WE DON’T BELIEVE IN THE QUICK FIX. OUR WORK MUST BE ENDURING, IMPACTFUL, AND REPLICABLE. PLEASE HELP SUPPORT THE WORK OF THE BERRY CENTER.

Above: Students from the Fall 2018 class of the Wendell Berry Farming Program of Sterling College walk with professor Leah Bayens and community member Steve Smith on his farm in Trimble County, KY.
WELCOME TO THE MEMBERSHIP

Mary Berry, Executive Director

My friend and colleague at The Berry Center, Darra Smith, said a couple of weeks ago, “Your dream for the Center is coming true.” Her comment was a gift to me. And I am passing that gift to all of you as a way of thanking you for your support and interest in our work.

Many of you signed on to help us when there was really nothing but a vision to support and there might have remained nothing to support without all of you. That vision was to continue my family's work in agriculture and to put my father’s writing to work for small farmers and land conserving communities. That vision now lives in the four principle programs of The Berry Center. I invite you to scroll down to read short updates on those programs.

Goethe said, “In the realm of ideas everything depends on enthusiasm: in the real world all rests on perseverance.” And that is where we are today at The Berry Center. Our work requires imagination and flexibility as good work always does but with maturity comes the need for committed people who, with insight, get up every day willing to do the work it takes to move something forward. I am grateful to say that we have those committed people at the Center.

You will meet our program directors when you read about their programs below. I want to introduce you to the rest of our team. Ben Aguilar, the director of operations supports everything we do here. Darra Smith is our office manager and financial officer. They have made a solid foundation from which the rest of our work springs. Kate Weiss has brought a decade of bookselling experience and expertise to The Bookstore at The Berry Center. Debbie Barker works with me on development, projects, and, well, everything that is happening here. Her years of work for nonprofits and her understanding of agricultural policy has been unendingly useful to our work.

Before starting The Berry Center I farmed full time. There is no such thing as a specialist on a small family farm. Everyone does everything. I am proud and happy to say that I work with people who approach their work here in the same way.

It is clear to me that we are in a continuing agricultural depression. Farmers have been encouraged for generations to get into large and industrial farming. This system is toxic, erosive, community and land destroying. Most ruinous to farmers and the land is the over production that commodity farming encourages. Farmers are failing because the system quickly moves money out of the farmers’ hands and into the pockets of the agri-industrial companies. It would appear that the stated policy of the USDA in the 1950s, that there were too many farmers, is still in place because there is no help for these farmers when they fail as a result of having to compete against global agribusinesses and food companies.

Local, organic food movements have only benefitted a small number of entrepreneurial farmers and have not changed the culture of agriculture. These entrepreneurial farmers are having a harder time making a living in local markets. Not only do they have to grow food, a more than full-time job, but then must compete with large organic food companies in marketing, transportation, and a host of other jobs. Learn more about challenges our farmers face today in our Renewing a Vision for Rural Prosperity article.

It is long past time for us to learn to do better but it is not too late. Our work to build local food systems, stabilize income for good farmers, to educate young farmers, and to work on the culture of agriculture is hopeful work. We don’t believe in the quick fix. Our work must be enduring, impactful, and replicable.

My father tells me that once one sets an intention and makes a commitment what is needed comes. I have learned the truth of this since starting the center in 2011. The programs you will read about below show the commitment of our program directors and the usefulness of their programs. Moreover, I count everyone who has been interested enough in our work to be on our mailing list and is reading this now to be a part of the help that has come our way. We hope that you will continue to support us in 2019.

From our family at TBC to all of you we wish you a very happy holiday season. -MB
LESSONS IN HOMECOMING
Dr. Leah Bayens, Director
Wendell Berry Farming Program Of Sterling College

“People are joined to the land by work. Land, work, people, and community are all comprehended in the idea of culture.”
- Wendell Berry, “People, Land, and Community”

The Wendell Berry Farming Program of Sterling College is founded on the principle that the union of land, people, and community defines good work. In fall of 2019 this good work will be going forward in a big way—we are so pleased to announce that we received a major gift that allows us to begin the full-time curriculum of the Wendell Berry Farming Program (WBFP). Offered exclusively in Henry County, Kentucky, the home base of The Berry Center, we’ll provide education for junior- and senior-year undergraduate students linking liberal arts to farming, forestry, draft power, and good land stewardship. Students will work with local farmers and neighbors, economists, rural advocacy groups, and The Berry Center staff. Coursework covers these subjects, among others:

- Agricultural literature and arts
- Land-conserving and restorative crop and livestock production
- Restoration forestry
- Draft animal power systems
- Rural leadership
- Farm business management
- Agricultural policy and farmer advocacy
- Agrarian and natural history

The generous gift, distributed over the next five years, will cover staff and educational needs and now our upcoming goal is to secure student housing. We’ll soon begin a Wendell Berry Farming Program Capital Campaign to purchase student housing and indoor classrooms. Look for more information in the near future and if you’d like to know how you can be part of this Campaign, please contact us— 502.845.9200

Our full slate of classes builds upon our short course that took place in August 2018 and the upcoming short course in January 2019. This past fall, twelve Sterling College students took part in our inaugural short-course, “Homecoming I: Good Work Is Membership.” Students explored the natural and cultural history of the area and considered how good work leads to membership in place, or as Wendell Berry puts it, how “people are joined to the land by work.” They trained Wendell Berry’s draft horses on his son Den Berry’s farm. They listened to farmer Steve Smith’s compelling story of his land’s tenure from the time when indigenous communities made their lives there to his life in and with the place. They also learned how he shifted from conventional production to operating the first Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program in Kentucky. Tom and Janet Grissom, who are graciously sharing their land for WBFP courses, discussed the challenges to local forest economies and examined the extractive history of their farm along Drennon Creek and how it can be repaired. Students also met with farmers raising livestock for Our Home.
Place Meat program and heard the challenges of building local food movements. A concluding highlight of the Program included an invigorating class on rural culture and literature led by Wendell and Tanya Berry.

In keeping with the motto of community engagement being part of good work, students also pitched in with The Berry Center’s Agrarian Literary League’s fall festival by selling Our Home Place Meat at the farmers’ market, judging cakes and cobblers for the Best of Henry County Bake-Off, inspiring a dance party at the Odd Fellows’s fish fry, and generally making the day run smoothly from set up to clean up. Through these experiences, they learned, as one student put it: “Good work is in part based on healthy limitation. The land can only take so much cultivation, our bodies can only work so many hours, and in that way we find ourselves empowered by our limitations as we are forced to stretch out and rely on our draft teams and our neighbors. Our limitations empower us to build community by the necessity of sharing the burden in order to reach our absolute potential.”

In January 2019, twelve students will return to the Grissom’s Drennon Creek Farm for a restorative, short-course, forestry class that will feature draft-horse logging led by draft animal educator Rick Thomas, Healing Harvest Forest Foundation’s Jason Rutledge, and Kentucky draft logger Ben Burgess. Details about an open house event for the public are forthcoming.

To be accredited as part of the Sterling College Sustainable Agriculture degree program, the Wendell Berry Farming Program of Sterling College is providing future farmers with education that combines the arts and sciences with community-based, co-operative economics and training.

We are putting culture back into agriculture and community into education. Interested WBFP applicants may contact the Sterling College Office of Admission by email at admission@sterlingcollege.edu or by phone at (800) 648-3591/(802) 586-7711 ext. 100.
FROM THE ARCHIVES

Michele Guthrie, Archivist

The Archive at the Berry Center documents the work of Wendell Berry, John Berry, Jr. and John Berry Sr., and reveals their affection for rural communities, rural people, and rural culture. This work required determination and intentionality which Mr. Berry Sr. and Jr. and Wendell showed all their lives; the Archive contains the proof of it in their own words and deeds. The Berry Center Archive contains a record that can be found nowhere else—speeches, articles, correspondence, institutional files, drafts, notes and commentary—of three of the people at the center of the American agrarianism. It provides a window into the character of these men, the focus of their work and their lives, a background for the agricultural history of our state, region, and nation.

Mr. Berry, Sr.'s life and work come into focus for me when I read his handwritten notes for speeches. In one, his idea was to talk to his audience about the Tobacco Program. He used the phrase, "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" to link the Tobacco Program, an economic ideal which included all tobacco farmers—and gave the small producer the same opportunity for success in the marketplace that it gave to the large producer—to the Declaration of Independence, the standard for life in a new nation. Thus the effort to create a sturdy farm economy became not primarily about a crop or a product, but rather about the people, economy, families and communities of a region and ultimately, a country. That effort has been challenged by many from all sides, and the allies of agrarians pitted against those challenges have been few. In 1989 John M. Berry, Jr. suggested that a well known farm organization, was, along with Cargill, Kellogg, Archer Daniels Midland and other agribusiness giants responsible for the industrialization of farming and the subsequent loss of rural communities through the loss of farm land to foreclosure or development - intentional removal of farmers from their land. John Berry's speech is astonishing. His statement to a convention of that organization? "You are in bed with the enemy."

It is so moving to see this brave man's notes, ideas jotted down in the night when he woke up but didn't want to turn on the lights, written on a brochure, that I have to turn over and over in
my hands to follow his thoughts in the margins, written in the dark. These and other found gems are the basis for a file I created called “The Quotable John Berry, Jr.” This story and many others just as enlightening and moving are to be found only in our Archive. It is rich terrain for researchers and enthusiasts alike to make connections.

Agrarian values are also reflected in our collection of books for circulation in our newest archival effort, the Tanya Amyx Berry Agrarian Library, now open for lending and housed here at the Center. The topics can be described as chiefly agrarian and focus on the art and the science of farming. In our efforts to revitalize our local culture and farming, we, as Wendell says, will “always be in need of teachers, friends, and allies among the living and the dead.” We have hundreds of books and many journals and are adding more every day. Visit The Archive and become a patron of the Tanya Amyx Berry Agrarian Library. There you will find the allies you need, when you need them most.

Right: John Berry Jr.’s ambling notes on a brochure.

Below: An excerpted spread from the published version of Mr. Berry, Jr.’s speech, ‘When We Awake...Will There Be A Tobacco Program?’

In other words, by your acquiescence in American Farm Bureau Policy, you are in bed with your enemy.

the early 70’s? Who were the advisors to the Secretary of Agriculture in the development of the 1985 farm bill? For the sake of brevity let me tell you the answer; they were the same corporate interests that historically have profited at the expense of farmers. But to emphasize the point let me tell you the makeup of the so-called “Kitchen Cabinet” that has advised a succession of Secretaries of Agriculture on the formulation of farm policy. It consisted of officials of or lobbyists for Archer-Daniels-Midland, Cargill, Continental Grain, Kellogg, RJR Nabisco, and the American Farm Bureau Federation. In effect, the Kitchen Cabinet consisted of those interests who had bought the rights to influence farm policy with campaign contributions. The only farmer organization that participated was the American Farm Bureau Federation. In other words, by your acquiescence in American Farm Bureau Policy, you are in bed with your enemy.

What are the specific objectives of the current farm policy?
1. “A market-oriented agriculture with supply and demand, rather than government action, ultimately determining production and price.”
2. “Encourage production decisions based on market demand.”
3. “Provide income support at a level that would not interfere with opportunity for income from the market.”
4. “Strongly oppose . . . any type of mandatory production, acreage control of marketing quotas.”
“Government economic policies should be designed to encourage economic stability, increased productivity, a greater competitive ability in the international market and a high level of economic prosperity...” (italics mine).
I joined The Berry Center in November as the director of Our Home Place Meat (OHPM), a program establishing a cooperative for local beef producers to sell to local markets—chefs, retailers, and other outlets. OHPM is addressing the fundamental challenges of creating local food economies and is a model that can be replicated in other communities.

As with rural regions across our nation, farmers in Kentucky have had few options other than to sell their livestock to giant agriculture companies operating massive industrial animal and meat processing facilities. OHPM offers an alternative. We are challenging today’s unhealthy industrial, globalized system of meat production. In contrast to this system, OHPM is based on ecology and care—respectful animal husbandry, healthy landscapes, quality food, and thriving farm communities.

Rose Veal is the launch product of OHPM. Unlike traditional white veal, Rose Veal is raised with its mother for its whole life, supping on milk and pasture. Our Rose Veal is raised and processed humanely in Henry County, Kentucky. Our farmers are growing calves under special standards set by The Berry Center. We are talking milk fed, grass fed, no antibiotics ever!

I’m pleased to report that OHPM has successfully completed its first harvest of 50 animals corresponding into 11,000 pounds of tender, beautiful and tasty Rose Veal. We have visited chefs from the Louisville, Lexington, and Northern Kentucky/Cincinnati areas, many of whom are ordering for their restaurants. We’re working with Ohio Valley Food Connection, a distributor that is opening doors for us throughout the region. And we now have a presence in three retail locations—Good Food Coop in Lexington,
Rainbow Blossom/Paul’s Fruit Market/The Fish Market in Louisville, and Dorothy Lane in Dayton, OH.

Critical partners in this endeavor include Trackside Butcher Shoppe’s Chris Wright and John Edwards, a local slaughterhouse and butcher, essential services for building a local livestock and meat economy. The quality and consistency of our packaged Rose Veal product continues to improve and we are grateful to Trackside for its professionalism and shared enthusiasm for our goals. Levi Burg, our county extension agent, is providing great assistance working with organizations to continue forage and field improvements that will strengthen the niche market for OHPM. And I’m grateful to my predecessor, Katie Ellis, who set a firm foundation for the stability and growth of OHPM.

But the real stars of OHPM are the farmers who are raising cattle on diverse and healthy Henry County pasture! A key part of our Program is to provide a parity price to farmers—a secure, stable price—for their animals, independent of the endless downward price pressures and boom/bust cycles of the commodity markets. This means that animals are staying here in our home place, creating value for local farmers, and strengthening our local economy.

A local food economy that is better farming, better food, and better for planet—that’s Our Home Place Meat. If you’d like to know where and how you can purchase our fantastic Rose Veal, please contact me at The Berry Center, 502.845.9200.

Above: Rose Veal T Bone steaks processed by Trackside Butcher Shoppe in Campbellsburg, KY
Previous: Our Home Place Meat cattle on beautiful Henry County pasture.
Community book group leaders of the Agrarian Literary League enjoy a spirited discussion and fellowship during Brunch With Wendell
As the The Berry Center’s Agrarian Literary League (ALL) celebrates the conclusion of its second year, I am reflecting with gratitude on the successes of this rural reading program and the efforts of the many communities that made its good work possible.

With the help of a close partnership with the Henry County Public Library and a National Endowment for the Arts Big Read grant, the ALL gave away 400 copies of Ernest J. Gaines’s acclaimed novel, *A Lesson Before Dying*, and brought a variety of humanities programming to Henry County. Between September and November we hosted nine events for ALL members. These events were thoughtfully planned by the ALL committee, and were based on the themes of injustice, African American agrarianism, and redemption, found in Dr. Gaines’s book. Three events of particular note included:

A discussion about criminal justice and wrongful conviction with the Kentucky Innocence Project. This gathering was led by attorney Jimmer Dudley and Jeffrey Clark, who was exonerated and released from prison in February of this year after wrongful conviction 25 years ago. Mr. Clark’s generosity in telling his story led to emotional conversations about prison reform, post-release culture shock (Mr. Clark was incarcerated well before computers and cell phones became ubiquitous), cases of corrupt prosecution, and the responsibility we as citizens have to be an educated juror.

The Get on the Bus Tour offered our county’s first ever tour highlighting African American agrarian historical sites. Led by Henry County native and member of the local chapter of the National Association of Black Veterans (NABVets), Joe Wright, we were introduced to the sites of several African American cemeteries and former Rosenwald Schools within the county. Bill and Karen Shannon spoke of their efforts to restore one of these historic schools. Conversations have continued since the tour about a partnership between the NABVets and the Wendell Berry Farming Program in helping to maintain the African American cemetery in New Castle.

Brunch with Wendell gave a smaller group of readers an opportunity to talk with Wendell Berry about his 60-year friendship with Ernest Gaines, as well as the importance of “Ernie’s” writing to the legacy of agrarian literature. ALL members shared incredible stories of reading *A Lesson Before Dying* with their family, friends, and neighbors.
asked Wendell about interpretations they had of various passages and images from the book, and asked if their understanding matched Wendell’s and all that he knew of his friend.

We concluded this year’s ALL program with a big event for The Berry Center as a whole, our annual Kentucky Arts & Letters Day. Each year, Kentucky authors join us here in New Castle to read from their latest work or a beloved classic, while the Center’s gallery features the work of Kentucky artists. This year, we were honored to host wood engravers, Wesley Bates, Joanne Price, and Carolyn Whitesel, and listen to readings by; Maurice Manning, Mary Ann Taylor-Hall, Bobbie Ann Mason, Gray Zeitz, Leslie Shane, Rebecca Gayle Howell, Jonathan Greene, and Maureen Morehead.

Unique to this year’s Arts & Letters Day was a keynote conversation, the finale of the 2018 ALL, between Wendell Berry and author Crystal Wilkinson. Ms. Wilkinson was the recipient of the 2016 Ernest J. Gaines Award for Literary Excellence (serving to inspire and recognize rising African-American fiction writers of excellence at a national level) for her beautiful novel, The Birds of Opulence. Moderated thoughtfully by our friend Debbie Barker, Wendell and Crystal’s conversation included the art of common language—the necessity of familiarity and affection for the people they’re writing about; the culture and joy of shared work, and the craft of writing. In reflecting on the legacy and influence of Ernest Gaines’s writing on her life, Crystal said, “Wendell, Gurney [Norman], Bobbie Ann [Mason], George Ella Lyon, Gail Jones gave me permission to write about Kentucky. Ernest Gaines gave me permission to write about rural black people.”

For these gatherings, for the hard work of many people, for the generosity of time given, for new and growing partnerships, for the growth of the ALL in this county and beyond, and for the financial support of the organizations and individuals who made it possible, I am grateful.

Don’t forget to visit our online store for books, broadsides, and apparel to help show your support for the work of The Berry Center: Shop Online at The Bookstore At The Berry Center. We can also special order and ship any title you’d like, and again, all proceeds go directly toward supporting the program work of The Berry Center.

Kentucky author and 2016 Ernest J. Gaines Award for Literary Excellence winner Crystal Wilkinson joined moderator and Berry Center consultant Debbie Barker and Wendell Berry for the Kentucky Arts and Letters Day Keynote event. Photograph courtesy of Morris Grubbs.
The Berry Center is putting Wendell Berry’s writings to work by advocating for farmers, land conserving communities, and healthy regional economies.

Wendell Berry’s *The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture*, published in 1977, awakened a national and global conversation on the dire state of agriculture. The Berry Center was launched in 2011 to continue this conversation and preserve the legacy of Wendell Berry’s work and writings and the exceptional agricultural contributions of his father John Berry, Sr., and his brother John Berry, Jr. We are putting these inspiring writings and histories into action through our Archive at the Berry Center, the Agrarian Culture Center and Bookstore, Our Home Place Meat—A Local Beef Initiative, and The Wendell Berry Farming Program of Sterling College. The core of our work is to advocate for farmers, land conserving communities, and healthy regional economies.

Our work seeks to provide solutions to essential issues that are rarely in public discourse and certainly not reflected in agricultural policies. “What will it take for farmers to be able to afford to farm well?” and “How do we become a culture that supports good farming and land use?” These are just a few of the questions that The Berry Center is addressing. We believe that the answers—while firmly rooted in local work—are central to solving some of the world’s most pressing problems including the devastation of natural resources and biodiversity; rapid onset of climate change; economic and social inequities; and the collapse of healthy farming and rural communities. We welcome you to join us in this work.

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Friends, we hope you have enjoyed reading about how our work at The Berry Center is building an alternative to destructive industrial food and farm systems. We believe that successful farming is embedded in ecology, community, culture, and neighborliness. Our programs are building local food models, educating the next generation of farmers, reclaiming rural culture, and honoring agrarian leaders and history that can provide a vision for the future. If you can, please help support this important work with a one-time or recurring gift via our donation portal at berrycenter.org/support/membership.

Thank you so, so much for supporting this hopeful work, and Happy Holidays from our family to yours. - TBC