Together for Hope



TOGETHER FOR HOPE is transforming rural America by focusing on four priorities of hope: EDUCATION, HEALTH & NUTRITION, HOUSING &ENVIRONMENT, and SOCIAL ENTERPRISE. By leveraging community strengths rather than focusing on needs, we help generate hope using Asset-Based Community Development alongside counties of persistent rural poverty in the US.

WE ARE BUILDING A COALITION TO INTERVENE, INNOVATE, AND ADVOCATE FOR A LIFE FREE OF POVERTY.

TFH FOCUSES ON THE 338 COUNTIES OF PERSISTENT RURAL POVERTY IN AMERICA AS DEFINED BY THE USDA. A rural county is in persistent poverty when 20% or more of its population lives below the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) for 30 consecutive years or more. These counties cluster into four primary ethno-geographies: Appalachia, Black Belt, Delta, and TNT4C (Tribal Nations, Texas, and Four Corners).

WE HAVE FOUR PRIORITIES OF HOPE, which represents the best ways to holistically end persistent rural poverty.

EDUCATION...supporting after-school programs to fighting school vouchers and book bans!

HOUSING & ENVIRONMENT...building affordable housing, repairing current housing stock, and fighting for access to clean water in rural communities.

HEALTH & NUTRITION...summer feeding programs to SNAP benefits campaigns, health fairs to advocacy for Medicaid Expansion!

SOCIAL ENTERPRISE...supports economies of scale for small towns from small vegetable farms, to mobile grocery stores, to hand-made local clothing!

These four strategic priorities collectively address the various issues related to systemic poverty. Focusing on any one of these priorities is essential, but to neglect any one of them creates a barrier to breaking systemic, generational cycles of poverty.







GUIDED BY AN ASSET-BASED APPROACH TO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, we identify and elevate the strengths that reside in a community instead of focusing on needs. When communities come together to build upon their strengths related to our four priorities of hope, they reframe their communities based on what they have rather than what they may need. This generates hope and builds shared priorities that pave a common path towards alleviating endemic poverty.

WE CONVENE...

from annual national & regional meetings to topical summits, we bring people together for good. We host trainings, film screenings, informational sessions, advocacy events, and more around our priorities of hope and issues most pertinent to our coalition members. We bring together communities for asset mapping, an Asset-based Community Development strategy that can be a guiding force for change in a community.

WE CONNECT...

our coalition members so they can share best practices with each other, encourage each other's work, and build new collaborations. We connect members, who represent grassroots work, to grass-top organizations for collective impact.

WE CONSULT...

for local nonprofits, community-based organizations, and social enterprises on management, resource and funding identification, board development, administrative assistance, strategic growth, and brand marketing and communications.

WE CREATE...

small social businesses and nonprofit organizations in communities of persistent rural poverty. From an after-school program in the Delta to a sauce company in Appalachia, we support innovations that create rural community development. We help members create models of their good work to replicate across rural spaces where assistance is needed.

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APPALACHIA

AT TOGETHER FOR HOPE APPALACHIA, we believe that our mountain region is diverse, vibrant, and abundant with opportunity. As a result of the economic history and geography of the region, our region has many strengths even when faced with many dilemmas. However, we recognize that the resources in our region are powerful enough to overcome the challenges we face individually and collectively!



"After the storm (Hurricane Helene), I was thinking, 'I don't know if we can afford to help, but I might be able to connect you to organizations that can.' That same evening we got a call from TFH asking if we needed help….and that opened up so many avenues for us to be able to assist."

– Stephanie Colchado, Growing Roots, Grundy County, TN



TFH Appalachia supports on-the-ground work in the 63 counties of persistent rural poverty in the states of Kentucky (42), West Virginia (9), Tennessee (7), Virginia (4), and Ohio (1).

We focus on systemic and equitable poverty alleviation. We stay focused on seeking ways to address the root of inequity on the grassroots level, while innovating long-term, sustainable solutions for the people of Appalachia.





BLACK BELT

THE BLACK BELT REGION is named for the dark, fertile soil that runs throughout the South. THF's Black Belt area is made up of 82 counties of persistent rural poverty across Georgia (42), Alabama (16), South Carolina (12), North Carolina (9), and Florida (3).

Those who know and love rural communities in the Black Belt the most see our region as rich in local leadership and insight, overflowing in creativity and strong relationships, and plentiful in sustaining natural resources.



Together for Hope has been invaluable to Allendale County ALIVE by connecting us with like-minded partners, opening doors to resources, and strengthening our capacity to serve rural communities. Being part of the Rural Development Coalition helps us amplify our impact and ensures that our local work is part of a broader movement for equity and hope across rural America.

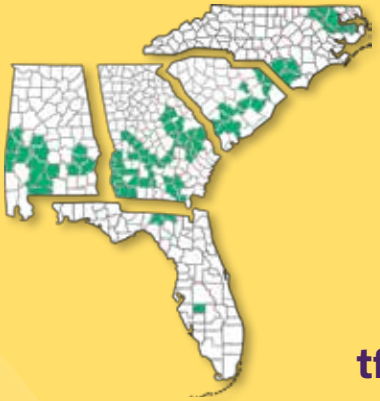
-DeWayne Ennis, Allendale County Alive (SC) & Low Country Rural Housing Task Force

By engaging in the work of TFH Black Belt, you will meet some of the hardest-working, caring individuals who are working to transform their communities into places where all citizens have the opportunity to thrive.

From equitable access to healthcare to free and equitable public education, we work at the root of systemic problems to make change in our region. From fixing houses to building houses, we work to provide safe, affordable housing so that families can gain access to improved health and educational outcomes.







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THE DELTA

DELTA REGION's topographical footprint includes 102 counties of persistent rural poverty, spanning across seven states that flow geographically along the banks of the mighty Mississippi River: Mississippi (45), Louisiana (22), Missouri (14), Arkansas (13), Texas (4), Tennessee (2), Illinois (1), and Kentucky (1).

Fervently committed to improving the lives of the most impoverished and marginalized communities, we are a small but mighty team of poverty abolitionists, engaging people from across our states to build bridges across the rural spaces of the Delta.



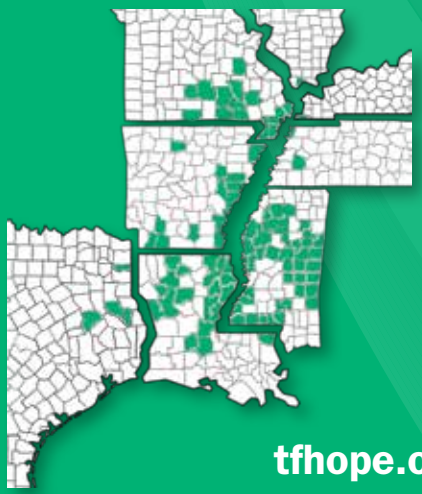
"Being a part of the Together for Hope Coalition has been extremely helpful as the Director of Delta Hands for Hope. For the past six years, TFH has been instrumental in providing support through resources and training to our organization and that has helped to make my job easier. During the pandemic, DHH was operating as an emergency food pantry and TFH rose to the occasion to help steer food, supplies, and other essentials to us to disperse to other coalition members and to the Shaw community. I am grateful to be a part of a coalition that supports its members both personally and professionally and works to strengthen the regions that it serves across the country."

– Chiquikta Fountain, Delta Hands for Hope, Bolivar County, MS





We bring all community components together, focusing on the gifts of the people and the local assets within a community.



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TRIBAL NATIONS, TEXAS, & THE FOUR CORNERS

TRIBAL NATIONS, TEXAS, AND THE FOUR CORNERS (TNT4C) represents 95 counties in 11 states and is the largest area in Together for Hope's ethno-geographies. From the Northern Plains to Oklahoma and in the Desert Southwest, many of these counties fall within Tribal Nations. Other counties across Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and Colorado are predominantly Hispanic. From the fertile grounds of the Rio Grande Valley to the frozen High Plains, this region represents beautiful diversity but devastating poverty.



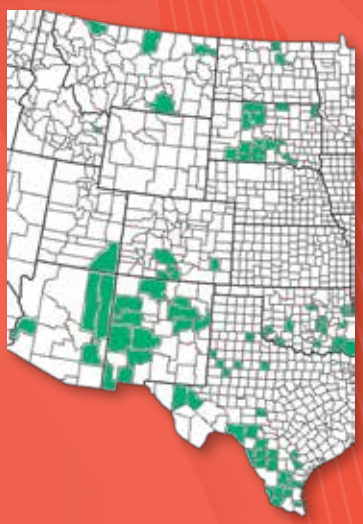
"Texas esconde pobreza profunda detrás de carreteras y rascacielos. Sus megaciudades invisibilizan comunidades no incorporadas, olvidadas por el tiempo y el gobierno, marginadas por el capital, pero llenas de dignidad y resiliencia. La presencia de Together for Hope, con historias de éxito e impacto, honra sus luchas y siembra justicia, solidaridad y transformación."

"Texas hides deep poverty behind highways and skylines. Its megacities overshadow unincorporated communities—forgotten by time and government, marginalized by capital, yet full of dignity and resilience. Together for Hope's presence, with stories of success, impact, and faith, honors their struggles, strengthens local efforts, and sows justice, solidarity, and lasting transformation."

– Elket Rodriguez



Elket is a passionate advocate, attorney, and mission-driven leader committed to addressing poverty, inequality, and systemic injustice. With extensive experience at the intersection of law, faith, and social impact, Elket brings a unique perspective on holistic approaches to empower communities and create lasting change.



We are committed to working with locals to find a way forward with hope and resilience.

You can be a part of this mission!

Help us grow our work in TEXAS, Tribal Nations, and the Four Corners.



The COLLECTIVE Impact of Together for Hope Partnerships Nationwide

Twenty-five years ago, Together for Hope cast a bold vision: **a 20-year commitment to the 20 poorest counties in America.**



Home Repairs Completed

26,718

Today, that vision continues on an even larger scale:

- Over 100 partner organizations
- Across 13 states

We have expanded our vision to include **all counties of persistent rural poverty** in the United States. Today, we have partnerships actively working in **over 84 of 338 designated counties** for immeasurable collective impact.

Awarded in Grant Funding

$4,221,000

Volunteers

70,660

Children Impacted

22,145

Strategic Partners

24

Value of Volunteer Hours

$772,584,487

(2,207,085 volunteer hours x volunteer rate of $34.79/hr)

Volunteer Hours

2,207,085

Members Added Since 2021

43



Pounds of Food Distributed Since 2016

2,318,704

Coalition Members

88

Home Constructions Completed

3,469

ADVOCACY

SYSTEMIC CHANGE
DEMANDS
POLICY CHANGE!



WE ADVOCATE...as we provide a collective voice for municipal, state, and federal issues directly affecting our coalition members and the people they serve. From lobbying for Medicaid Expansion to combatting school vouchers, Together for Hope brings people together to speak up for and against government policies that are detrimental to the health and well-being of rural communities.

WE ADVOCATE FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION, THE FOUNDATION OF PROGRESS IN RURAL AMERICA!

— FIGHTING THREATS TO PUBLIC EDUCATION! —

Partner Feature: Pastors for Children

For children growing up in counties of persistent rural poverty, public education is the primary vehicle for establishing social and economic mobility and moving toward freedom from poverty. Supporting public schools is foundational to our advocacy work, as any measures to underfund public education, destabilize public education, or even demonize public education are an assault on our most vulnerable and poorest children in our country.







PERSISTENT RURAL POVERTY EXISTS because our system creates it. The only way to change this system is by challenging the system and making the voice of the people heard.



WE ADVOCATE AROUND POLICY ISSUES THAT AFFECT THE HEALTH AND ACCESS TO NUTRITION IN RURAL AMERICA!



— MEDICAID PROTECTION! —

Partner Feature: ACS CAN

Access to affordable healthcare is a crucial part of preventive health and sustained employment, which directly affects the overall health of a family. Medicaid keeps rural hospitals from reducing their services or even closing. We advocate for Medicaid because it will have a profound and lasting effect on millions of families who need access to affordable health coverage in rural America.



— SNAP, TANF & WIC BENEFITS PROTECTION! —

Partner Feature: American Heart Association

Nutrition programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) are designed to help families afford basic groceries. We advocate for the protection of programs such as SNAP, TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families), and the WIC (Women, Infants, and Children) Nutrition Program, as they are designed to help families navigate the monumental journey out of poverty towards prosperity. We have the deepest conviction that what is good for the most vulnerable is good for everyone!

INNOVATIONS

CREATING LOCAL ECONOMIES OF SCALE *DEMANDS INNOVATION!*

WE INNOVATE...where industry has abandoned labor in order to create jobs that are defined by living wages and dignity. In almost every county of persistent rural poverty people are faced with "rural overpopulation." This doesn't mean that there are too many people in rural America. It only means that there are not enough jobs for everyone there to be gainfully employed. By creating new businesses with a purpose to care for society as much as to make a profit, we are innovating rural American from the inside out.

GROWING THE GOOD IN APPALACHIA!

Partner Feature: T & T Organics and Economic Development Greater East (EDGE)

Jason Tartt, founder of T & T Organics, has a large farm in McDowell County, West Virginia, where he has taught Appalachian people how to do mountain farming post coal. Coupled with Amelia Bandy with EDGE, they are partnering to create a new local economy with their agro-business. Not long after meeting with them, TFH introduced them to Josh Magee at Y'all Sauce out of Winston-Salem, NC. Within weeks, they collaborated to create a new brand of sauces from West Virginia: Appalachian Gold. The hope here is to create production and distribution jobs in McDowell County, WV.









— A HOLIDAY HOPE BOX! —

Program Feature: HOPE BOX

As a way to highlight our partner social enterprises like Appalachia Gold and Koinonia Farms, TFH produced the HOPE BOX as a holiday gift box. In the HOPE BOX we have Mama's Meat Sauce from Appalachia Gold and Koinonia Farms' mixed nuts. Last year we had celebrity chef, Nick Wallace's new rub Nick's 26. For the holiday season 2025, we will feature more products from Koinonia Farms—like their Dark Chocolate Pecan Bark! We will also introduce our network to Y'all Company's Mississippi Comeback Sauce. By selling these products, we are supporting our social enterprises move their product and support their laborers with living wages.





— HUSH PUPPIES FOR A BETTER ECONOMY! —

New Social Enterprise Feature: Beau Jack's Mixes

With the generosity of a family foundation, we took a big step this past year in purchasing a small business in Kemper County, MS—a county of persistent rural poverty. Our intention is to build a model for a sustainable and growing small business that will create living wage jobs and produce a great set of mixes. The Hush Puppy batter mix is from the Hush Puppy Queen of Kemper County and is already in over 100 stores between Mississippi and Alabama. This new venture in social enterprise puts us at the front lines of job growth, workforce development, and entrepreneurship—three vitally important areas in counties of persistent rural poverty. With just 10 living-wage jobs, we can possibly pull a county out of persistent rural poverty by 2030.

INTERVENTIONS

IN A SYSTEM THAT CREATES
POOR OUTCOMES
WE MUST INTERVENE!

WE INTERVENE...because children need tutoring in schools that have poor educational outcomes, because senior adults need food in rural towns that are food deserts, and because homes need to be warm, safe, and environmentally healthy. Intervening in the areas of education, health & nutrition, and housing are critical in areas of persistent rural poverty in order to produce better outcomes in rural America.

SOMETIMES A SAFE PLACE IS A POWERFUL INTERVENTION!

Partner Feature: Together for Hope Arkansas

For nearly 25 years, Together for Hope Arkansas has provided "Swim Camp" to the town of Helena-West Helena, AR. This two-week camp gives the children of Helena-West Helena a safe place to learn how to swim with volunteers from across the U.S. The children not only learn how to swim, but they get to have lunch, additional recreational activities, and a Bible story. Mrs. Karen Williams, a long-time resident, runs this program to intervene during the summer months to give kids a meaningful summer experience.





— INTERVENING IN A FOOD DESERT —

Program Feature: A Better Way Grocers

Tiffany Terrell understood that dozens of towns across Southwest Georgia didn't have access to fresh fruits and vegetables because these towns were in food deserts—they were over 10–15 miles away from the nearest grocery store. To intervene in these food deserts, Tiffany had an ingenious idea: she converted an old school bus into a mobile grocery store. Now, over six counties in Southwest Georgia—around Albany, GA—have access to fresh fruits and vegetables when Tiffany drives into town. Besides that, she also offers cooking classes to show how to prepare vegetables in a healthy way.



BUILDING A BETTER AND HEALTHIER RURAL AMERICAN THROUGH AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Program Feature: Together We Build

In a partnership that TFH Black Belt forged between the Fuller Center for Housing and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Georgia, Together We Build became a signature program for Together for Hope. With our convening and connecting power, we built a state-wide partnership that created a house for a young family in Fitzgerald, GA. Now this young family can own their own home, and as they repay their no-interest loan, that money will be used to build the next house for the next family. Because of this success, we are planning on building 3-4 new homes this next year (2026).

Join Us in Forming the Future

Visit Together for Hope on the web at tfhope.org

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