



**RURAL**  
technology fund

# Reducing The Digital Divide



2021 ANNUAL REPORT

# LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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Since I started the RTF 13 years ago, I've traveled all over the country and interacted with rural teachers and students in all fifty states. In many of these folks, I saw reflections of my own rural upbringing and the contrast of fortune inherent to it. While small-town life is rooted in a strong sense of community and mutual care, individuals within those areas have fewer ways to transcend the socio-economic conditions they are born into than when compared with their urban counterparts. It was here that I learned how poverty charges interest, impeding people's chances of ending cycles of generational hardship. While it would be easy to feel overwhelmed by these stories, I also saw that across the country, talent was distributed equally regardless of region. It was the opportunity to wield that talent that

was not. I was fortunate to find a few of those opportunities along my path, but I also know that I was incredibly lucky. Through our work at the RTF so far, we have been proud to provide opportunities to thousands of rural kids so that they don't have to rely on luck. But, there is still much work to be done.

As an organization, we took significant steps in 2021 to grow our mission and expand our ability to provide opportunities for young people. This included:

- Hiring our first full time COO, Dr. Claire Williams.
- Expanding our advisory board with the addition of Elizabeth Wharton, Dr. Shavonne Gibson, Dr. Brooke Blevins, and Monica Bilak.
- Expanding our mission scope to begin providing assistive technology devices to help children with disabilities achieve greater access to technology and education resources.

Along the way, we provided technology education resources to over 21,000 students, bringing our total reach to over 150,000 students across all fifty states. We also funded our first assistive technology projects, providing tablets and other alternative and augmentative communication (AAC) devices to speech therapists serving rural schools.

I'm tremendously excited for our growth and the new reach it will allow us to have. We've got big plans for 2022 that will include new forms of outreach, additional community partnerships, and the ability to provide even more opportunities to rural and underserved students.

As always, thank you to the teachers, students, volunteers, donors, and community members who support our mission.

**CHRIS SANDERS**

Founder and Executive Director



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*The mission of the RTF is to help rural students recognize opportunities in technology careers, facilitate pathways to work in the computer industry, and provide equitable access to technology for students with disabilities.*



# CONNECTING CULTURE AND COMMUNITY

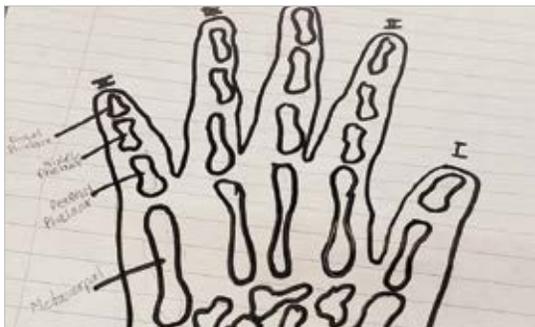
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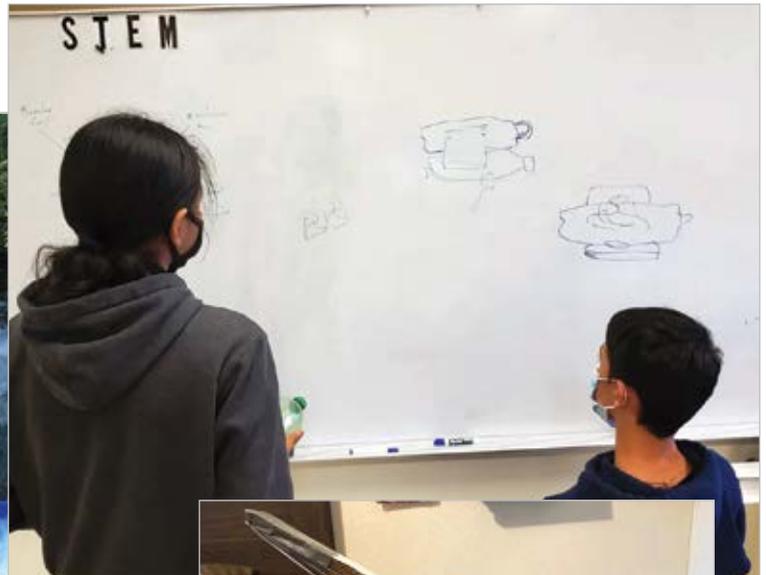
Helping educators integrate purpose and community into their projects is an important goal of the RTF. Behind every technology grant is an educator with big ideas who wants to expose their students to innovation and opportunity. Over the summer, we funded a project in Mescalero, New Mexico that exemplified these goals. Mr. Raynor, a science teacher at the Mescalero Apache School, submitted a project aimed at the 5th-12th graders whom he works with. He wanted to continue expanding STEM programming opportunities, utilizing resources to teach engineering, coding, and design through projects on the reservation. The project included Arduinos, soldering kits, sensors, motors, raspberry pis, and a robotics kit. But, there was much more to this donation than we could have imagined.

Mr. Raynor works with over 100 students each year and creates new programming opportunities for them. With a brand-new computer science class, he hoped to increase student engagement, aiming for at least 50% growth in class enrollment each year. A critical component of Mr. Raynor's approach was to integrate the Apache language into student coding projects. Students used Apache words for functions and variables while writing a program that controlled LED lights. He described the value of this approach, saying, *"By combining their language and programming, it is our hope that the language is kept alive throughout their lives."*

He was able to stress the importance of this lesson by establishing mentorship opportunities for the high school students to work with elementary and middle school students to teach them how to code in their native language. Mr. Raynor does a remarkable job of instilling value and importance in his students' work, tying together their interests and innovation with real-world issues.

With this strong sense of community, Mr. Raynor's class went even further by using their skills to focus on a local issue. His students placed sensors in three different locations on the reservation to collect data on air quality. They used these results to demonstrate how the air quality was affecting people in their community, eventually





“By combining their language and programming, it is our hope that the language is kept alive throughout their lives.”

sharing them with tribal members and at a Leadership Summit in California. This project was incredibly important as the reservation approached fire season – there were two fires burning within 15-20 miles of the school when the students were presenting their work. This project integrated STEM lessons with the importance of doing good in our communities, demonstrating to students the type of impact their innovation can have.

Mr. Raynor’s dedication is evident in the individuals he works with. His student, Caydence, recently received the Student Enhancement in Earth and Space Science (SEES) summer internship at the University of Texas at Austin’s Center for Space Research, where she will conduct research on data collected from NASA satellites, design Mars habitats, and analyze International Space Station imaging. We wish Caydence the best as she embarks on this incredible opportunity!

Mr. Raynor’s project is a true reflection of the opportunities that are within reach for students who are given exposure and support in the world of computer science. He fosters an environment of true invention, guiding his students in STEM exploration and pushing them toward success that enriches their own education, and the community they live in. We are honored to be a part of his work as he continues to touch the lives of his students and better the communities around him.

# OUR IMPACT



2021 donations went to  
**127**  
 different schools.

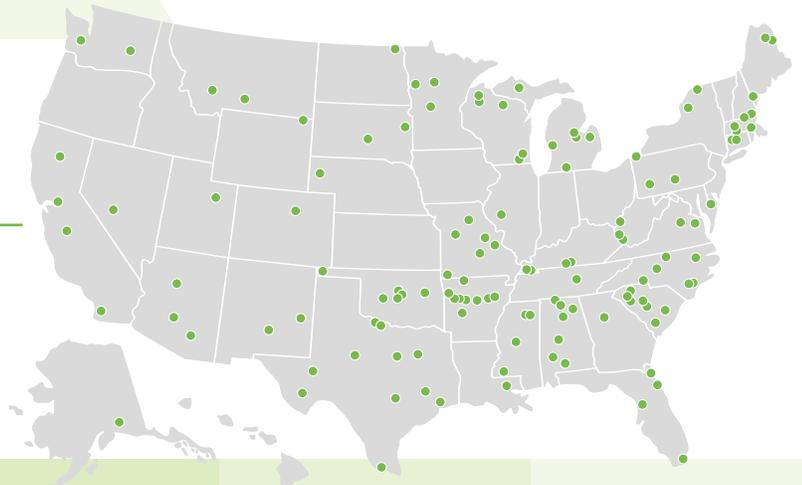


The RTF put tech education resources into the hands of

**21,196**  
 students in 2021, bringing our  
 total number of students to  
**154,410**

# MAPPING OUR REACH

The locations below represent where we provided technology education resources and assistive technology to rural classrooms and libraries this year.



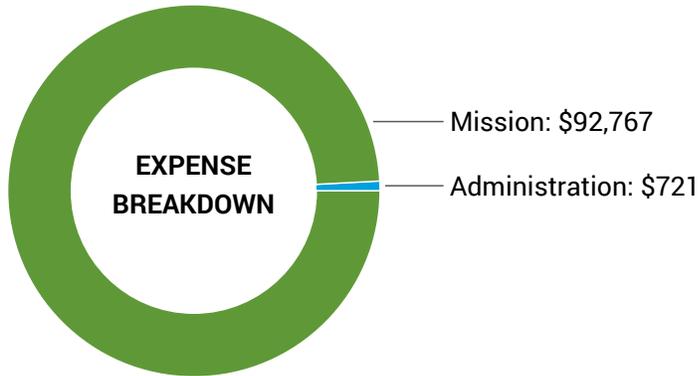
Beatrice	AL	Litchfield	CT	Ishpeming	MI	Brasher Falls	NY	Presho	SD
Evergreen	AL	Laurel	DE	Kingston	MI	Carthage	NY	Sparta	TN
Geraldine	AL	Brooksville	FL	Saint Charles	MI	Bostic	NC	Alvarado	TX
Oneonta	AL	Homestead	FL	Hawley	MN	Lexington	NC	Anahuac	TX
Somerville	AL	Jacksonville	FL	Osakis	MN	Reidsville	NC	Cedar Creek	TX
Trinity	AL	St. Augustine	FL	Nevis	MN	Rocky Point	NC	Grandfalls	TX
Copper Center	AK	McDonough	GA	Centreville	MS	Stokes	NC	Penitas	TX
Cottonwood	AZ	Roberta	GA	Pelahatchie	MS	Willard	NC	Tuscola	TX
Glendale	AZ	Winchester	IL	Pontotoc	MS	Walhalla	ND	Marathon	TX
Oracle	AZ	Mayfield	KY	Mantachie	MS	Boise City	OK	Murchison	TX
Atkins	AR	Phelps	KY	Bland	MO	Edmond	OK	Livingston	TX
Augusta	AR	Sedalia	KY	Cadet	MO	Gracemont	OK	Wichita Falls	TX
Bismark	AR	Thompkinsville	KY	Edgar Springs	MO	Wagoner	OK	Duchesne	UT
Danville	AR	Lena	LA	Huntsville	MO	Yukon	OK	Mineral	VA
Mountainburg	AR	Loranger	LA	La Monte	MO	Edinboro	PA	Milford	VA
Omaha	AR	Ashland	ME	Pineville	MO	Ruffs Dale	PA	Lind	WA
Rose Bud	AR	Berwick	ME	Columbus	MT	Shade Gap	PA	McCleary	WA
Shingletown	CA	Mars Hill	ME	Three Forks	MT	Gilbert	SC	Hamlin	WV
Stockton	CA	Hatfield	MA	Hemingford	NE	Moncks Corner	SC	Wayne	WV
Tranquility	CA	Mendon	MA	Tonopah	NV	Roebuck	SC	Fontana	WI
Warner Springs	CA	West Warren	MA	South Hampton	NH	Saint George	SC	Hayward	WI
Bennett	CO	Burr Oak	MI	Windham	NH	Ware Shoals	SC	Hulett	WY
		Hemlock	MI	Elida	NM	Waterloo	SC	Rhineland	WI
		Holton	MI	Mescalero	NM	Estelline	SD	Waterford	WI

# RTF FINANCIALS AT A GLANCE

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TOTAL INCOME AND CONTRIBUTIONS:  
\$264,464

TOTAL EXPENSES:  
\$93,488



## SUPPORTING PARTNERS

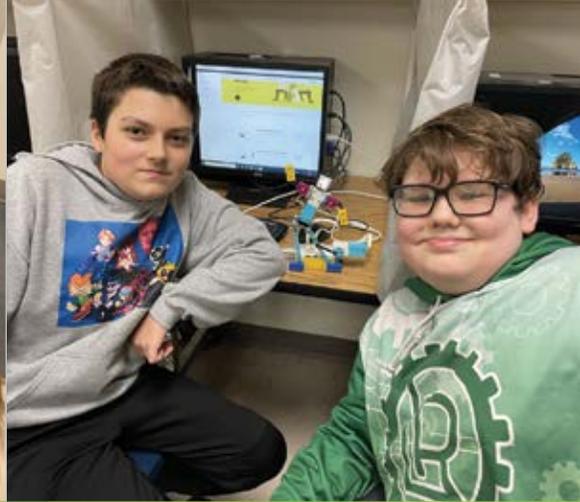
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## COMMUNITY PARTNERS

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# How to Help

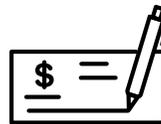
Your donation will go directly to supporting rural and economically disadvantaged students by providing computer science and engineering equipment, curriculum, scholarships, and assistive technology in classrooms and libraries across the country.



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