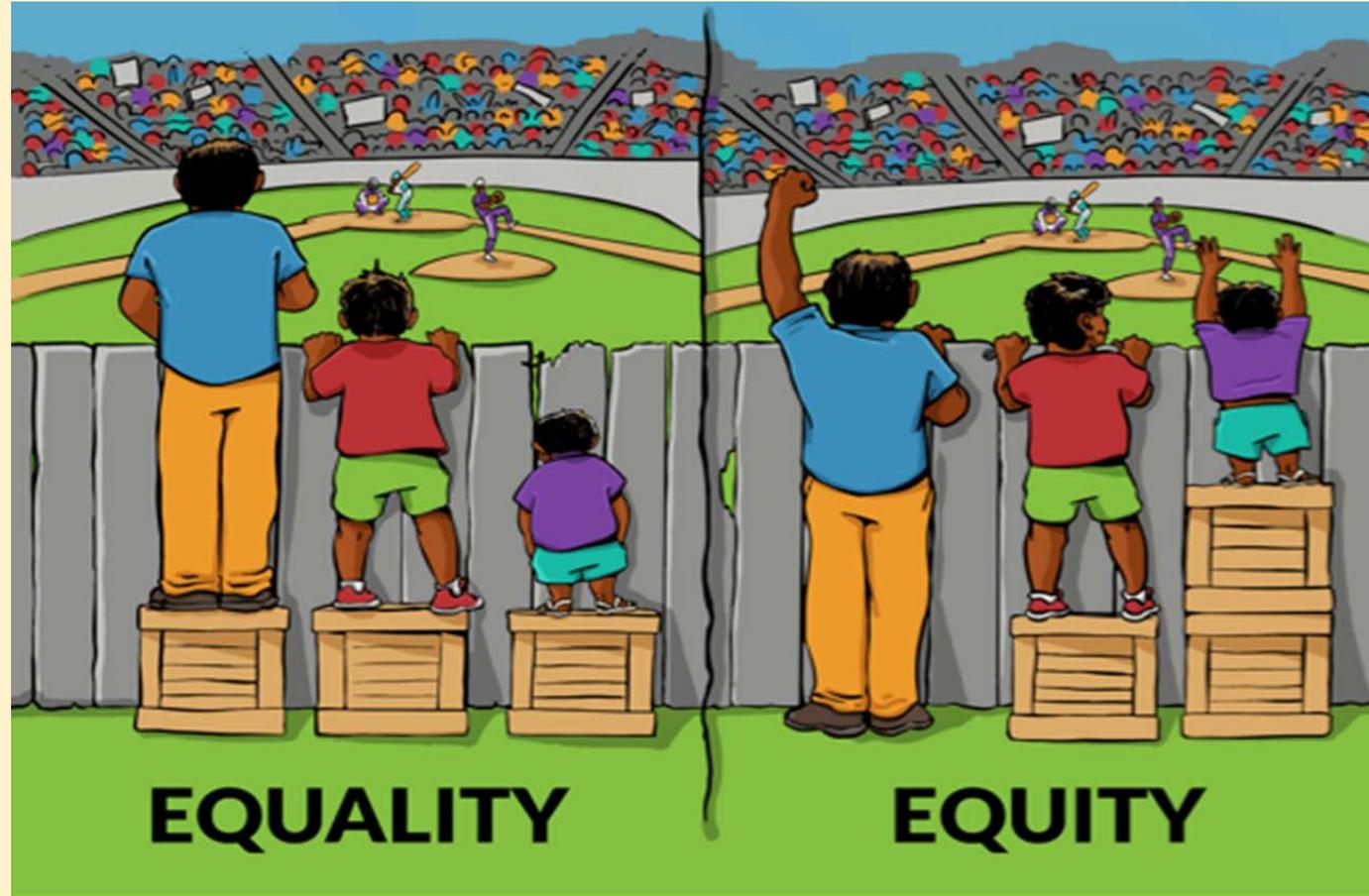
<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/importance-addressing-social-determinants-health-mealey-msn-rn-cde>



How oppression and racism inform our work

- ACF seeks to model an organization which is effective, responsible, accountable, democratic, anti-racist, and committed to developing leadership.
- Racism poses a unique obstacle to the ability of groups to organize, within our communities and with each other in the broader social change movement.
- ACF feels that in order for any of our organizations to be allies in the movement for social change — which includes people from all races and ethnicities — we have to be willing to work cooperatively and respectfully with each other, and to be accountable for our behavior with our allies.





Changing systems and institutions

- ACF provides grants to community-based organizations working to:
 - End racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, ageism, and ableism
 - Promote non-violent communities
 - Build organizations that are fair, inclusive, and democratic
- Community-led and community-based organizing, addressing root causes and systemic issues, and understanding forms of oppression, especially racism.
- ACF supports using a wide range of tools to work for social change including community organizing, coalition building, community education, training, cultural work, and advocacy.



ACF grantees addressing racism

- Racism is central to our mission and vision. We share wealth and resources through grant making to address racism and other ‘-isms’ in our communities.
- Below are just a few highlights of the accomplishments of the work that we have recently supported:
 - Reached 5,000 undocumented immigrants in Tennessee with information about using the Obama Administration’s administrative relief to avoid deportation.
 - Connected chemical safety with racial justice at a summit of 62 residents, community activists, local government officials, academics, youth, and scientists, developing strategies to address the disproportionate impact of chemical releases.
 - Challenged and postponed a road project which would have destroyed Chattanooga’s historic African-American Lincoln Park neighborhood with its old Negro League ballfields.
 - Examined, with an interracial group of middle school students, the effects of urban renewal, gentrification, structural racism, and classism in their own backyards.



ACF grantees addressing racism, continued

- Centro Hispano – non-profit organization and welcoming center for multi-cultural families of East Tennessee.
- Chattanooga Organized for Action – non-profit organization that works to initiate, support, and connect popular grassroots organizations for the purposes of advancing the local social justice movement.
- UUNIK Academy - rites of passage program that is dedicated to transforming African-American youth into respectful and respectable African-American adults.



Regional work to build healthy, productive communities

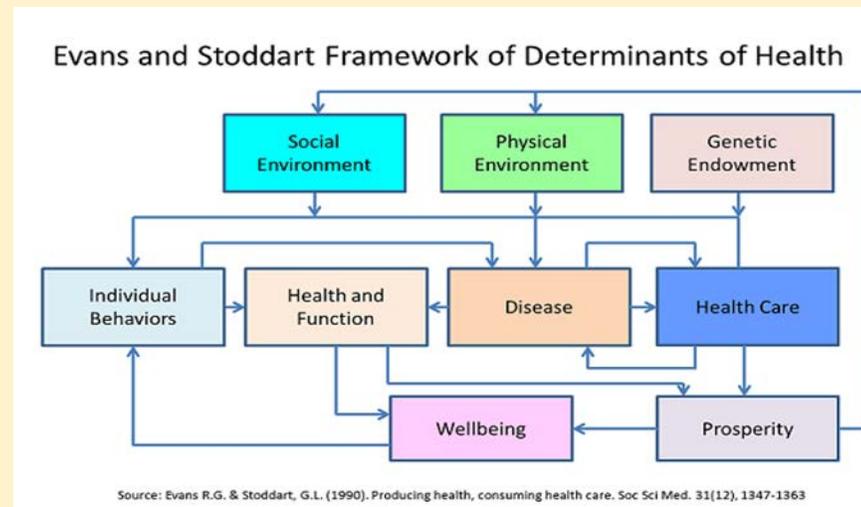
- University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute – Making Wisconsin the Healthiest State and County Health Rankings & Roadmaps
 - Food hubs
 - farmer’s markets, community gardens
 - Mobile markets
 - Rural Resources in Greeneville, TN
 - Intensive case management for pregnant and parenting teens
 - HUGS; Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) programs
 - Service learning programs: pregnancy and STIs
 - VRLAC education via TN DOH
 - Expand higher education financial incentives for health professionals serving underserved areas
 - Tennessee Rural Partnership is a healthcare workforce network comprised of medical schools, hospitals, rural health clinics, community health centers, private medical practices, community-based organizations, the Tennessee Department of Health and other interested stakeholders, such as the Rural Health Association of Tennessee (RHAT), the Tennessee Primary Care Association (TPCA) and Tennessee Hospital Association (THA)
 - These groups help TRP achieve its mission of maximizing access to primary care health in rural and underserved communities in Tennessee.



Regional work to build healthy, productive communities, continued

- Expand rural training tracks and programs in medical education
 - East Tennessee State University Rural Primary Care Track is a 4-year community-based experiential curriculum whose core goals emphasize community, rural culture, interdisciplinary team interactions and leadership development.
 - The Appalachian Preceptorship is designed to expose medical students to rural primary care practiced in a manner sensitive to the culture.
- Telemedicine
 - ETSU OCME Project ECHO
- Proper drug disposal programs
 - TN Dept. of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services
 - Community coalitions (Insight Alliance Count It, Lock It, Drop It)
- Access to places for physical activity
 - Persuaded 21 childcare centers to adopt policies that exceeded the current regulation and proposed new guidelines. Children served by participating centers are now getting 60-90 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity daily, which meets or exceeds the national recommendations.

Moving forward



- Focus should be on creating unity between communities within the area. Unless a unified front is able to address the factors we are up against, work will continue to shift and there will continue to be a deficit in terms of cultural productivity.
- Economic development has, at the center of it, a strong relationship to dishonesty or mistrust. That is to say that practices over the past century or longer have strained opinions on collective bargaining, company policies, and beyond.
- Our challenges are steeped in race and stereotypes.
- Self-determinism waivers in the faces of activism and change for the benefit of the collective.

