

# Annual Report

2024

**Building  
Community Wealth  
Through  
Individualized  
Financial Services**



APPALACHIAN  
OPPORTUNITY  
FUND

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# MEET *the* TEAM



**Victoria Hewlett**

Leads the organization's vision and ensures its success.

*Executive Director*



**Adam Taylor**

Empowers clients with financial education and planning.

*Co-Founder & Financial Coach*



**Oren Peterson**

Empowers clients with financial education and planning.

*Financial Coach*



**Hannah Newberry**

Empowers clients with financial education and planning.

*Financial Coach*



**Barbara Tipton**

Empowers clients with financial education and planning.

*Financial Coach*



**Abigail Gaines**

Keeps operations organized and running smoothly.

*Administrative Assistant*





# What We Offer

Appalachian Opportunity Fund is dedicated to building community wealth by providing **free financial coaching** and **affordable lending** for residents of the Appalachian Highlands.

## Financial Freedom Fund (FFF)

The Financial Freedom Fund (FFF) is AOF's affordable lending program, offering low-interest (3%) loans to motivated financial coaching clients who have little to no credit history and are unable to secure loans through traditional financial institutions.

These loans empower clients to achieve financial goals, pay off high-interest debt, and reduce financial stress. FFF loans are reported to all three credit bureaus, helping clients build their credit scores and create a stronger financial foundation for the future.



## Financial Coaching

Our People-Centered Financial Coaching program is at the heart of AOF's mission. We offer completely free, personalized, one-on-one financial coaching to help community residents manage their income, reduce debt, build credit, and grow their savings.

Since 2019, we've supported over 800 clients who have collectively increased their credit scores by 16,284 points, paid off over \$573,000 in predatory debt and \$300,000 in delinquent debt, and established more than \$700,000 in savings and investments.





# Tax Season: AOF x SimplifyCT

Providing expert tax services to help our community thrive.

In 2024, AOF partnered with SimplifyCT to bring professional tax preparation services to residents of the Appalachian Highlands. This partnership ensured that community members received expert guidance to maximize their tax refunds and achieve financial stability.



Tax Returns  
Filed:

59

Total Refund  
Amount:

\$130,735

## SimplifyCT

Every dollar refunded during Tax Season 2024 was a step toward financial freedom for our clients. Many used refunds to pay off debt, build savings, or invest in their future.

# ENGAGEMENT EVENTS

## Johnson City Recovery Center & Recovery Resources

In July of 2024, we began hosting regular financial empowerment workshops at the Johnson City Recovery Center and at Summit Leadership with Recovery Resources participants. Since then, we have held 14 total workshops with 142 attendees and 14 one-on-one coaching clients.

## JCHA Fall Festival

In November, we partnered with Eastern 8, LXI and the Johnson City Housing Authority to bring Fall fun, food and activities to dozens of Johnson City families while sharing financial empowerment resources and information.







# Community Wealth Building Symposium

In September of 2024, we hosted our very first symposium, entitled **“Building Community Wealth Through Employee Ownership”**. We featured speakers from the Tennessee Center for Employee Ownership, the Industrial Commons, State of Franklin Healthcare Associates and the Appalachian Producers Cooperative to share how employee ownership and conversion of existing businesses to worker owned firms can build regional wealth, keep businesses open, and protect thriving wage jobs.

## **SPONSORED BY:**



Mina Jarrell  
McVeigh, LCSW



**FOUNDERSFORGE**  
SUPPORT FOR THE UNDERDOG ENTREPRENEURS

## **HOSTED BY:**



# 2024 IMPACT DATA



**498**

CLIENTS  
COACHED



**7,255**

CREDIT SCORE  
INCREASE



**\$149K**

SAVED &  
INVESTED



**9**

FFF LOAN  
GUARANTEES



**\$29K**

FFF LOAN  
AMOUNTS



**\$63K**

NEGOTIATED  
SAVINGS



**\$223K**

PREDATORY  
DEBT PAID OFF



**\$51K**

DELINQUENT  
DEBT PAID OFF





# CLIENT SUCCESS STORY

“ In January 2023, I was released from prison after two years, with no income, no family support, and living in a halfway house. As a recovering addict and mother of four, I knew I had to rebuild my life and bring stability back to my family. I also had 3.5 years invested in my bachelor’s degree and my biggest goal was to graduate from ETSU. But starting over felt impossible.

That’s when I found Appalachian Opportunity Fund (AOF) and was paired with my coach, Hannah Newberry. With her help, we set realistic goals and came up with a plan I could stick to. I started with part-time jobs and worked my way up to full-time employment, even juggling three jobs for a while. I also focused on my recovery, working a 12-step program and building relationships in my community.

Now, I’m working full-time and part-time, I own my own car, I’ve moved into my own apartment, and I’m working on joint custody of one of my children. I’m 3.5 years sober and finally living a life I’m proud of.

Working with Hannah has been life-changing. She helped me see that I can achieve anything I set my mind to, and that’s something I never thought was possible before. The AOF program has given me the financial freedom to stop worrying about bills and focus on my future. I’m so grateful for the support, and I’m excited about the life I’m building for myself and my family.

“I’m 3.5 years sober and finally living a life I’m proud of...the AOF program has given me the financial freedom to stop worrying about bills and focus on my future.”

# REAL LIVES, REAL CHANGE, REAL IMPACT

At the heart of AOF is our commitment to empowering individuals to overcome obstacles and achieve lasting financial stability. In this video, you'll hear directly from our clients about their transformative journeys.

Their stories are a testament to the power of support, hard work, and the belief that everyone deserves a chance to rebuild and thrive.

Click the video below to watch how AOF is changing lives, one success story at a time.



“...I JUST  
START THE  
GAS PUMP AND  
WATCH THE  
BIRDS FLY BY.”

“...I WAS  
CHECKING  
CREDIT KARMA  
MORE THAN I  
WAS CHECKING  
FACEBOOK.”



# STRONG

## Accountable Care Community

Impact Highlights from 2024:



**273**

CLIENTS  
COACHED



**\$46K**

SAVED &  
INVESTED



**\$71K**

PREDATORY  
DEBT PAID OFF



**\$27K**

DELINQUENT  
DEBT PAID OFF

STRONG Families NETN is one of seven Tennessee Opportunity Pilot Initiative (TOPI) grants awarded to communities across Tennessee. With the help of this funding, the STRONG Families Northeast Tennessee program will help at least 800 economically-disadvantaged families increase economic mobility and self-sufficiency. First Tennessee Development District serves as the grant manager and fiscal agent, and STRONG ACC serves as the programmatic lead. Appalachian Opportunity Fund provides financial coaching services to participants in this program.

Appalachian Opportunity Fund's  
**5TH ANNIVERSARY**   
*Fundraiser Dinner*

In November, we held our first ever  
Fundraiser Dinner at the Langston Centre  
in Johnson City!

**We  
raised**

**\$39,957**

Thanks to the incredible generosity of our donors  
during our dinner, sponsors, Giving Tuesday, and  
year-end contributions, we raised a total of **\$82,684!**

This funding will provide support for 166 additional  
unsponsored clients.

*Sponsored by:*





# Because we



# believe you're worth it

During our Fundraiser Dinner, we honored three of our clients who have shown exceptional resilience and personal strength during their financial coaching journey with an AOF coach.

## Resilient Client Awards



Jessica Kilgore



Mackenzie Hickman



Becky Silvious

Awardees were each granted a gift of \$500 each.



# Hurricane Relief Volunteer Network

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Appalachian Opportunity Fund is dedicated to supporting our community in navigating financial recovery from the impacts of Hurricane Helene. To assist those affected, our team has created a toolkit designed to provide valuable resources and options for individuals, businesses, and property owners impacted by the storm:

## *HELENE FINANCIAL RECOVERY TOOLBOX*



We have volunteers and team members here to help guide you through this resource toolkit. If you or someone you know would like support from an AOF coach or volunteer with hurricane recovery resources, please don't hesitate to reach out to us at (423) 430-6582.

## Freedom On Four Wheels



We are happy to provide assistance to families in our community who are looking to secure their next affordable vehicle. Our transportation services include some combination of financial coaching, and helping clients find the right loan for them (whether from us or another institution). In some special cases - we can do even more! Thanks to a generous donor, we were able to provide this new family with a used vehicle **for free!**



# THANK YOU

TO OUR SUPPORTERS

## How to Give:

### Online-

Donate securely at  
[www.aofcoaching.net/donate](http://www.aofcoaching.net/donate)

### By Mail-

Send checks to  
AOF, PO Box 5526,  
Johnson City, TN 37602

### Employer Matching-

Ask your employer about  
matching gifts.

## Contact Us:

(423) 213-9089

[info@aofcoaching.net](mailto:info@aofcoaching.net)

