



# Concerts & Confections



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Community Engagement Initiative Report  
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2021 Social Connectedness Fellow

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## Introduction

As part of my fellowship, I undertook two weeks of fieldwork at Appalshop, an arts and community organization based in Whitesburg, KY. Though I had to cancel my original CEI due to unforeseen circumstances, I quickly learned that Whitesburg is brimming with cultural events through which I could organically engage the local community. In addition to attending these events, I facilitated connectedness by baking two pies for Appalshop employees and my interview partners. Over the next two pages, I candidly recount and reflect upon the various events I attended in my improvised journey to connect with the local community.



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# 1. Farmers' Market

Soon after arriving, I attended a farmer's market in Whitesburg filled with local farmers and artisans selling their goods. Although the event was lively and I *did* end up meeting a few folks, I struggled to genuinely connect with the community; after all, I was really just another customer to the vendors. This was my first brush with the community, inspiring me to rethink my approach

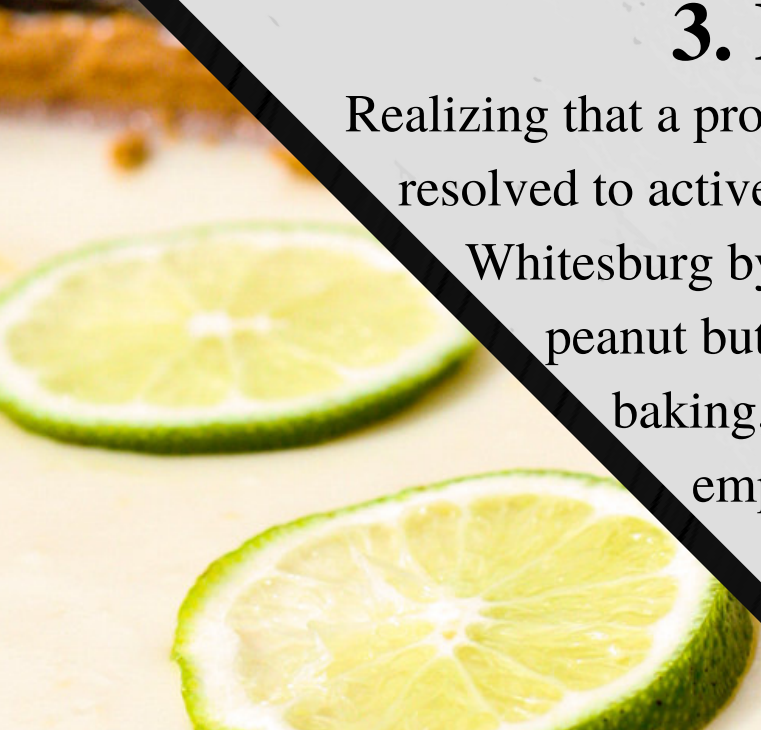


## 2. Live on Main

Sponsored by Appalshop, Live on Main is a free, bi-weekly concert series in Whitesburg. Here, I similarly struggled to connect with my fellow concert-goers, all of whom were there to listen to music rather than entertain some outside researcher. After the concert, I approached the organizers and offered the only thing I could: a helping hand. I assisted them in clearing the stage and actually made a few genuine connections, sensing that I had finally gotten somewhere

## 3. Baked-Goods Break

Realizing that a proactive approach worked best, I next resolved to actively share my passion for cooking with Whitesburg by baking my famous keylime and peanut butter cream pies. After a long night of baking, I shared the pies with Appalshop employees during their break and brought the leftovers to some of my following interviews. This led to some great chats between bites of pie







## 4. Summit City

Around the same time, I was invited to the Summit City Lounge, a nearby concert venue, to hear more live music by local bands.

Since I attended with a group, it was far easier to meet new people and connect with the community in a meaningful, if unacademic, way. I would later return to the venue again later in the week, yet again listening to local musicians expanding my own network in Whitesburg.

## 5. Carcassonne Community Center

During my second week of fieldwork, I was invited to tour the nearby Carcassonne Community Center and interview the organization's founder during one of the center's weekly meetings. Nestled deep in the mountains, the center was a hidden oasis of communal jubilation; my tour was interrupted by gangs of rowdy children playing, and soon enough my interview dissolved into stories and jokes. I left the center with a bag of melon slices and an offer to go hiking if I returned

## 6. Levitt-Amp

Taking place just a few days before my departure, Levitt-Amp is yet another concert series in Whitesburg. Here, I enjoyed music with friends, effortlessly met folks, and even helped tear down the stage. After two weeks of effort, I finally connected with the community not by implementing any one profound program or event, but by earnestly and gradually engaging with their own, local traditions

