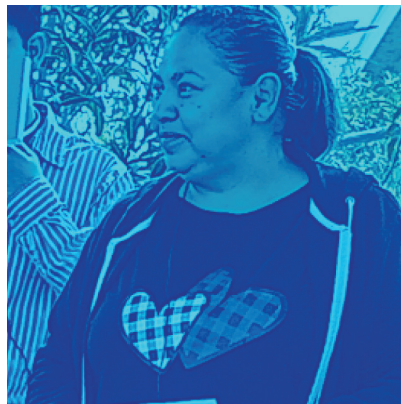
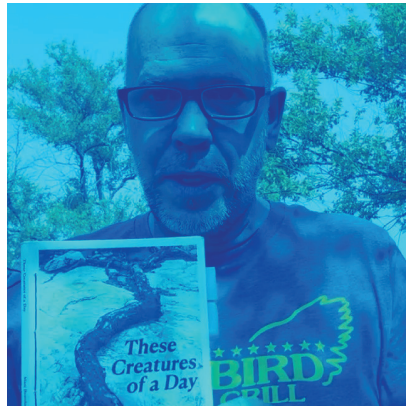
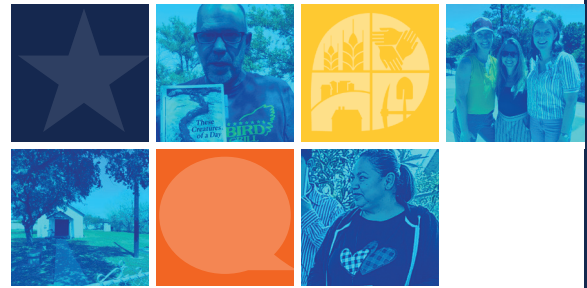


Rural Assembly

2024

ANNUAL REPORT





Dear friends and allies of the Rural Assembly,

Since 2007, Rural Assembly has served as a platform for rural people to gather, partner, and advocate. Our aim is to amplify rural voices and issues leading to greater connectedness, more civic participation, and increased investment in rural issues and places.

In 2020, Rural Assembly built virtual spaces to have important conversations about community wellbeing and civic life. We met each other in Zoom rooms and continued those conversations off the screen – creating art together, brainstorming community campaigns, and always keeping inclusivity at the heart of rural life.

In 2024 we dialed into our core focus and values by shoring up a network of bright, down-to-earth rural leaders who have imagination and enthusiasm for what's possible. Here are a few highlights:

- Over 250 people tuned in live for **Rural Assembly Everywhere** to celebrate and explore stories of rural creativity, innovation, and care – and Everywhere attracted registrants from all fifty states.
- We launched **Morning Connections** in partnership with 100 Rural Women to provide a gathering space for rural women.
- We **visited rural communities** to hear stories that upend stereotypes and illuminate rural realities. Our Daily Yonder colleagues joined us in our travels to share these stories with our national audience.

Read on to see all the great work that happened in 2024. Our team is looking forward to another important year filled with connection, collaboration, and action.

Whether we see you in person or online – you'll always have a place in the Rural Assembly family.



Warmly,
Taneum Fotheringill
Director of Programs & Partnerships
Rural Assembly

Who we are...

 Rural Assembly

Center for
Rural Strategies

THE DAILY YONDER.

Rural Assembly is a program of the Center for Rural Strategies, which has been advocating for rural America for more than 20 years. **The Center for Rural Strategies** strives to create better opportunities for small towns and rural communities by building coalitions, developing partnerships, leading public information campaigns, and advancing strategies that strengthen connections between and among rural and urban places. The Center for Rural Strategies also publishes **The Daily Yonder**.

Rural Assembly was launched in 2007 as a gathering of advocates and leaders from rural communities across America. In our work, we strive to lift up the voices of people working at the local, regional, and national level to improve life in rural communities.

The Daily Yonder is a nonprofit news platform dedicated to distributing high-quality news, research, reports, features, and commentary about rural America. The Daily Yonder offers a blueprint in the creative use of media to highlight and improve conditions in rural communities.

Together, the Center for Rural Strategies, Rural Assembly, and the Daily Yonder work toward these goals day in and day out.



Mission & Vision

Rural Assembly's mission is to build a more inclusive nation through gatherings, partnerships, and advocacy. We work with rural people and allies toward this goal.

★ Gather

Our voices are stronger and clearer together. In our gatherings we strive to:

- Provide a platform for rural people, leaders and advocates to gather and engage;
- Discuss and understand issues affecting rural communities;
- Capture untold stories while celebrating the diversity, culture, and stories of rural communities;
- Challenge harmful narratives;
- Recognize the interconnectedness of issues and communities.

★ Partner

Connect and collaborate to ensure rural voices, lives, and issues are captured and presented in an accurate and compelling way in the national discourse. We partner with:

- Local grassroots activists;
- Nonprofits and business leaders;
- Government officials and policymakers;
- Donors and philanthropists;
- Community members.

★ Advocate

We advocate for policies and issues that benefit rural communities to ensure more just, positive, and sustainable outcomes, by:

- Encouraging more resources and greater investment in rural places;
- Strengthening democracy by creating content to inform policymakers and stakeholders;
- Researching, analyzing, and disseminating data on the realities of rural places and people to support improved policies;
- Broadening the discourse on rural issues to include marginalized voices.

STRATEGIC ADVISORS

Rural Assembly's Strategic Advisors help shape and guide the work of the Rural Assembly. We thank our Strategic Advisors for their expert advice, direction, and contributions throughout the year.



Carmina Taylor
Community Organizer



Marcos Silva
RGV Lead



Mary Sketch
Virginia Soil Health Coalition



Nikiko Masumoto
Farmer and Artist



Sarah Green
Kansas-based Consultant



Teresa Kittridge
100 Rural Women

★ Rural Assembly 2024

Milestones & Impact

In 2024, Rural Assembly hosted numerous online and in-person events that focused on raising awareness of key issues in rural America.

Whether it was hosting bridging workshops to counter the urban-rural divide, uplifting the interconnectedness of communities, or advocating for policies to support civic infrastructure, we spent the year working alongside dedicated rural advocates. Thank you to those of you who joined us in 2024.

Rural Assembly Everywhere / *Gather, Partner, Advocate*



Everywhere, our annual virtual gathering, features rural thought leaders, artists, and organizations who are supporting their communities at national and local levels. In 2024, we focused on the theme of “Nurturing Thriving Communities,” bringing together influential democracy and cultural experts including professors Hahrie Han and Kathy Cramer; artist and midwife Autumn Cavender, USDA Acting Deputy Under Secretary for Rural Development Lillian Salerno, and other distinguished rural voices. When we gather for Everywhere, we are reminded and awed by the tremendous efforts going on day-to-day. Together, we inspire each other and find the energy to keep these endeavors going all year long.



Participants said:

“The information provided supports my work in exploring and creating capacity for the rural narrative in Wisconsin...”

“Hearing about organizations I might look up for relevant application to our programming was useful.”

“I feel inspired!”





68%

of survey respondents said Rural Assembly Everywhere *considerably* increases their knowledge and understanding of rural issues and rural communities.

Reported outcomes:

- *I feel a sense of possibility about what my community could do.*
- *I heard stories that I am excited to share with others in my community.*
- *I feel like I have a greater understanding that makes me more inclusive of others.*
- *I feel a greater sense of belonging and connection with my rural neighbors across the country.*

Did you miss Rural Assembly Everywhere or want to revisit all the great features? [Watch Everywhere online](#)

Morning Connections / *Gather, Advocate*

At [Morning Connections](#) there is no agenda – we gather and connect. The last quarter of 2024 was full to the brim because women showed up every Thursday morning with words of encouragement for each other, a willingness to share, and the desire to support the rural communities we all know and love.

Thanks to our partnership with 100 Rural Women, Rural Assembly launched Morning Connections for Women on a national scale in October 2024. We are thrilled to expand upon the program which began in Minnesota in 2022 and bring it to life on a national scale.

“Networking can be a huge drain for me, so the opportunity to talk with other women in a way that leaves me feeling energized about my community and my work is wonderful.” – Lilly

“Serving a rural community can be a frustrating and lonely pursuit. It’s great to make connections with others doing the same (and yet very different) things and to learn and share ideas with them.” – Patti

Partner Visit Spotlights / *Gather, Partner*



This year we had the pleasure of visiting with communities all over the country to bear witness, listen, document, and elevate the experiences of our partners in ways that inform the national discourse about rural people and places. Our colleagues from the Daily Yonder joined us to report on local issues during these trips.

Rio Grande Valley

In partnership with the Museum of South Texas History, Rural Assembly Strategic Advisor Marcos Silva, and key allies in the area, we documented the history and contemporary experiences of local populations along the United States-Mexico border.

Ilwaco, WA

The Columbia Pacific Heritage Museum opened Rural Assembly contributor Nhatt Nichols' exhibit "The Willapa Oyster and its Environs" in November. Rural Assembly traveled to Southwest Washington to learn more about the area and the people and environment that shaped it.

In Case You Missed It:

Rio Grande Valley, Texas

Watch the Video: [The Organizing Work of La Unión del Pueblo Entero](#)

Read the Daily Yonder Story: ["First the Community, Then Us": Bringing Public Light to Texas' Colonias"](#)

Read the Daily Yonder Story: [Q&A with LUPE Community Organizer Marco López](#)

Watch the Video: [The History of Jackson Ranch](#)

Read the Daily Yonder Story: [What a Borderland Church Can Teach About Belonging](#)

Ilwaco, Washington

Watch the Video: ["The Willapa Oyster and its Environs"](#) about the exhibit from Rural Assembly contributor Nhatt Nichols

Listen to Keep it Rural: [Dispatches from a Coastal Cranberry Bog](#) from Daily Yonder correspondent Claire Carlson

Read the Daily Yonder Story: [As Erosion and Floods Swallow Buildings, Washington's Coastal Communities Strain to Adapt](#) by Daily Yonder correspondents Claire Carlson and Julia Tilton

Rural Journalism Collective / *Gather, Partner*

From the beginning, the Rural Journalism Collective has been a space to explore the unique dynamics that journalists and storytellers navigate in rural America. In 2024, we continued to dig into big topics like [Election Year Reporting](#) and [Contentious Issues in Rural Communities](#).

Rural Remix / Partner, Advocate



Together with our colleagues at The Daily Yonder and Center for Rural Strategies, we worked to expand the Rural Remix feed of podcasts and audio in 2024. With four different series plus content from Rural Assembly Everywhere and Daily Yonder reporting brought to life in audio, it was our biggest year ever for audio content.

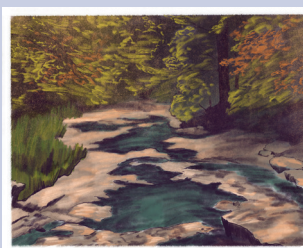
- [Keep It Rural](#)
- [Backroad Ballots: Rural Politics in 2024](#)
- [Home Cooked: A 50 Year History of Meth in America](#)
- [Rural Food Traditions: Bread](#)

Beyond the Clock / Gather, Partner

Drawing on the wisdom and experience of rural culture bearers, Beyond the Clock brings together rural creatives in learning exchanges and happy hours. Led by the Department for Public Transformation and Voices for Rural Resilience, each Beyond the Clock gathering reminds us of the vastness and limitlessness of the rural experience. Artist-in-Residence Nhatt Nichols created portraits of each Rural Rockstar featured throughout the year and published interviews to build on the themes shared during their Beyond the Clock learning exchange.

Check out the interviews with Savannah Barrett, Donna Neuwirth, Melissa Peña, Rae Garringer, and Erika Nelson on the [Beyond the Clock Blog!](#)

Plus, check out the [Beyond the Clock Spotify Playlist!](#) This compilation of songs chosen by each Rural Rockstar is guaranteed to get you movin' and groovin'.



Advocating for Rural Communities



In January, as Congress was beginning to consider an expanded Child Tax Credit within the bipartisan tax package, we **partnered with [Rural Organizing](#)** to catalyze advocacy within our network. Over 2,000 people wrote to their Congressional legislators in support of the expanded Child Tax Credit.

The Percent for Place coalition advocates for civic infrastructure. In 2024, we were part of efforts to educate the public about why civic infrastructure matters and released guides like how to work with your legislators to advocate for federal earmarks for your community.

Nhatt Nichols interviewed five community members who are pushing back against systemic injustice. Read the [Drawing Resilience](#) interviews on our blog.

Exchanging Ideas Throughout the Year

Our team was honored to meet many of you at conferences, summits, and gatherings. The people met and ideas shared led to key efforts and partnerships throughout the year.



- Rural Assembly Strategic Advisor Carmina Taylor attended [Radically Rural Summit](#) in Keene, NH hosted by the Hannah Grimes Center for Entrepreneurship. [Read about her experience.](#) *Rural Assembly is proud to now serve on the Advisory Committee for Radically Rural.*
- Rural Assembly Fellow Quintissa Peake attended **The Summit to Counter Antisemitism & Islamophobia and Related Forms of Hatred and Bias in Rural America** hosted by Tri-Faith Initiative and USDA in Omaha, NE. [Read about her experience.](#)
- Quintissa also attended the **National Rural Health Association's Health Equity Conference** in New Orleans, LA. [Read about her experience.](#)
- Director of Programs & Partnerships Taneum Fotheringill attended [Rural Futures Summit](#) hosted by Springboard for the Arts in Fergus Falls, MN. During the visit, she toured women operated farms of various scale with Cheryl Whitesitt (also featured in the Rural Food Traditions podcast on Rural Remix).
- Former Director and Special Advisor Whitney Kimball Coe spoke at [Bridging the Divide: Forging the Ties between Urban and Rural America](#) at the University of Chicago Institute of Politics in Chicago, IL.

Rural Assembly

Staying Connected



We reached over
9,000
email subscribers.



We achieved an above industry standard open rate of **30%** through our twice [weekly newsletters](#).



Followers of Rural Remix on Spotify doubled.
Nearly 700 people tune in to listen to each episode for stories that tell deeper, richer stories about life in rural places.



We reached more than **8,000 followers** across Facebook and Instagram and increased collaborative posting with the Daily Yonder on projects such as Rural Remix.

A collage of smiling people's faces arranged in a circular pattern, with a central text overlay. The faces are of various ethnicities and ages, all smiling broadly. The background is a bright blue sky. The text is centered and reads:

Thank you
to our partners, funders, and everyone
who joined us in 2024. Stay connected,
find rural opportunities, and more
with our [*weekly newsletters*](#).