

RUX 2022 Cohort Bios

Katie Adams-Cornett is an idealist, attorney, and mom to two awesome kids. Most often, she would rather be outside.

Contea Allan was born in Louisville and raised in Elizabethtown. She attended the University of Louisville where she graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education and a Master's in Teacher Leadership. She later obtained a second Master's degree from Eastern Kentucky University. She currently teaches ESL at an elementary school in the Jefferson County Public Schools district. She and her husband are co-owners of a pest control company, Tailor Made Pest Control, that serves Louisville and its surrounding areas. She enjoys reading, a good documentary, and figuring out ways to change the world.

Michelle Amos is a regionally recognized fiber artist and Executive Director for the Little Loomhouse in Louisville. She is interested in setting new standards for contemporary understanding of American folk art weaving, and specifically strengthening discourse and practice of artists across Kentucky. Her work includes artistic practice, research, publishing, curatorial projects, and teaching. Her visual work includes themes of feminism and issues concerning the natural world. She is also a mother, daughter, sister, and wife.

Emma Anderson grew up running wild in rural Anderson county. Feeling connected to nature and community made her who she is today. She's worked on a farm, at a bakery, at the Farmer's Market, done trail work, taught preschool, was a groundskeeper, and now she does eviction prevention based in Lexington. She thinks everyone deserves to be happy, healthy and have their needs met and so works with her community to make it better, including helping pass the No Knock Ban in Lexington after Breonna Taylor's murder in 2020. She's currently reckoning with her family's history in KY and is hoping to explore that more during RUX (the good and the bad!). She is good at baking wedding cakes and hugging.

Emily Baldrige is an artist and Eastern Kentucky native who works as a fine arts educator and community arts program developer at the Pike County Cooperative Extension Service with the University of Kentucky. Some of that work includes leading art classes for people of all ages, creating local theatre set pieces, and strengthening access and education through the arts.

Additionally, Emily is an organizer with Pikeville Pride, a grassroots alliance working to increase visibility and rights for rural LGBTQ+ people, including hosting the area's first public Pride event in 2018. She is also a former sex educator with Sexy Sex Ed, an organization that focuses on personal and political consent, sexual safety, and empowerment using visual and performing arts.

Baldrige holds a BA in Art Education with K-12 certification from Morehead State University, believes in magic, loves ice cream, and lives with her dog Bunny among many happy houseplants.

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C. Todd Birdsong received his MFA from Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, Illinois in Mass Communication and Media Arts. He is an interdisciplinary artist that works with both analog and digital processes within photography, sound and transmission art, time-based media and instrument making using found objects and electronics. Execution of his work takes the

form of conceptual installations, performances and remote transmissions. Concepts of indeterminacy, randomness, and improvisation are used to examine the ideas of mindfulness and being present in the moment of witnessing, understanding and decoding our daily lives.

He is currently the Director of the Clemens Fine Arts Center in Paducah, KY where he produces several performing arts series and programs the visual arts exhibits for the CFA Gallery.

Shaelyn Bishop (she/her) is an Instructor of Biology at Campbellsville University, and current Masters student of Sustainability at the University of Louisville. She teaches various courses on biology, evolution, and the environment, and sponsors CU's environmental activism group, the Green Minds club. Shaelyn is a homesteader-in-progress, an avid gardener and houseplant enthusiast, and a bona fide nerd. She loves "Knitflix", walking through fields and forests, and cherishing the simple moments in life that connect her to this beautiful planet. She believes her main purpose in life is to help others see that beauty, appreciate it, and work to protect it.

Emma Bryan-Lok is a life-long Kentuckian. She grew up in rural Franklin County and became heavily involved in cultural organizations such as the Paul Sawyer Public Library, the Kentucky Historical Society, and Liberty Hall Historic Site. Here, her passion for relationship building, cultural work, and public history studies grew. She now proudly serves as the Community Engagement Specialist at the Filson Historical Society in Louisville, Kentucky. She has lived in Louisville for the past nine years as she moved to the city to study at Bellarmine University. She continued her studies in public history at the University of Louisville and completed her graduate degree in 2019. She lives with her partner, Justin, her two cats, Mj and Junie, and their new puppy, Bashful. She enjoys learning about the history of our commonwealth to discover connections that inform our present and to create a more compassionate and inclusive future.

Lauren Calhoun is a lifelong Kentuckian and resident of Owensboro. She received her Bachelor's in French from Murray State University and holds a Master's in Business Administration from Northcentral University. She is active in community theater and works as the Hospital Billing Supervisor for Owensboro Health. Lauren is married to John Calhoun and has three wonderful kids; Jack, Michael, and Katie.

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Bernard Clay received an MFA in creative writing from the University of Kentucky Creative Writing Program and is a member of the Affrilachian Poets collective. His work has been published in various journals and anthologies. He currently resides on a farm in eastern Kentucky with his herbalist wife Lauren (founder of Resilient Roots). English Lit is his first book.

Brandon Coan is a 41-year old consultant from Louisville, KY. He is a lawyer and a former Louisville Metro Council member. His wife, Summer Auerbach, is the Second Generation Owner of Rainbow Blossom Natural Food Markets. Brandon, Summer and their 4-year old son Simon live in Louisville's Tyler Park neighborhood. Brandon has served on many community boards and commissions. He enjoys wilderness tripping, hot yoga and exploring new cities and towns. He returns to RUX after having participated in Whitesburg, Louisville and Paducah cohorts. He is a graduate of the University of Michigan (English and American History and the University of Kentucky College of Law.

After spending the past decade as a communications professional in the bourbon industry, **Chelsey Duncan** recently pivoted to pursue a new vocation in marriage and family therapy. She will begin her studies at Louisville Seminary this fall. Chelsey is a member of the 2019 RUX cohort, and since the pandemic, she has become a cookie decorator and trained yoga teacher.

Ceirra Evans is a Louisville-based painter who graduated from Spalding University in January 2021 and has established an independent practice exhibiting locally and curating for Folx Gallery.

Born and raised in Eastern Kentucky, Evans' body of work depicts scenes directly from her early life in the foothills of the Appalachian region. Her work uses humor to sift through the discourse around the stigmas and stereotypes surrounding the holler. Ceirra uses personal stories to highlight the love and forgiveness that the region deserves.

Hello, everyone. I am **Rachel Evitts**, a Muhlenberg County native. I am an AmeriCorps service member and am currently serving as Muhlenberg Achieve's College and Career Coordinator. I am also implementing a brand-new program that will provide middle school students with a pathway to success. In a few short weeks I will graduate from Murray State University with a Bachelors of Integrated Studies – Education. My journey as a non-traditional college student has led my passion to help others discover their dreams and achieve them. I love meeting new people and exploring new places. I am excited for the opportunity to get to know my fellow Kentuckians and their homes.

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Laura Farmer grew up in Upstate NY, attended high school in Canada, and has lived in multiple states finally residing in Owensboro KY with her husband, Eric and their dog Jax. Laura has worked as an educator, paramedic, and currently working as a Training Specialist for Owensboro Health. Laura will accomplish one of her dreams by finishing her Bachelor's degree in May and starting her Master's program in the Fall. In order to remain grounded, Laura practices quilting, photography, attends music and theater productions, as well as staying in contact with family around the country. After living in multiple states Laura's participation in RUX and the welcoming nature of Kentuckians has made Laura finally feel she is home.

Isaac Fosl-van Wyke is a songwriter and puppeteer based in Louisville, Kentucky. With families and friendships spread across sometime-homes in Atlanta, Chicago, New Orleans, New

Mexico, Vermont, DC, and Upstate New York, he's happy to have moved back to Kentucky in 2019 to weave a life out of puppetry, singing, teaching, writing, and growing and cooking food. Be it in the woods or the classroom, onstage or in church, he's excited to gather with humans and other animals to re-member connection to the land through projects driven by beauty, grief, and gratitude for all that feeds us.

Joe Gallenstein grew up in Florence Y'all, but currently calls Covington home. Both sides of his family trace their Kentucky roots to the mid to late 19th Century, predominantly to Mason and Lewis counties. Growing up his family instilled a love for Kentucky for him - the people, history, the place, and the basketball. He attended Boone County schools, the University of Kentucky, and then moved back home to northern Kentucky from Lexington. Since 2010 he has been an organizer for Kentuckians For The Commonwealth, working primarily in northern Kentucky and Scott County.

Mariel Gardner

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C. Josh Givens is returning for his second year in the RUX cohort. Josh is a journalist and photographer, living in Muhlenberg County and working in Hancock County. He is a U.S. Army veteran, a former Kentucky Press Association Board member, and a proud supporter of the International Society of Weekly Newspaper Editors.

“RUX has offered me the opportunity to meet people from all walks of life in Kentucky, and gain exposure to people and places I probably would not have met or seen otherwise,” he said. “RUX has allowed me to better understand the issues facing Kentucky and its people, and witness the creative solutions to needs across the Commonwealth.”

In his spare time, Josh enjoys visiting historic locations with his wife, Amber, along with participating in living history and military reenactments. He often supports west Kentucky Veterans Day events, depicting World War II and Viet Nam War soldiers. He is also a collector of military artifacts and vinyl records.

Josh is a founding member of the Muhlenberg County History Group, an loosely-organized group which promotes the rich history of the west Kentucky community. While native to Butler County, he was raised in Logan County. “I consider myself very fortunate to essentially have three home counties,” he said. “It is a blessing to have such strong connections to these places.

Growing up in Eastern Kentucky and being economically disadvantaged spurred Annette’s passion for working in her community. **Annette Hines** is currently the Trio Academic Coordinator with the Talent Search Programs at Morehead State University. She has worked the last 18 years with low income and socially and economically disadvantaged students, families, and communities. Working in this capacity has allowed Annette to be involved in and lead many different projects from family engagement activities to citizen science projects helping the environment. Annette also gives time to her family and community.

In partnership with Angela Rowe, they created an organization, Appalachian Gamechangers to help disadvantaged people change their own narrative. One of the many ways that AGC is going to do that is through social housing. They are in the process of exploring successful social housing and plan to introduce the concept to EKY in the next few years.

Ms. Hines has been invited to present workshops at many different venues including the Kentucky School Counselors Association and Kentuckians for the Commonwealth. She is very involved in local environmental efforts and has even started a Facebook page sharing Appalachian environmental information and events called EKY ECO Community. Let’s sit down for coffee or tea and talk!

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Lauren Hunter-Smith is an artist, gardener, amateur mycologist, Mama, and the owner of Bluegrass Death Doula. Lauren is a Lexington native and graduate of the University of Kentucky where she studied Painting and Biology. Following college, Lauren served in the Peace Corps as a Women's Health Volunteer in Benin, West Africa. Upon her return to the Bluegrass, Lauren worked with several local nonprofit arts organizations including the HeadleyWhitney Museum and Kentucky Theater. Lauren made the leap to death care professional after completing her death doula certification in 2021. In addition to being a death educator and companion, Lauren is a home funeral guide, natural burial advocate, and non-denominational celebrant.

Christa Iwu is a first gen Nigerian raised in eastern KY, living in Louisville. She is always eager to evolve in beliefs and values and looks forward to being inspired and challenged by new KY friends and communities. Christa is an account manager at KERTIS - a creative agency that focuses on mission-focused narrative storytelling. She is also on the board of directors at the Portland Museum in Louisville, where she sees art, community, and activism at their best. Christa believes Kentuckians will build the best Kentucky, and is excited to explore new ways to help her neighbors thrive.

Amanda James is a proud Louisvillian and currently works as the Assistant Director of Young Alumni and Student Philanthropy in the University of Louisville's Alumni Relations. She is passionate about working with college students and at UofL, where she earned a BA in 2008 and an MEd in 2012. In addition to advising several alumni councils, she is also an advisor for three student organizations: raiseRED Dance Marathon, She Became, and the Student Organization for Alumni Relations (SOAR). Amanda also serves on the Beechmont Neighborhood Association Board and the Mercy Academy Alumnae Association Board of Directors. In 2022, she was awarded Neighbor of the Year by South Louisville Community Ministries. In her spare time, she enjoys going to fun events and new restaurants throughout the city, spending time with family and friends, traveling, and being a Yelp Elite member.

Robert Kahne was born and raised in Louisville and lives there today. He works as a data scientist and is active in several local organizations in town. He helped to found Code for Kentuckiana, is a deacon at Highland Baptist Church, serves on the board of Highland Community Ministries, and hosts a show about government and politics in Kentucky called My Old Kentucky Podcast.

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Emily Kicklighter is the mother of two and an English/Theatre teacher for Jefferson County Public Schools. She is passionate about the Arts and sustainability and has over 500 hrs of yoga teacher training. After living in New York City for six years, she moved to a tiny rural town in North Carolina with a population of about 700 people; she could not tell you which she preferred. The lover of nature, gardening, and hiking was fed by her rural lifestyle, and the lover of Art, culture, and community was fed by her urban existence. (It should be noted that, in Brooklyn, she found balance in an intentional community, complete with front-yard chickens, raspberry bushes and a fig tree, steps away from the Franklin Ave stop on the ACE subway line). She prides herself on the artistic work created with theatrical ensembles in Kentucky, New York, LA, and Tennessee (where she got her MFA in Acting from UTK in 2018). Her

family has invested in a holler in Estill County, and it is a dream of theirs to create a welcoming space for all. A favorite pastime includes hosting artists and musicians from NYC in Louisville for the Motherlodge Live Arts Exchange, and she hopes RUX will provide equally fulfilling opportunities to build bridges and synthesize the things she loves most about rural and urban living.

Dorothea Manley-Davis is the Executive Director of ProjectSpeakLife.org, a cultural and arts empowerment program located in my hometown, Paducah, Kentucky. I pay my bills as a government contractor for the Department of Energy. A graduate from Roosevelt University in Chicago IL with a bachelor's degree in Administrative Studies, I am currently pursuing recently earned a Master of Public Administration degree from Grand Canyon University. In addition, I am the co-founder of the Paducah Diversity Advocacy Board, an ad hoc board comprised of community members who will work city officials, civic organizations, religious, and educational institutions to develop and promote relevant strategies that consistently foster the ethical, diverse, and equitable inclusion of marginalized groups. I have the blessed opportunity to speak to women and girls from different backgrounds, admonishing them to heal and live past their pain and their trauma by identifying their passion and pursuing their dreams. My mantra for life is an African proverb that says, "If you look at a man and see him for what he is, he becomes what you see. But if you look at a man and you see his potential, you see what he could be." My pride and joy are my three children, my three bonus children, all our grandchildren, and my wonderfully supportive life partner.

LeeAnna Meadows is a Kentucky native currently residing in Paducah. Her interests include spending time with her family, collecting and playing records, and gardening. A self-described nonprofit nerd, LeeAnna has worked in the human services aspect of the field for over 10 years and is dedicated to working with the housing insecure and homeless populations. Advocacy for the Kentucky homeless population, specifically those with substance use and mental health diagnoses, is a top priority for her. Through the RUX experience, she hopes to spread awareness in these areas and gain insight into how other areas address these concerns.

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Christopher Morris is a registered land surveyor in the state of Kentucky. He is the group leader for the survey department for The Kleinger's Group in Louisville. He is passionate about the outdoors and exploring what Kentucky has to offer. Because of this passion, he created several databases of the commonwealth's natural resources that are available for free for all to enjoy and visit. He believes in inclusion of all peoples in outdoor spaces and believes that it is important to make them accessible to all Kentuckians.

Tom Morton was born in Pennsylvania, moved to Kentucky when he was 8 and has lived there most of his life. He has been married for 48 years and is a father of four, grandfather of three, and great grandfather of one. Now retired, most of his work has been in education - teaching in pre-school, elementary, middle school, high school, college, special ed, and adult ed. He has been involved in many musical endeavors as musician, teacher, choir leader, and autographer. He has acted on stage, in voiceovers, on film, and on TV. His interest in his community resulted in co-writing a book about St Matthews KY. In retirement, he is involved in tutoring young readers, narrating books and describing theatre for the blind, working in a clothes bank for the unhoused, supporting efforts for equity and equality. His interest also includes the involvement of his age group with sharing wisdom and experience and preparing for the many changes of the aging population.

Rachel Muwanga is a project manager and energy alchemist, raised in Lexington, Kentucky. Her love for spirituality and being in service to others has led her to gather and organize members of her community for a better Kentucky. Rachel has organized and hosted over a dozen events in the African-American community of Lexington within the realm of arts & entertainment. Including a rap battle between Lexington and Louisville that had each participant create raps about topics such as poverty, gentrification, parent-child dynamics, and gun violence. She believes encouraging local artists to combine their creative talents with grassroots organizing can shift Kentucky into a safe and inclusive space for African-American culture.

Nikita Perumal lives in Lexington and grew up in Louisville. Nikita was first introduced to community organizing through student climate justice movements. She now works to support partner organizations at the Kentucky Civic Engagement Table, which advances long term organizing and coordinated civic engagement in the Kentucky progressive ecosystem. In the past, Nikita worked at Kentuckians For The Commonwealth and pursued a Fulbright research

project on climate adaptation projects in the Pacific Island nation of Vanuatu. In her spare time, Nikita enjoys writing, making Indian food, and taking pictures of her cat.

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Ben Redfield grew up in Paducah, KY and went to the University of Kentucky in Lexington on the William C. Parker Scholarship. While attending UK he went to two diversity meetings a semester for his scholarship and was able to get and give insight on the difficulties of transitioning into college life. After college Ben was hired on to Hilliard Lyons a financial services firm in Louisville and shortly after was transferred to Milwaukee, WI. In an effort to get closer to family he found an opportunity in Madisonville, KY where he currently works and a financial advisor serving clients daily. While he has seen and experienced many of the cities Kentucky has, he is excited to find out what he might learn through the RUX program.

Beau Revlett is a tenant organizer and Director of KY Tenants. KY Tenants fights for a Homes Guarantee in Kentucky, so everyone can have high quality, affordable housing. They organize tenants' unions, run campaigns for policy change, and advocate for social housing. Beau was born in McLean County, raised in Scott County, has lived in Lexington for the past six years, and just signed a lease to move to Morehead. Organizing and poetry are the cornerstones of Beau's life. They enjoy painting and playing chess as semi-serious hobbies, and want to disappear into the woods a lot more often than they actually do.

Amy Le Ann Richardson is a writer and visual artist deeply concerned with environmental issues. She was born and raised in Morehead, KY and earned a Bachelor's in English from Morehead State University ('07) and MFA from Spalding University ('09). She lived in Oklahoma for five years after completing her MFA where she became a mother and decided Kentucky is where she belongs. So, she moved back home and she and her husband, Channing, worked to turn his family land from an old tobacco farm into a small-scale sustainable farm they named Forgotten Foods Farm. Amy has taught and worked as an academic advisor at MSU and is actively involved with Red Oaks Forest School, a nonprofit centered on reconnecting children and families with nature.

Angela Rowe was born in Middlesboro, KY, but spent the majority of her child and teen years in West Liberty, KY. She and her children moved to Morehead, KY where she attended Morehead State University from which she is a two time alumna, graduating with a Bachelor of Arts and a Master of Arts in Education. She currently is the Educational Program Coordinator/Manager with the secondary STEM teacher preparation program, MSUTeach, at Morehead State University. She has been employed at the university since 2013. Angela recently completed the Leadership Kentucky program, Class of 2021. She is also involved in such organizations as Rowan County Listening Project, Kentucky Tenants, Kentuckians for the Commonwealth (KFTC), Morehead/Rowan County Racial Justice Task Force, Prichard Committee, Kentucky Family-friendly Partnership Initiative, (Governor's) Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership (C.I.P.L.), and AmeriCorps VISTA. She is working to live out her values by forming, alongside colleague and friend, Ms. Annette Hines, the nonprofit: Appalachian GameChangers (AGC). AGC is a partnership formed by individuals brought together by shared lived experiences and a dedication to helping their fellow Appalachians. AGC has a special emphasis on foster/adopted youths and adults, abused individuals, and single mothers. AGC works to help folks overcome barriers thus "changing the game" while creating

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the village for others we all need to thrive. In her free time, Angela enjoys spending time exploring the world with her three children and newly born granddaughter, advocating for matters dear to her heart, and being involved in her community.

Olivia Spradlin is an avid gardener, canner, knitter, and dog mom. She is a medical anthropologist working at the Kentucky Coalition Against Domestic Violence to build safe and affirming systems of care for all survivors of violence.

Josh Teague is a musician and writer from Corbin, Kentucky. He grew up in the nearby rural community of Rockholds where he spent most of his free time on his grandparent's farm. From his grandfather, he learned not just farming and life lessons, but also how to play a variety of musical instruments. Music was his first endeavor into being a part of the local community. It makes you meet new people frequently and find yourself in an assortment of environments. This led Josh to become involved with the Whitley County Farmers' Market as both a farmer and musician. He now sits on the board of directors for the Market. He has spent the last many years becoming as involved as possible with the local goings-on of his hometown of Corbin. He has worked for a range of small businesses in its downtown and gotten to know local politicians and other advocates. With The Sunup Initiative, he helped organize an event to Mark the 100year passage since the racial expulsion that took place in Corbin in 1919 to help make the community aware of its past to help move forward together in inclusivity.

Robin Verson has spent the past two decades developing and managing her certified organic Metcalfe County farm while also devoting herself to raising 3 incredible humans. Growing food and nourishing the Hill and Hollow Farm's CSA community has offered Robin the opportunity to center her work on community support of sustainable farming practices. The farm is also home to a flock of heritage breed sheep rotationally grazing the pastures. In addition to raising vegetables, herbs and cut flowers, the farm also focuses on dye plants. The one of a kind local farm fiber products emerged from the farm's wool and these farm raised dye stuffs. She cofounded the Southern Appalachia Regional Fibershed with hopes of furthering awareness around healthy local fiber systems. Her knowledge of sustainable farming systems and her commitment to working with local farmers, shepherds, and consumers prepares Robin to more deeply explore the relationship between Kentuckians. Robin is thrilled to share her experience, her passion and her expertise.

Taylor Wood is 22 year old part-time library worker at Marion County Public Library in Lebanon, KY. Taylor is local to the area, having grown up in a little bit of everywhere in Marion County. She has a great passion for community, and finds that building communities with compassion and kindness through learning and patience are fundamental to leading a better life for all. Taylor takes great interest in creative endeavors, pursuing knowledge and developing their artistic skills in her free time.

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Christine Xu is a neurodivergent, queer, and chronically ill child of East Asian immigrants committed to continually learning about and practicing disability justice, abolitionism, and decolonization. She was born and raised in Southern California and moved to Louisville in 2015. She acknowledges the land she lives on as ancestral homelands belonging to Shawnee,

Eastern Band Cherokee, and Osage peoples, and the land she was raised on as lands belonging to the Kizh Nation and Tongva Nation. She also recognizes this acknowledgment is oversimplified and incomplete, as the dynamic, complex, and living histories and identities of Native peoples cannot be fully expressed through settler-colonial notions of mapmaking, nationality, and territory. To those reading this statement, she challenges you to learn and understand how the forces displacing Native peoples are the same that exclude and other nonNative people of color, including the Southern Chinese immigrants she descends from. Christine is honored to join the 2022 RUX cohort and looks forward to exploring what it means to call ourselves Kentuckians, honor the lands we occupy, and build solidarity with Native communities who have long been and continue to be stewards of the Kentucky we call home.