On December 22, 2008, a toxic tsunami hit Roane County, Tennessee. 1.6 billion gallons of coal waste flooded a residential area, the largest environmental disaster of its kind in the United States. The catastrophe occurred when an earthen dike at the Tennessee Valley Authority’s (TVA) Kingston Fossil Plant collapsed and ten times more sludge than was spilled by the Exxon Valdez flooded a quiet, lakefront community. Toxic coal waste covered 400 acres of land and flooded into tributaries of the Tennessee River, the water supply for millions of people living downstream in Alabama, Tennessee and Kentucky. An aerial survey estimated 5.4 million cubic yards were spilled covering land with up to six feet of sludge. Cleanup is estimated to take months and possibly years.

**POST-SPILL EMERGENCY RESPONSE**

Many agencies and environmental groups have responded to the disaster; however, United Mountain Defense (UMD), a volunteer-driven non-profit organization dedicated to protecting Tennessee’s environment and communities, began working at the disaster site within hours of the spill. We engaged in door to door “Listening Projects” to understand the immediate needs of the community in the wake of the disaster. We learned that the first need people had was for information about coal ash, so we delivered informational handouts to residents about the spill and how they could protect their families from coal ash.

For the first ten days of the disaster many of the residents were without clean, safe drinking water and we were able to deliver over 500 gallons of bottled drinking water door to door and established a water distribution center run by a local family.

**Ten times more sludge than was spilled by the Exxon Valdez.**

Many impacted community members are worried about the lasting environmental impacts to the water and land - and air - as the coal ash is drying out and becoming windborne. Independent testing of water and ash samples show high levels of arsenic, radium and other heavy metals. By monitoring and providing independent lab results, UMD and the local citizens hope to motivate the TVA and the Environmental Protection Agency to conduct more testing and to become more open and transparent with their own tests and protocols, providing for the needs of the people hit by this disaster.

UMD is working with residents to run a citizens’ air monitoring program in coordination with the Global Community Monitor. This is a simple but effective tool that will allow the community to find out what is in the air. The program includes testing for seven different heavy metals and particulate matter small enough to enter a person’s bloodstream from their lungs.

Numerous people in the community are experiencing adverse health problems which their doctors believe to be directly related to the disaster; many of these however are trapped in this polluted environment with no help in sight. Residents have expressed interest in being tested for heavy metal exposure, and UMD arranged several toxicity testing clinics for full body heavy metal analyses. We hope to continue offering free bio-monitoring as the number and severity of health concerns grow.

**Over 500 gallons of bottled drinking water [delivered] door to door**

Coal is filthy, from the extraction process which blows up mountains and destroys watersheds, to ignition that plagues our air quality, to the waste disposal that can devastate whole communities in one fatal swoop.

This article is excerpted from RESIST’s March/April newsletter. Matt Landon is a full-time volunteer staff person at United Mountain Defense and Bonnie Swinford serves on UMD’s Board of Directors. UMD works to halt the destructive practices of mountaintop removal coal mining. With support from the New York Community Trust Alexander Fund and the Funding Exchange Network, ACF was able to give special initiative grants to UMD and to the Southern Alliance for Clean Energy for work on the disaster.

www.unitedmountaindefense.org  * www.clearenergy.org  * www.resistinc.org
Every few years Appalachia seems to turn up in the national media and "new attention" to the region produces a small wave of interest, concern, offers of assistance, letters to the editor, and people wanting to donate books, clothes, do a class project, or bring a work group. With respect for the good will and compassion that motivate people to want to understand the matters of abundance and scarcity that so mark our country at the moment, the people of Appalachia have long been subject to study, research, writing, filming, TV shows, volunteers, and charity. These are admirable - but they are not enough. All of that has still not brought the analysis and understanding of Appalachia that we might wish as Appalachians continue to see ourselves and the region portrayed in the media in ways that may be real but that fall short of telling the story of Appalachia. The recent Diane Sawyer 20/20 special "Children of the Mountains", highlighting drug addiction and school dropouts among other dysfunctions, is a case in point.

There's no denying the poverty and oppression that mark so many families and communities in our region - these are historical and structural. What would serve us all better, however, would be for the media to provide some historical and social framework for people to understand what they are seeing. Rarely do we get a popular prime time primer on "why people are poor". By contrast, another recent effort entitled "Appalachia: A History of Mountains and People" is a four-part series that highlights the environment, ecology, and natural history of the region as an "intersection of natural history and human history". This PBS series produced and directed by Jamie Ross and Ross Spears of Johnson City, Tennessee attempts to go deeper into the multiple layers of this region so rich in natural resources but whose people continue to struggle against economic oppression. "Change, not Charity" is ACF's byword (as it is for the entire Funding Exchange Network of which we are a part) meaning we want to support change in conditions and causes, and change that builds understanding of why the "children of the mountains" continue to have to drop out of school, why they will probably have to leave to find employment, or why they might turn to drugs to ease the reality they don't understand and don't know how to change.

Gay Evans
Executive Director

The GLBTQ Initiative (Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning Initiative) was established in 2006 with an initial gift from a Tennessee donor to develop and strengthen resources for GLBTQ organizing efforts in Central Appalachian communities. This Initiative is designed to support GLBTQ organizational building, strengthening Gay and Lesbian Community institutional resources, and capacity building for GLBTQ organizing efforts.

ACF also seeks applications from new and emerging organizations, work with GLBTQ youth, and networking efforts to connect GLBTQ work throughout Central Appalachia. Information on ACF's Initiative, including a proposal application form can be found on our website:

www.appalachiancommunityfund.org/html/GLBTQInitiative.html

IN PRAISE OF MOUNTAIN WOMEN 2009 GATHERING
"CELEBRATING OUR HOME PLACE: THIS EARTH IS HOME TO ME."

THURSDAY, JUNE 18-SATURDAY, JUNE 20, 2009
REGISTRATION IS 3-5 P.M. ON THURSDAY.
LINCOLN MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY
HARROGATE, TENNESSEE - LOCATED ON US 25 E
COST: $150.00 (INCLUDES TWO NIGHTS AND FIVE MEALS)
COUPONS/SCHOLARSHIPS ARE AVAILABLE. CHILD CARE IS AVAILABLE.
FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT WWW.INPRAISE.COM

GATHER! CELEBRATE! HEAL!

The first gathering of In Praise of Mountain Women (In Praise) sharing, remembering, and strengthening each other was in 1991, and this June marks the eighth time women have gathered from all parts of Appalachia and beyond. In the past few years the theme has developed into "Celebrating our Home Place: This Earth is Home to Me". According to Anne Leibig, part-time volunteer staff, this theme fits into their practice of "creating a movement of women caring for self, the Earth as our Home-place, and hearing stories of women from around the globe."

Over the years, hundreds of women have been part of the process of envisioning, planning and implementing the Gatherings, which are especially welcoming to "first-step" women, women who have few opportunities to leave home and who can come and take part. Each Gathering has "safety women" who are specially identified to be a safe source of information, comfort, or support. The "Home Circles" are part of the process of planning and organizing and are based in the local communities. Women who have participated form a "home circle" and draw other women in to help plan and to keep connected with other circles and to keep movement going between events. Anne says "we create it as we do it and we have to trust the process."

"In Praise changed my life."

The gathering programs include women telling stories about how they relate to their Homeplace, opportunities to respond to those stories, and an evening of sharing that includes a talent show and playful celebration. The evening is designed to send women home with tools and inspirations to carry forth. The overall experience is a healing one where women can express what has been going on with themselves and the earth.

ONE EXPERIENCE

Renda Keith has been active with In Praise for eleven years. Other women like Barbara Greene and the late Teri Vautrin supported and encouraged Renda to gain the strength and courage to attend her first meeting. She was amazed to find herself in an environment with strangers where she felt supported, welcomed and listened to when she talked. She says, "In Praise changed my life."
The Fourth Annual

BLUEGRASS AND BARBEQUE

New York City Benefit featuring a live performance by Roseanne Cash was a success! Thanks to all who attended, supported and enjoyed the event.

Todd Klein and Otho Kerr are all smiles as they take a moment to take a picture with another guest shortly before the program began.

Singer/writer, Rosanne Cash and Renda Keith. Renda was with ACF staff in New York and told about her experience with In Praise of Mountain Women.

Gerald Caporicci, Susannah Carney and Kathryn Partan had a good time at the event. They are standing here with Kevin Jennings (center), who has hosted Bluegrass and Barbeque for the past four years. Planning for this year’s event is already underway.

Conrad Honicker is a young community organizer and advocate working with LGBTQ issues locally and nationally. Recently, he was appointed to the National Advisory Council for the Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network (GLSEN) www.glsen.org. Jackie Kittrell is a public interest attorney who mediates and practices collaborative law. She advocates for youth and works to encourage youth leadership. They live in Knox County. They became ACF donors at an event for Kevin Jennings, then the Director of GLSEN, who is also an ACF donor.

Jackie: So, what was it like growing up with such fabulous parents?
Conrad: Mom!
Jackie: Seriously, how did the way you were raised have an effect on how you have chosen to live your life?
Conrad: I saw you and Dad helping a lot of people, going up against what looked like impossible odds. You were persistent and always looked at how what you did would affect those most directly impacted as well as the big picture. That developed my sense of the injustices others faced and that it was good to actively work for change.
Jackie: Thank you. I was afraid you thought I had a phone growing out of my head.
Conrad: I always felt my parents and my brothers accepted me completely as a unique human being. You were supportive of everything positive I wanted to do.
Jackie: How do you, as a young person, address the injustice you see in the world?
Conrad: Youth today face a series of struggles—from the daily oppressions like racism, sexism, and homophobia, to more personal things: academics, social development, and parents. Teens are put down constantly—at home, school, in the media, everywhere. Providing safe spaces for teens and acting as a voice for young people are just some of the most important things youth advocates, no matter how old they are, do.
Jackie: What are you working on now?
Conrad: I’ve been working with local LGBT youth and straight allies to organize a rally and fundraiser called “Breaking the Silence” to support local GSAs and to create a local GLSEN chapter. We want to raise awareness about anti-LGBT bullying and harassment. Our event on April 17 drew close to 300 people and raised $1,000 for our issue.
Second, I am coordinating a Diversity Prom with other young organizers in Knox County. It will be held on May 17. Third, I am thinking long-term about how to support the LGBTQ youth movement in rural East Tennessee.
Jackie: And you found out about GLSEN through the 2007 ACF house party for Kevin Jennings, the founder of GLSEN, way back when you were in 9th grade and just getting started with your GSA at West High. ACF brought Kevin to Knoxville and arranged for him to visit your high school—they really added great energy by making introductions and providing information. It was the following summer that you joined GLSEN’s Jumpstart Team and now... Aren’t you going somewhere this summer?
Conrad: New York City! In July, I am interning with GLSEN’s Research Department in Manhattan, and learning the ropes of working in a national nonprofit office. What are you doing this summer, Mom?
Jackie: I’ll be coming to NYC to check on you, sweetie!
ACF Meet and Greet
SATURDAY, MAY 30, 2009
5:00 – 7:00 P.M. ♦ OXBOW CENTER
16620 E. RIVERSIDE DRIVE
ST. PAUL, VIRGINIA 24283

HOST COMMITTEE
Beth Bingman & Rich Kirby, Sparkle Bonds, Darryl Cannady, Angelyn DeBord, Steve Fisher & Nancy Garrett, Edna Gulley, Julie Hensley & Gregory M. Kallen, Anna Hess & Mark Hamilton, Carol Honeycutt, Robert Kegley, Renda Keith, Anne Leibig & Dick Austin, Peggy Mathews & Jim Thompson, Rees & Katherine Shearer and Maura Ubinger

For more information: Contact Margo Miller, margo@appalachiancommunityfund.org or 865-523-3783

MARIA GUNNOE IS THE THIRD APPALACHIAN ACTIVIST TO RECEIVE THE GOLDMAN ENVIRONMENTAL AWARD

"The people of Appalachia have sacrificed everything including their lives for energy in America. We must put a stop to mountaintop removal coal mining and transition to renewable energy to allow us our homeland security and to preserve our rightful place and culture in the mountains."

-Maria Gunnoe, Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition (OVEC) Huntington, West Virginia

For more information and to see Maria’s profile and video, visit www.goldmanprize.org/2009/northamerica

The Appalachian Community Fund is a member of the Funding Exchange and Community Shares of Tennessee.