

# NEWSLETTER

Spring 2025

## The New Opportunity School for Women

serves under-resourced Appalachian women who are ready to build stable and fulfilling lives for themselves, their families and their communities. All of our programs are free.



Scan to  
learn more

## OUR LADIES

### From Darkness to Light: Cyndi's Story of Resilience and Redemption

Life is full of unexpected twists and turns. For Cyndi Slagle, the journey has been one of tragedy, grief, and heartbreak. Yet, in the depths of despair, she found hope through the New Opportunity School for Women (NOSW), her faith, and the unwavering support of her family. Today, she stands on a powerful path of redemption and self-discovery, hoping to inspire others facing similar struggles.

At just 28 years old, Cyndi experienced an unimaginable loss—her first husband passed away on her birthday in 2002 due to congenital heart failure. This tragedy sent her into a downward spiral, leading to addiction, incarceration, and the painful separation from her three young children.

In 2015, Cyndi entered another relationship, hoping for a fresh start. Unfortunately, this relationship also became abusive, pushing her to the brink of despair. In

2023, she found refuge at Hope's Wings, a local organization supporting women in crisis. There, she took several transformative courses and learned about the New Opportunity School for Women in Berea.

NOSW provides free educational and personal development programs designed to empower women who are ready for change. With encouragement from Hope's Wings and a newfound determination, Cyndi enrolled in NOSW's three-day program in 2023. Inspired by the experience, she took the next step and joined the two-week residential program, an intensive initiative that fosters personal growth, career readiness, and self-confidence. Through these programs, Cyndi found the strength to reclaim her voice and build a future for herself.

She credits Angelika and Carl Weaver's course, Reframing Your Story, as a pivotal moment in her

*See CYNDI, page 3.*



## NOSW AT APPALACHIAN STUDIES CONFERENCE

New Opportunity School for Women (NOSW) was recently invited to the 48th Annual Appalachian Studies Conference (ASA) held this year in Cookeville, Tennessee at Tennessee Tech University to receive a 2025 Appalachian Foodways Fellowship Award. NOSW was honored along with Marcus West, Chris Smith, and Ronnie Mae Tartt, all Appalachian foodways wizards who are involved in gardening, butchering, canning, cooking, seed saving, and more.

As part of the invitation, Sam Cole, Development & Communications Coordinator (pictured above), presented a panel about her experiences with regional foodways during her life, as well as the work of NOSW programs to bolster regional foodways knowledge. Sam was born and raised on a mountainside farm, run in part by her entire extended family, where planting by moon sign was a regular practice.

NOSW has always worked to provide session courses on gardening, canning, and integrative health, as well as regional culture. But this award allows us to offer so much more! Since receiving the grant, NOSW has begun our newest program, Holler Harvest, where graduates receive container gardening supplies and are required to attend several courses centered around gardening basics, planting by moon sign, preserving food, and more. Our class roster for this course filled to capacity in less than 24 hours! Stay tuned for more updates about this program!



## FROM OUR DIRECTOR

### A Full-Circle Journey: From Participant to Interim Director

In 2013, I was at a crossroads. After losing a job I loved, I struggled with depression and financial hardship, feeling like my future had stalled. A brochure for the New Opportunity School for Women changed everything. Though applying was intimidating, I took the leap—and those three weeks at NOSW rekindled my sense of purpose.

On my first day home, I applied to Berea College, where I later graduated with honors as a 44-year-old student balancing motherhood and academics. The day after receiving my degree, I stepped into my first role at NOSW. Over the years, I moved from program assistant to coordinator, and today, I have the honor of serving as Interim Director of the organization that once lifted me up.

NOSW transforms lives—I know because it transformed mine. In this role, I'm committed to ensuring that more women have the opportunity to rediscover their potential and rewrite their stories. Thank you for being part of this journey. Together, we are changing lives.

Jennifer Walden  
Interim Executive Director



### KY GIVES DAY: MAY 13, 2025

Have you dreamed of making history? Of course, we all have. And now we have a chance to be a part of Kentucky's day of giving - an opportunity to unite our community around causes in which we truly believe and help nonprofit organizations connect to the larger community.

NOSW needs your help! Please join our campaign and help us reach our goal of \$3000! We need you to tell your friends and family members about the important work we do and ask them to join us in helping to make a difference. As a bonus, a generous donor has agreed to match, dollar for dollar, our first \$500 in your donations for the day.

Get ready to give! On May 13, 2025, visit [kygives.org](http://kygives.org) and make a donation to us. All giving will end at midnight on May 13, so make sure to get your gift in on time!

As always, if you have any questions or would like more information, let us know by emailing [scole@nosw.org](mailto:scole@nosw.org) or calling us at 859-985-7200. Thank you in advance for your generosity!

### WHAT'S COMING UP

#### April

7-9: Three-Day Non-Residential Session (Owenton, KY)  
21: Graduate Support Group (online)

#### May

7-9: Three-Day Non-Residential Session (Booneville, KY)  
19: Graduate Support Group (online)  
31-June 14: Residential Session (Berea)

#### June

May 31-14: Residential Session (Berea)

## CYNDI

### *Continued from page 4*

transformation, helping her embrace her past and step outside her comfort zone. NOSW's programs gave her the tools to see herself in a new light and empowered her to make lasting changes.

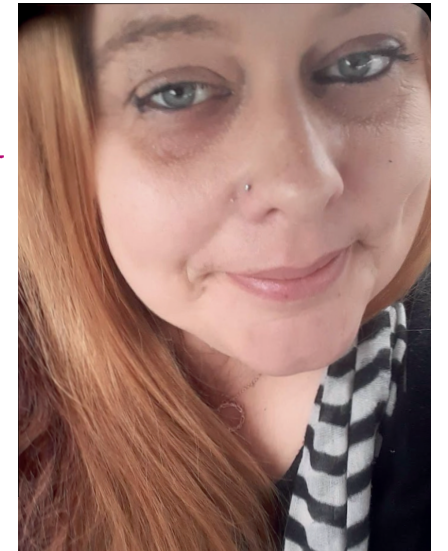
Despite her progress, Cyndi (pictured left) continued to face challenges. She took in a former partner who was homeless, only to endure continued mental torment. Earlier this year, he passed away in his sleep—a moment that marked a profound turning point in her journey. She turned to her faith, attending church regularly and leaning on the unwavering support of her NOSW sisters. When asked what has helped her cope with a lifetime of grief, Cyndi reflects that it has been her faith in God and the support of NOSW that carried her through.

Today, Cyndi is a living testament to the human spirit's ability to overcome adversity. Her children, once separated from her, are now back in her life, and she has embraced the joy of becoming a grandmother. The recent arrival of her mini-Border Collie puppy, aptly named Hope, has brought even more love and energy into her home.

Cyndi's story is a beacon of hope for women who feel lost in the darkness. Her journey reminds us that, no matter how dire our circumstances may seem, we all have the power to rewrite our stories. Through NOSW, she gained the confidence and support she needed to change her life. By embracing vulnerability, seeking help, and using our voices, we can overcome even the most daunting obstacles. Cyndi's life is a true testament to resilience, redemption, and the transformative power of NOSW.



Cyndi found the strength to reclaim her voice and build a future for herself.



### DONATING A MEAL: MORE THAN JUST FOOD

NOSW is preparing for our upcoming two-week June residential session held in Berea, KY. Just like at every offering, this session will include trips to the salon, a shopping day, and various courses that the participants will be engaged in. We are especially excited about our trip for the upcoming session, the 250th Anniversary Celebration of the Founding of Fort Boonesborough!

The two weeks are always lots of fun, but they are also always a lot of work for all the women involved. Although we give a lot to all of our participants, they will also be engaged in deep, challenging work. Our days often last 12+ hours. This is why we provide all our participants with lodging at Happiness Hills Farm just outside of Berea, and also work to provide them two nutritious meals a day. At each meal, we serve about 20 people. That's a lot, but you can help.

Simply visit our Take Them A Meal sign-up here and volunteer to provide a meal for us during session: <https://takethemameal.com/UXHT3564>. You can cook the meal yourself or order from a local restaurant, whichever is easiest for you.

It is only because of your continued support that NOSW can offer such robust and effective programming! Thank you for your continued, generous support.

#### Get our e-news

Want to receive our e-news in your email inbox? Email: [scole@nosw.org](mailto:scole@nosw.org)

#### Follow us on Facebook

To keep up with NOSW between newsletters, follow us on Facebook at: [facebook.com/noswberea](https://facebook.com/noswberea)

#### Make a gift

Your donations impact women's lives. Use the envelope to give today.