



ENERGIZING ENTREPRENEURIAL COMMUNITIES

A Pathway to Prosperity



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“We never dreamt it would go this far” –
Entrepreneur April Roberts is on a journey,

by Emma Pepper, Director of Strategic Network Communications



People line up for food from Carnivore BBQ (via Facebook)

This story originally appeared in the Winter 2019 print edition of The Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation newsletter. [Read the full newsletter](#) and learn more about the work of The Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation [on their website](#).

In 1998, April Roberts caught the bug.

“The first actual business I got into was Pampered Chef, buying and selling equipment, and that’s where I got my first taste of being my own boss... I’ve always had something going on on the side, and I liked the flexibility of doing what I wanted to do,” says April, a resident of Hamlin, WV.

Through the years, April jumped from one side hustle to the next – trying photography, personalized jewelry and crafts, and other business ideas – until she landed on a lasting venture, Carnivore BBQ. What started out as a competition barbecue team with her family has grown into a fully fledged business. April’s barbecue food truck travels to fairs and festivals, and she offers catering for meetings and events.

“In 2017, we started with two tents, a smoker, and a dream,” April says, laughing. “We never dreamt it would go this far, and I’m glad that it has, I’m loving everything about it.”

When talking about the successful growth of her business, April cites three things: the support of her husband Jonathan and sons Joshua and Jared; the support of her community; and her participation in the WV Community Development Hub’s Energizing Entrepreneurial Communities (E-Communities) program.

April’s next big step is bottling her barbecue sauce. Whenever she serves her barbecue, customers comment on how much they love the sauce, and ask if they can buy it. Through the E-Communities program, April connected with the Robert C. Byrd Institute for Advanced Flexible Manufacturing and the WV Department of Agriculture, and both groups are supporting her as she takes the leap to start producing her own sauce. She expects to begin distributing the barbecue sauce to local markets as well as making sales on her own this summer.

At The Hub, we believe in creating solutions to community challenges that invest in leaders like April. What if engaged residents in towns across West Virginia devoted their energy to creating the culture needed to inspire more people like April to step forward and create their own livelihoods? What would it take to create momentum toward this end? This is the challenge The Hub is addressing through the coaching and community development programs, like E-Communities, that we offer to communities across the state.

April is just one of many local leaders currently participating in four designated E-Communities: Madison/Danville, Grafton, Lincoln County, and Wyoming County. As part of the program, April is not only learning about resources to connect with to grow her own business, she is working with a team of people to support the growth of an entrepreneurial culture for her entire community. Through trainings, connections to resource providers, mini-grants for community projects, and coaching to support the creation of lasting community groups in the spirit of these efforts, April and her peers working in E-Communities teams are building a bright future with fellow West Virginians.

April believes in giving back to the community that is supporting her, and we believe in April.

Find April on [Facebook at Carnivore BBQ](#) »

