



## Kindness key at this year's Radically Rural summit

By **Magnolia McComish** and **Olivia Morrissey**  
Franklin Pierce University

**K**EENE — The fifth Radically Rural Summit kicked off at the Colonial Performing Arts Center yesterday with a message of kindness, inclusiveness and community listening.

Some 550 registered for all or parts of the conference, which focuses on how to make small communities more successful and sustainable.

Attendees took part in 12 different sessions across seven tracks, all of which were designed to improve a particular part of rural life: arts and culture, community journalism, entrepreneurship, main streets, clean energy, land and community, and a track called, “All In For Health.”

“Radically Rural is building powerful networks of passionate, engaged, innovative people willing to share ideas and resources and then take actions to strengthen their communities,” said Radically Rural Director Julianna Dodson, who opened the summit. “And the impact has been incredible.”

Maine Democratic state Sen. Chloe Maxmin was this year's opening keynote speaker. The Mainer also serves as co-director of Dirt Road Organizing. Maxmin shared her experiences running for office in polarized times, emphasizing community and kindness in her campaigns.

“I am a registered Democrat, but I really don't care about parties,” Maxmin said. “I care about values, listening and respect. What I'm passionate about today is the fight to save the rural home that raised me.”

In 2012 she left her hometown of Nobleboro, Maine, for college at Harvard University. The shift to a large city made her rediscover what she loved about her small town. The friendliness and kindness that comes from knowing your community members came to mean even more to her.

While at Harvard, she founded Divest Harvard, an environmental activism organization with the goal of preventing fossil fuel pipelines from being constructed in New England. A group of 10 people in 2012 became an army of 70,000 by the time Maxmin graduated in 2015.

She returned to Maine, with fellow Harvard alum and campaign organizer Canyon Woodward. She ran for state representative in a district that, since it was redrawn in 2010, had never been won by a Democrat.

“Canyon and I were organizers at heart, and the opportunity to do this work on a larger scale was so exciting,” Maxmin said.



Chloe Maxmin, the keynote speaker for Radically Rural, talked about her abilities, as a Democrat, to get elected in a Maine Republican district. She stressed that kindness and listening were key to her campaigns.

Photo by Magnolia McComish, Franklin Pierce University

Community involvement was at the core of her campaign. Local artists painted political yard signs. Woodward designed mailers to save money. That money was used to hire young people for the campaign and scores more volunteered to approach households with diametrically opposing views.

Door-knocking proved pivotal in her win. Each day, Maxmin spent seven hours knocking on up to 120 doors leading up to the election. She knocked on so many doors that callouses formed on her knuckles. Maxmin stressed the importance of meeting face to face with members of her community and listening to their interests and needs.

“We really had to talk to Republicans and Independents and find that common

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# KEYNOTE CONTINUED

ground to be able to even have a shot at winning these districts,” Maxmin said.

Even though Maxmin didn’t have party registration in common with many she talked to, they shared a desire to improve the community, something Maxmin fears is falling by the wayside.

“As a democracy ... we are so divided that we cannot even have conversations because of the challenges that we’re all going to talk about,” Maxmin explained. “They require political solutions and that requires the people that we elect, and the people in our communities, to be able to simply talk to one another in a kind and compassionate way.”

Alice Fogel, the former poet laureate for New Hampshire, had a similar message for the crowd. Before reading a poem from her latest collection, “Nothing But,” she explained her love of living in a rural community.

“About 15 years ago, I was ill for a while and the whole town just came together and started making meals and driving [my] kids around and taking care of our whole family,” Fogel said. “One of my



Julianna Dodson, director for Radically Rural, opened the summit with thanks to nearly 80 speakers, more than a dozen sponsors and the more than 500 people who registered to attend all or parts of the conference.

Photo by Samuel Powell, Franklin Pierce University



The keynote event wrapped up with a performance by The Windborne Singers.

Photo by Magnolia McComish, Franklin Pierce University

kids said, ‘When I get sick, when I get older, I want to live in a small town.’ And he does. He lives two miles from me.”

The keynote event wrapped with a performance by The Windborne Singers. Performers Lauren Breunig, Jeremy Carter-Gordon, Lynn Rowan and Will Rowan have been studying polyphonic music for 20 years and performed reworked songs from hundreds of years ago to emphasize topics that are relevant in today’s social climate.

“We sing music from a variety of countries and cultures with traditions of harmony singing,” Breunig said. “In recent years we have been focused on music from movements in the past for social, environmental and political justice, reimagined in some of the things we see going on in the world today.”

Mary Ann Kristiansen, executive director for Radically Rural and co-founder of the event, said, “The point of the event is to share really good ideas that are working all over the country, so that more people can use those ideas to make their rural communities better.” ●



# WELCOME

Welcome to coverage of the fifth Radically Rural summit, held yesterday and today in Keene.

The concept of Radically Rural was first imagined following two successful CONNECT events staged in Keene by The Hannah Grimes Center for Entrepreneurship and The Keene Sentinel.

CONNECT, when first a partnership between The Sentinel and Hannah Grimes, was held in some unfinished space on the second floor of the Colony Mill on West Street. The theme was “Art of the Start,” and the event featured some of the most innovative businesses and artists from the region displaying products they manufactured or works they created. The evening, helped staged by Machina Arts, which would go on to create Machina Arts: Kitchen and ArtBar, featured a fusion of music and the locally famous culinary arts of CC&Ds Kitchen Market.

Year two of CONNECT was held in the then unfinished space of Green Energy Options on Roxbury Street. The theme for 2017 was “Downtown as a Conference Center,” a concept that would go on to be the manner in which Radically Rural would be held, in small venues sprinkled among the downtown.

The two networking events drew a combined 700 people. Event organizers began thinking about the results of CONNECT and imagined expanding beyond the arts and entrepreneurship focal points to a summit that could help small communities advance in many key areas in innovative ways.

Radically Rural was planned for the fall of 2018, and joining arts and culture and entrepreneurship would be tracks focused on downtowns (following on the theme of the 2017 CONNECT), community journalism, a key interest of The Sentinel, and land and conservation.

Some 500 people from more than 30 states registered to attend the first Radically Rural that September, which continued to include the CONNECT event, this one staged at Keene State College. Several downtown venues hosted the tracks, including Hannah Grimes, MoCo Arts and the Alumni Center at Keene State College.



2019 drew more than 600 registrants from more than 40 states and, for the first time, included a track focused on clean energy. The pandemic, in 2020, pushed Radically Rural online; still, more than 500 registered for the virtual sessions. And, in 2021, Radically Rural held its first hybrid event, allowing in-person and online attendees. Still in the pandemic, the event registered about 500, and it added a track focused on health care.

This year's Radically Rural, presenting 80 speakers, will again surpass 500 in-person and virtual attendees and includes seven tracks, several common programs that can be attended by all conference-goers and numerous roundtable discussions and activities. CONNECT, which gave birth to this radical idea, is still a core element of the summit. ●

## About this publication

Each year, Radically Rural has been covered by students at the Franklin Pierce University Marlin Fitzwater Center for Communication. The Center is once again the sponsor of the community journalism track. Student journalists from Franklin Pierce and the Center cover many aspects of the first day of Radically Rural and work with Center editors and The Sentinel to produce the 16-page tab you hold in your hands. We hope you find it informative and a good representation of some of the many activities that took place on the first day of the Radically Rural summit.

**Terrence L. Williams**  
President and COO, The Keene Sentinel



## Panelists: Change *can* be a good thing

By Paul Lambert, Brandon Kolek, Tyrese Marshall,  
Christopher Stevenson, Christopher Bastien

Franklin Pierce University

**K**EENE — Things just aren't the way they used to be. Not necessarily for worse.

That was the message conveyed to attendees at the first session of the Entrepreneurship track, held at the Hannah Grimes Center for Entrepreneurship on day one of the Radically Rural summit.

During the first of two sessions, "Policy in Community Wealth Building & Supporting Engineers," three industry professionals spoke about the future of rural economies and how rural communities should operate in a post-COVID-19 world.

The pandemic was "horrific in a thousand different ways," said Matt Dunne, founder and executive director of the Center on Rural Innovation. "But it changed the aperture of where work can happen and where investment can take place. It's been pretty profound," he noted.

According to Dunne, venture capital spending in rural areas has increased five times since 2017.

Rural communities, and their visions of themselves, have also changed, said Liz Kelly, a planner and designer at Resilience Planning and Design of Plymouth.

"In the last five years, we're in a completely different type of climate," Kelly said. "We're seeing many more communities interested and mobilizing actively towards addressing big issues."

According to Dunne, the most effective way for rural communities to strengthen their local economies is to make those economies matter on a larger scale while still keeping their local

roots.

"We need to make sure we have beautiful communities with awesome downtowns and a lot going on. But you also have to have businesses, ideally locally-owned businesses, new enterprises that are coming up that are involved in national or global economies," he said. "For a rural community to be successful, it has to be functional in a tradable economy. It has to be importing cash and exporting value."

While Kelly noted there might be resistance to change, she also said that change wasn't something of which to be afraid.

"Change is probably the only constant that exists, and that we have the ability to articulate the ship to change that," she said. "We actually have the power and can be empowered by that."

Much of how that change happens comes down to getting people in communities involved in making it, said attorney Basel Musharbash, a Texas lawyer that has as a mission improving access to capital and partnerships for governments, developers and financial institutions.

"Asking people about the problems that they're facing, in business, in work, can yield a lot of engagement in and of itself from people and build community in a different way, in a better way," Musharbash said.

The rapidly changing world won't be slowing down any time soon. But Musharbash pointed out that there is a historic track record of positive change being accomplished for rural businesses and communities.

"This isn't the first time we've been here in terms of the disparity between rural communities and urban communities," Musharbash said, referencing the federal government's passing of anti-monopoly legislation to help small busi-

nesses in the 1920s and 1930s. "I think we can do it again."

The second panel, "Grassroots Leadership and Entrepreneurship Support," focused on how leaders and small businesses in rural communities can create a closer bond with local folks.

The focal point of bringing a local community together is trust, said Lea Ann Seiler, Southwest Region Manager at NetWork Kansas.

"Building trust is a lot like being married," Seiler said. "When you first get married, you love this person. But 30 years later, you've been through everything you've been through — it's a whole different ball game. It's a whole different level of trust."

Not only are strong communities built on gaining trust, but they are also built on trusting the people civic leaders work with, according to Jeff Murphy, Owner of NOVA Arts and Brewbakers, a successful restaurant and event space in Keene.

"Build a team you trust," he said. "Take time to enjoy what you build."

As was the case with the first panel, speakers on the second session concurred that change was largely in the hands of the community.

"[A downtown] is built around: what do you want to see in your town?" Murphy said.

Seiler and Murphy were also joined by Jamie Pesch, Muskegon, Michigan's planner.

Those who attended the session heard from a half-dozen rural civic leaders, each with pedigrees of success.

"As a person in a leadership position in my small community, [the second panel] talked about a lot of relatable topics and problems that arise often," Radically Rural attendee Amy Cullen said. "It was overall a very positive experience." ●





Discussing "Policy and Entrepreneurship" at the Hannah Grimes Center during Wednesday's Radically Rural session were, from left, Elizabeth Kelly, planner and designer at Resilience Planning and Designing; Matt Dunne, executive director at Center on Rural Innovation; Basel Musharbash, managing attorney at Basel PLLC; and Melissa Chapman, associate director of Entrepreneurship and Innovation at the Federation of American Scientists.

Photo by Helen Joy George





## Local Food Entrepreneurs Planting Their Roots for Future Growth

By Joseph McLaughlin  
Franklin Pierce University

If you buy locally produced food at a farmers' market or a farm store, you are contributing to a growing part of the U.S. food system and local food production, said speakers at a Radically Rural roundtable discussion.

The sales of locally produced food have skyrocketed due to supply shortages stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic, and mass industries have been unable to produce food at pre-pandemic pace., the speakers said.

With the pandemic receding, the world faces more challenges, making food more expensive. This is an advantage for locally sourced food businesses, speakers said.

As part of Radically Rural, local farm and food entrepreneurs from across New England gathered at the Hannah Grimes Center for Entrepreneurship for a Wednesday roundtable discussion to highlight the importance of local food and farm businesses and how to support them.

The roundtable, "Unifying Your Independent Farm and Food Entrepreneurs into a Visible Growth Sector," addressed food entrepreneurs working together to present their growth efforts, challenges they have faced and their excitement for the future.

Andy Pressman, the leader of a farm business lab offered at Hannah Grimes, shared the details of a seven-week course that is designed to train farmers to create a business and marketing plan revolving around their farm's production.

Pressman oversees two nationwide programs: Appropriate Technology Transfer to Rural Areas (ATTRA) and Armed to Farm. ATTRA provides free technical assistance to farmers while Armed to Farm is a program that follows a similar curriculum as the farm business lab, focused on teaching veterans and active military.

Armed to Farm was built to "help [veterans] transition out of the military into agriculture as a new career path," Pressman said.

A food business lab, led by Jim Verzino, founder and president of Food Creators LLC, is similar as it trains farmers to transition into their own businesses. Despite the successes of these programs, there have been some challenges.

One obstacle the food business lab faces is running a farm and training programs dealing with selling products already available to the public. The programs teach farmers to sell value-added commodities to increase their revenue.

"That creates a whole other set of issues, because when you add value-added products, now you're talking about 'well, how do I market and get my thing on a shelf in a store and package it in such a way that it can compete with everything else,'" Verzino said.

While programs, such as the food business lab are a solution, there are still more challenges that entrepreneurs face. The biggest obstacle might simply be pitching business ideas to get projects running.

"Rural areas just don't compete when it comes to pitch competitions; it's a very



Mary Ann Kristiansen (back to the photographer), executive director for the Hannah Grimes Center for Entrepreneurship, moderated a panel at the Radically Rural Summit yesterday on how local farmers can be more competitive in the marketplace. Photo by Violet Schuttler, Franklin Pierce University

urban thing," said Mary Ann Kristiansen, executive director of the Hannah Grimes Center and the session moderator. The 2022 Pitchfork Challenge, a national pitch competition for rural farm businesses, is part of today's Radically Rural line-up, from 10 a.m. to 11:30 am at The Colonial Performing Arts Center.

Despite these problems, farm entrepreneurs have been quick to find solutions. Those have created excitement for the future of food entrepreneurship.

"There's a lot of conversation going on around supporting these small food and farm businesses, and there's a lot of momentum right now towards figuring out how best to serve those populations and figuring out how to build sustainable models towards success for those folks. So, that is a really exciting kind of place to be in," said Cameron Huftalen of Henniker,

and a project manager with Vital Communities, located in the Upper Valley.

"There's so much thought going into developing these systems that are going to be in place for years to come that'll hopefully make the pathways to success for these businesses stronger," Huftalen said. "There are a lot of people that recognize the opportunities in the food sector and local farm sector in that I think it's we're all working towards trying to figure out how to connect people to make the local food economy thrive."

The buy-in from rural communities that Kristina Cannon, executive director of Main Street Skowhegan in Maine, sees gives her confidence that better times may lie ahead for local food.

"I think that it is great to see all of the people working in this segment and the enthusiasm behind it," Cannon said. ●





## Rural design and its transformational impact

By Jenna Parent

Franklin Pierce University

**H**ow does physical space and the process of transforming it, change a community? Panelists who took part in Radically Rural's "Citizens Institute on Rural Design: Good Design is Transformative" endeavored to answer that question.

Track leader Jessica Gelter, executive director for Arts Alive!, began the session by acknowledging that communities are built by their residents and are rooted in history.

That history wasn't always rosy. She acknowledged many of the institutions that exist today were established by erasing other cultures, including the cultures of indigenous peoples.

"Uncovering truth and acknowledging it are critical first steps to building respect for each other and a clearer sense of our collective past," she said.

Courtney Spearman, a design specialist at the National Endowment for the Arts, spoke about the Citizens Institute of Rural Design (CIRD). Part of the National Endowment for the Arts, the institute's goal aims to "enhance the quality of life and economic vitality of rural America through planning design and creative place making."

"Good rural design is beyond aesthetics. It fosters economic development and contributes to livability," Spearman said. "Cohesion and pride in place are often manifested in design."

Art, according to Spearman, goes beyond just looking pretty. It can be economically and sociologically beneficial to a rural community.

Trevellya Ford-Ahmed of the Mount Zion Baptist Church Preservation Society spoke about how her community came together to save the Ohio church, founded by "free-born and formerly enslaved Black Americans" after it became dilapidated and run down.

The organization is working with CIRD to turn the



Jean Grisby consultant at Snow Pond Center for the Arts, Trevellya Ford-Ahmed of the Mount Zion Baptist Church Preservation for the Arts and Courtney Spearman, design specialist at National Endowment for the Arts, spoke at the Arts and Culture track session "Good Design is Transformative." Photo by Jenna Parent, Franklin Pierce University

former church into a community center that will offer educational, cultural and creative programming to support the Black community and other marginalized peoples in the area.

"Good design preserves community and its history," Ford-Ahmed said.

Attendee Genna Styles-Lyas of the Americans for

the Arts in Washington, D.C., was asked about her most significant takeaway from the panel. She said, "One of the takeaways is that there are connections and similarities. Challenges that are happening in rural communities are similar to those in suburban, as well as urban communities. They're connected." ●





# LAND & COMMUNITY TRACK



Left to right: Anthea Lavelle, Nikhil Chavda, Nat Wood, Phoebe Dolan spoke as youth climate activists.  
Photo by Magnolia McCormish, Franklin Pierce University





# Confronting climate conflict by engaging rural youth

**By Caitlin Agnew**  
Franklin Pierce University

**T**he youth is our future and the hope for a better world, but it won't be without conflict.

This was the thesis of one of Radically Rural's sessions, "Climate Activism: Engaging in Rural Youth," which was a collaboration between the Clean Energy and Land and Community tracks. The panel of speakers focused on three youth activists who work with climate change and developed their perspectives on youth activism.

Rob Werner, N.H. director for the League of Conservation Voters and the Clean Energy track leader for Radically Rural, was able to bring his discoveries from another seminar in leading this panel.

"Other sessions I have gone to with youth, a few months ago, were interesting, where some of the youth said, 'We understand we are the future leaders, and we are taking leadership now,'" he said. But Werner added that these same young people "pointed at me as someone in their 60s, (and said) 'you're putting it on us, like, oh, they will solve it - the youth will solve the climate problem.'"

This conflict between older and newer generations is far from being resolved, not only because of the pressure that the older generation may put on youth but a lack of trust in ideas brought forward by young people.

"I think there is just an extreme level of adults and adult-led organizations just being like 'Yeah, no. Like your idea is cool but no...'" said Phoebe Dolan the co-director of Maine Youth Power. "And that to me brings up an extreme amount of anger."

While there is tension between generations, there can be avoidance to address that conflict.

"There is very commonplace in political spaces where we don't want to ruffle feathers," said Nat Wood, a student at Keene State College and part of the Emerging Leaders Collaborative. "It reminds me of a white supremacy culture or characteristic called the right to comfort where we prioritize our own comfort more than hearing something that goes

against our beliefs, and I see that a lot in political spaces.

"Not just in climate activism spaces (but) in local politics and larger politics; it's just like the minute you say something that someone disagrees with they just shut it down because they have a right to comfort," Wood said. "And, no, I think that having conflict and having disagreements is important and it pivots things to grow."

Wood wasn't the only one who believes conflict can be a good thing. Another panelist, Nikhil Chavda, a youth activist for 350NH, also believes that disagreement can be a good thing.

"It's a sign of change. Like maybe 10 years ago, people just did not take the climate movement seriously at all," said Chavda. "Climate activists were outright dismissed and ignored and made fun of for believing in crazy things, and now it's like they are such a part of the conversation."

Anthea Lavelle, executive director of Hubbard Brook Research Foundation and the moderator said, "It reminds me of an aphorism that I often take with me and will sometimes recite in particularly contentious meetings, which is, 'The lack of conflict isn't necessarily harmony but oftentimes it's apathy,' and so we need to get in there and really do that tough work when facing a variety of opinions."

Conflict can create a dialogue and communication between people to learn about each other's side, and this panel was able to start that conversation and provide the audience with ways by which to continue to communicate about this within their communities.

That was the sense of Claire McGlinchey from Norway, Maine, a climate resiliency program manager at the Center for Norway-based Ecology.

"Honestly, it's just really inspiring to hear from other youth who are doing this work," she said. "I am a little new to the youth side of things. In my head, it was just something where, okay, I'll get older someday and that will be the realm I'm in. It's always so inspiring to hear all the work that young people are doing like true organizing, not just little things here and there, like really forming change." ●



## Communication, Progress and Reflection Highlight Community Journalism's "Covering the Divide"

By **Samuel Powell**  
Franklin Pierce University

**"I** have been in journalism for 44 years, and I cannot recall a more fractured time," said Terrence Williams, president & COO of the Keene Sentinel and Radically Rural's Community Journalism Track Leader.

Those were his opening remarks at Wednesday afternoon's "Covering the Divide" session, which sought to uncover better ways for local news organizations to report on communities splintered over race, education, the pandemic, policing and other issues.

Moderator Elizabeth Stephens, associate professor and community newspaper chair at the University of Missouri Columbia School of Journalism, led a discussion of how newsrooms could better serve their communities.

The panel included Peter Huoppi, director of multimedia at The Day of New London, Conn., and co-producer of the documentary "Those People"; Tony Baranowski, special projects manager with The Gazette of Cedar Rapids, Iowa; and Sara Konrad Baranowski, managing editor for The Gazette.

According to a 2019 Knight Foundation Gallup study, local news is seen as more trustworthy, caring, accurate, and neutral or unbiased, Stephens said. However, the Center for Media Engagement, Stephens said, noted in 2020 that this trust is situational. For example, while Black Americans trust journalists in general, they do not trust them to cover Black communities.

"When you can't even agree on trusting the media you are consuming," Stephens said, "it's tricky to find a common ground and believe the same facts."

Stephens discussed a Columbia Missourian project, in which a group of reporters returned to a largely Hispanic populated town to attempt to bond and learn from residents by conducting interviews via a translator. They covered the stories in both English and Spanish so that the interviewees could also have copies as well.

Huoppi's work in the newsroom also addressed racial divides. His analysis of The Day's front pages and discussions with readers showed that people felt that The Day depicted people of color with negativity.

"Are we reporting the news, or are we actually perpetuating the urban boogeyman narrative?" he asked.

Huoppi's search for ways to bridge the racial divide at The Day led to the production of "Those People." His team worked with the New London Talent show to tell stories of underserved communities.

One story was that of a Native American singer who had a difficult time opening up to Huoppi. But his partner, Curtis Goodwin, a person of color, had a much different experience with the singer.

"He asked a similar question and because she was talking to somebody with a similar life experience, she opened up a little bit more," said Huoppi.

"Those People," will be screened at the upcoming Monadnock International Film Festival.

Tony and Sarah Baranowski talked about bridging political divides by focusing on building trust, improving relationships and growing community.

One of the first innovative steps they took to address this issue when they were at the Iowa Falls Times Citizen was to make its daily newsletters free while maintaining the paywall necessary for the paper's fiscal health. Sarah pointed to a relatively high poverty rate in the paper's circulation area, noting

that "there are some people that can't afford to buy the newspaper, that doesn't mean they shouldn't know what's happening in their community."

Tony described trust in media in Iowa as rising, especially in community newspapers. He said, "They don't even think of us as media. They think of us as neighbors," he said. "They don't hold deep personal grudges against community newspapers as they might against mainstream media."

"Genuine boots-on-the-ground personal interactions," said Tony, "that's where community newspapers can excel."

The panel turned to the upcoming midterms and 2024 election. Huoppi said that after listening to his readers, he is more conscious of how he frames election stories. Where he sees vivid language, some readers see charged language, as if the newsroom is framing election news as a fight or battle.

Stephens noted that election reporting should be focused on issues rather than the horse races. She encouraged newsrooms to ask what is important to the reader and what does the reader need to hear from the candidates. Talk to the readers, they all urged.

"We in our newsrooms, we should look more like the community we cover, along the lines of race, along the lines of ideology, along the lines of life experience," said Huoppi.

Attendee Linda Conway, executive director for the New England Newspaper and Press Association, was thrilled about the opportunity Radically Rural brings for her to expand her knowledge on topics of diversity, gender and different ways that she can grow as a journalist.

"I'm here to learn how they're (the newspaper industry) tackling these issues," Conway said. ●





Panelist for the Community Journalism track session “Covering the Divide” discussed better ways to capture different points of views and cultures in local news coverage. Pictured left to right: Tony Baranowski, special projects manager with The Gazette of Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Elizabeth Stephens, associate professor and community newspaper chair at the University of Missouri Columbia School of Journalism; and Peter Huoppi, director of multimedia at The Day in New London, CT. Joining online was Sara Konrad Baranowski, managing editor at The Gazette. Photo by Samuel Powell, Franklin Pierce University



# ALL IN FOR HEALTH TRACK



All in for Health track leader, Julia Johnston, left, who is a Knowledge Management Specialist at ChildKind International, was joined by Ericka Burroughs-Girardi, senior outreach specialist, County Health Rankings and Roadmaps (center), and Kini-Ana Tinkham, executive director, Maine Resilience Building Network and Romi Hall, director, Healthy Homes and Communities, Neighborworks America who joined remotely from California.



## Community health is tied to youth health

**By Magnolia McComish**  
Franklin Pierce University

**Y**oung people are the future of communities, so it is imperative that they feel involved, said panelists at a Radically Rural session on health yesterday. But that isn't always the case.

The 2019 Maine Intergraded Youth Health Survey showed that 50% of middle and high school students in Maine did not feel that they mattered in their communities.

At the Radically Rural All in Health track session – Health from the Start - a panel of four community health professionals spoke about how much young people matter and of the importance of a healthy foundation for local youth. The session was jointly staged with the Main Street track.

Track leader, Julia Johnston, a knowledge management specialist at ChildKind International, introduced the panel. Ericka Burroughs-Girardi, senior outreach specialist at County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, led the conversation and was joined by Kini-Ana Tinkham, executive director at Maine Resilience Building Network and Romi Hall, director of Healthy Homes and Communities, Neighborworks America.

The discussion opened by explaining that health is a universal right that should cover more than just health care.

"Just by the mere fact that you were born and that you walk on this earth, you have the right to be healthy," said Burroughs-Girardi.

The right to be healthy involves more than just physical health. To be healthy, a person needs the opportunity and ability to make choices regarding their health.

"We know research shows that those social and economic factors are kind of like the hub of decision-making," said Burroughs-Girardi. "Think about it. When you have good quality education, you're able most likely to be able to get a good job, that will provide you with income that allows you to make choices in your life that are healthy choices."

To know what young people are missing and what needs improving, it is important to hear from them. Tinkham noted that the Maine Intergraded Youth Health Survey conducted with middle- and highschoolers

translates to community plans designed to improve health outcomes.

"With that data, it drives how we educate and raise awareness and work with evidence strategies, to help communities shift the environment, shift family settings and supports for families and youths to thrive," said Tinkham.

Mental health was also a key concern at the event. Data can be used to recognize what helps students learn the best. The panel emphasized using outdoor spaces for youths. This includes allowing students to learn outside, and ensuring that outdoor facilities, like local trails, allow young people to use them.

Being healthy not only happens through having opportunities outdoors, but also having a stable home environment.

"They need to know where they're coming home to, where they're landing, so again, (it's) critical for the long-term well-being of our young people when they have stable housing," Hall said.

When a community can provide affordable stable housing for its youth and their families, there is a multitude of positive outcomes. Although housing is not the only way a community can show its support.

"We found that we were not engaging with the youth to understand why they didn't matter. So, immediately there was change from programs, coalitions, to kind of lean in and engage youth," said Tinkham. "But how can we do better to make our youth feel so well connected to the community where they're living and growing up?"

They also found that a lot of the disconnect came from local businesses. The simple act of business owners recognizing youth in the community as its future and interacting with them can lift their sense of belonging in the community.

These topics resonated with Keene community members in the audience. Sally Malay, executive director at Keene Housing Kids Collaborative said, "My heart is racing listening to you ladies, all of you, about the validation I feel that you're providing to the work that we do."

The other All in for Health Track event is today from 2:00-3:30 p.m. in the Colonial Performing Arts Center and called "Homegrown Care: Care you can Provide," featuring a group of behavioral experts who focus on collaboration to support mental health and community.

James Vanaria contributed to this story. ●





## CONNECT: A fusion of food and fashion

By Caitlin Agnew, Christopher Stevenson,  
Violet Schuttler, Caileigh Leger  
Franklin Pierce University

After a long day of panels and seminars, 200 Radically Rural attendees gathered at the CONNECT event outside the Wyman Tavern to unwind and discuss the events of the day while enjoying locally produced food, music and fiber.

CC&D's Kitchen Market's Charlie Pini and Denise Meadows provided a spread of locally grown food while the New England-based bluegrass band Poor Monroe

provided the music.

The crowd was entertained by a fashion show featuring locally sourced sustainable clothing, emceed by Katie Sullivan of Bobolink Yarns and Mary Ewell.

Among the runway highlights were Laura Jacoby and Cyrus Brooks of Muriel's, a Vermont garment company, who modeled their wool knits. Laura Sullivan, of Pipe Dream Hempworks, wore a dress fashioned of vintage curtains.

The Fibershed Team also included Sasha Azbel of Sashoonya; Urban Exchange; Bobolink Yarns; Ewell of Locally Dressed; Slow Process; Lee Rossignol, co-founder of the Northern New England Fibershed; and Nicole Bainer.



A culinary spread prepared by CC&D's Kitchen Market was a popular spot during the Radically Rural CONNECT event last night.





A farm-to-closet fashion show was hosted by Katie Sullivan of Bobolink Yarns, left, and Mary Ewell, organizer, that featured local textiles like Modern Saint Living and Muriel's Of Vermont. Models presented the fashions at Radically Rural's CONNECT event on the grounds of the historic Wyman Tavern.



Live music was performed by the New England-based bluegrass band Poor Monroe at CONNECT last night. Photos by Violet Schuttler, Franklin Pierce University



Radically Rural attendees and panelists enjoy a culinary spread created by CC&D's Kitchen Market of Keene. The well-known caterer produced a variety of food with a focus on local and sustainable.

CONNECT provided an opportunity to network with other attendees, who came from across the country.

"It sounded interesting, it sounded like a convention that wasn't really like other ones I had been to," said Jamie Pesch, planner for the City of Muskegon, Mich., and a speaker in the Entrepreneurship track.

A Muskegon native, Pesch does not necessarily consider his city the most rural place around but went on to say he does see similarities between Muskegon and rural communities.

Helen Joy George got a little bit of everything throughout the first day of the Radically Rural event. George, a photographer from Asheville, N.C., was able to capture pictures and listen in on all of the panels. She especially enjoyed the "Climate Activism: Engaging Rural Youth" session in the Land and Community Track.

"I really liked the youth panel," George said, "listening to them and being encouraged that they're thinking curiously."

Emily Manns of Peterborough, agreed.

"The youth panel stood out as having some inspiring young people to tell their stories. I am always struck by how inspiring other people's stories are."

Christine Osterwalder, of East Hampton, Mass, was enthusiastic about the Arts and Culture track.

"They talked about how their communities have changed because they have gone through the process, they had created stakeholders and gotten additional grants, so they have basically changed their communities into thriving spaces, so that was really cool," she said. "I think art is something that brings people together." ●