

# Arts & Culture

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## Preserving Appalachia

(NAPS)—The mountains of eastern Kentucky are coal country, but in the small town of Whitesburg, there is a thriving arts community dedicated to protecting and preserving Appalachian history and culture. Residents have been documenting and celebrating life in Appalachia and rural America for almost 50 years. This, in turn, has revitalized Whitesburg's economy and inspired its citizens to be creative.

In 1969, Bill Richardson founded Appalshop to provide young people with video cameras and help them develop a community film workshop. His goal was to create meaningful jobs so Whitesburg's citizens could produce art that tells the stories and carries on the traditions



### **An arts program in Appalachia provides opportunities to young people.**

of the community. Since its inception, Appalshop has produced more than 100 documentary films about their history and community, covering coal mining, the environment, culture and the economy.

A positive influence on the region, Appalshop provides opportunities to young people outside of coal. While the coal mining industry has been in decline in recent years, Whitesburg still has thriving businesses thanks in part to the presence of Appalshop. Due to the success of Appalshop, Whitesburg has been able to preserve its history while also ensuring its future.

Appalshop has received continual support from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) since its founding. Thanks to the NEA, the community now has a fully functioning radio station and a theater to further their mission of cultivating and preserving Appalachian culture. Appalshop's relationship with the NEA has allowed it to continue to do work in the region. However, possible cuts to the NEA in the upcoming federal budget process may put such nonprofits in serious jeopardy. To find out how you can voice your support for Appalshop and other organizations that benefit from NEA funding, go to [StandForTheArts.com](http://StandForTheArts.com). Stand for the Arts is an initiative of Ovation TV.