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Rural Action Awarded National Grant to Bring America’s Founding Story to Life Across Appalachian Ohio

Athens, Ohio — Rural Action has been awarded a competitive grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to lead a multi-community initiative commemorating the 250th anniversary of the United States.

“We appreciate this commitment from the National Endowment for the Humanities, which recognizes the significance of Appalachian Ohio culture and history,” said Joe Brehm, Co-CEO. “Rural Action is proud to work with NEH, partners, and local experts to learn together with communities as we lift up this early American history in our region.”

The project, *Ohio Country 1776: Gateway to America*, will bring a series of 25 public programs to communities across Appalachian Ohio, offering residents and visitors the opportunity to experience Revolutionary-era history through hands-on, place-based learning.

Spanning five regions—Athens, Chillicothe, Marietta, Steubenville, and Zanesville—the initiative will feature five programs on the themes of building, growing, learning, making, and moving. Each program combines expert-led interpretation with immersive experiences such as traditional craft workshops, historical reenactments, and experiences boating on the rivers that helped the region grow into what it is today.

“This project brings the foundational history of Appalachian Ohio to life by focusing on the material realities of the times. If we can taste the same apples folks ate some 250 years ago, if we can walk part of Zane’s Trace and try our hands at 18th-century handtools, then we can begin to better appreciate how Ohio came to be and what it means to be here now. We look forward to working with partners to showcase the region’s early beauty and resilience.”

In addition to in-person programming, Rural Action will develop a series of self-guided audio tours to extend access and deepen engagement beyond live events.

Rooted in Rural Action's mission to build resilient Appalachian communities, the project reflects a commitment to elevating local knowledge, fostering lifelong learning, and strengthening connections between people and place. *Ohio Country 1776* will be run by Appalachian Understories, a social enterprise within Rural Action's Environmental Education program. Appalachian Understories celebrates the natural and cultural heritage of Appalachian Ohio through guided tours and community-centered outdoor experiences that provide a sense of place, preserve cultural knowledge, benefit human well-being, and stimulate the local economy.

Programs will be offered free of charge and are designed to engage a wide range of audiences, from families and students to lifelong learners and history enthusiasts.

More information, including program dates and registration details, will be available soon at:

www.ruralaction.org

www.appalachianunderstories.com