

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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April 12 Kick-off Empowers Businesses to Create Communities of Healing Federal Grant Offers Recovery to Work Program

Beckley, W.Va. (April 13) – Approximately 50 community leaders and advocates attended the Communities of Healing Gathering virtually April 12 to learn about and support the newly launched recovery to workforce program. In attendance also were 12 area businesses, who together will begin their four-month cohort journey to learn how to mold their current businesses into social enterprises supporting local citizens recovering from addictions.

“Our investment in recovery can go hand in hand with that of community economic development,” said Judy Moore, director of the West Virginia Hive Network, which is supporting the effort. The WV Hive is assisting with startup of the program and recruiting cohort participants, as well as offering the Co.Starters Get Started workshop as the first step of the training journey, and providing business advisor support for businesses and entrepreneurs that desire to have social impact surrounding recovery efforts in our communities throughout the three-year program.

Moore said the Communities of Healing is an Appalachian Regional Commission funded recovery-to-work ecosystem program “designed to spur small business development and employ West Virginians healing from addiction through the growth of social entrepreneurship.” It is built on the success of Fruits of Labor, a culinary program based in Rainelle that has years of experience working with those in recovery.

Tammy Jordan, President of Fruits of Labor said her organization believes “change happens in ourselves, our families, and our communities as we understand better how to become part of that change. When we are growing and investing, we have space to create a place of healing, a community of healing, and to hold the space needed for those in recovery to invest in their own healing journey. We hope more

businesses will join us on this journey to create their own unique path of growing, investing, and healing as a leader, as a business, and as a community.”

The ARC grant was awarded in 2020 to the Region 4 Planning and Development Council in Summersville. The “Creating Communities of Healing by Cultivating Businesses to Address the Opioid Crisis” project is also supported by Seed Sower, Inc., Wright Venture Services, and Region 1 Workforce Development Board. The grant partners are seeking to deliver a program that strengthens the recovery-to-work system in southern West Virginia through the growth of social entrepreneurship, primarily in the food, hospitality, tourism, and agriculture sectors.

Moore said the cultivation of local businesses and entrepreneurs is a key component to addressing the opioid crisis in Appalachia and in improving the response to substance use disorder. “If we are successful, over the next three years, we will have engaged 60 businesses, 30 workers/trainees, and 150 participants, and leveraged \$500,000 in private investment,” she said.

The WV Hive is the entrepreneurship program of the New River Gorge Regional Development Authority and the administrator of the Country Roads Angel Network. More information about the WV Hive can be found at <https://wvhive.com/>.

More about Communities of Healing is at <https://www.fruitsoflaborinc.com/communities-of-healing>

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