

June 2026



# REST-KY Research Project Newsletter

*University of Kentucky*

## ☀️ Summer Greetings from REST-KY! ☀️

As we move into summer, we want to thank all of our REST-KY participants for your continued involvement in this important study. We are incredibly grateful for your dedication in keeping up with study activities and completing follow-up data collection. Your consistent participation is essential to the success of REST-KY—it allows us to track changes over time and better understand sleep health patterns in Kentucky communities.

The follow-up data you provide is just as important as the initial data, and we truly appreciate your ongoing commitment to this work.

We hope you're enjoying the warmer weather and finding time to rest and recharge. Thank you for being such an essential part of our research community!

## Our Team

### Co-Directors:

Daniela Moga, MD PhD  
Mairead Moloney, PhD

### Project

### Coordinators:

Jennifer Malan  
Angel Williams  
Alex Gonzalez

### Research

### Assistants:

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### Statistical Support:

Susan Westneat, MA  
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Maliha Mitu

## 📰 Recent Publications 📰

### Your Participation is Making a Difference: REST-KY Research Published in JAMA Network Open & UKNow Feature

We are thrilled to share some exciting news — research from the REST-KY study has been published in JAMA Network Open, one of the most respected medical journals in the country!

The study, "Social Determinants of Sleep Health Inequities Among Rural Appalachian Adults," used data shared by participants like you to take a closer look at how sleep problems affect people in Eastern Kentucky.

What we found was striking: nearly two-thirds of participants showed signs of clinically significant insomnia — a rate far higher than the national average — and over half showed elevated risk for sleep apnea.

The research also revealed that factors like income, stress, living situation, and social support play a

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major role in shaping sleep health in our communities.

These findings matter because they help make the case that rural Appalachian communities deserve more targeted, culturally appropriate resources and interventions to address sleep health — and your participation helped us make that argument with real evidence.

[Click here to read the full article](#)

**Our research has also caught the attention of the University of Kentucky's communications team! UKNow featured the REST-KY study, bringing attention to our work and its importance for rural Appalachian communities**

[Click here to read more](#)

Thank you for being part of this work. None of it would be possible without you.

## ✈️ Team Spotlight: Miami to Kentucky Site Visit





## **Rooted in Place: A Week of Stories, Music, and Connection in Eastern Kentucky**

When two members of our Miami team came to Kentucky this week, they didn't just visit a place — they were welcomed into a living story. Our Kentucky team was eager to share the region with our colleagues, and what unfolded over the course of the week was something none of us will soon forget.

### **Wednesday in Lexington**

Our Wednesday gathering brought us to West Sixth Brewery, where we met over lunch with Brett Ratliff, Arts Organization Director at the Kentucky Arts Council and Co-Founder and Director of Kentucky Old Time Music, Inc., a nonprofit devoted to preserving and sharing traditional Appalachian music in Kentucky. Brett is an Appalachian musician, storyteller, and cultural keeper, and he came ready to share. Through stories of the region, its people, and its artistic traditions, he helped us see Appalachia through new eyes — not as an abstraction, but as a living, breathing community rooted in creativity and resilience. We are deeply grateful for his time and his gift for bringing a place to life through story.

### **Thursday in Whitesburg**

Thursday took us to Whitesburg, where the richness of the day was almost hard to hold. We sat down with Carrie Wells-Carter from the Appalachian Citizens Law Center, who shared the powerful and vital work ACLC does for justice in the coalfields — representing miners and their families navigating black lung disease and mine safety, and standing alongside grassroots groups to protect the land and people from the harm of extractive industries. Carrie also shared her personal experience of the catastrophic 2022 flooding, a story that stayed with all of us. We were also grateful to spend time with Nell Meade-Fields, a founding board member of Cowan Community Action Group and Appalshop board member,

whose long dedication to community speaks for itself.

From there, our group traveled to Hemphill Community Center, where Gwen Johnson welcomed us with warmth and more than a little excitement. A community activist and founder of Blacksheep Brick Oven Bakery and Catering — a nonprofit social enterprise that provides jobs to local residents and those in recovery — Gwen shared the bakery's story, updates on the thriving afterschool program, and — to everyone's delight — delivered a hair-raising ghost tale that had us riveted.

Then came a moment of pure joy: a stop at Candy Nantz-Gibson's farm, where a field full of baby goats reminded us all that sometimes the best things in life are small, curious, and slightly chaotic. Thank you, Candy, for sharing your farm and your animals with us.

The day wrapped at Cowan Community Center, where Valerie Horn — Director of Cowan Community Action Group, Board Chair for the City of Whitesburg Farmers Market and Community Agricultural Nutritional Enterprises (CANE Kitchen) — welcomed us to a beautiful spring recital performed by the Pick and Bow students. The music was stunning, the dinner was wonderful, and the warmth in that room was the kind you carry home with you. Among the performers were some familiar faces from the day — Carrie's daughter Ophelia and Nell's granddaughter Daphney both took the stage, with Carrie herself joining in on old-time fiddle. It was a beautiful reminder that in this region, the people doing the vital multi-faceted work of advocacy, law, and community service are often the same ones keeping music and culture alive for the next generation.

### **An Evening with Zoe Speaks**

To close out the week, we gathered for an evening with Zoe Speaks — an Eastern Kentucky folk band rooted in the music-making and storytelling lineages of their rural origins. Banjo, guitar, fiddle, and beautiful voices filled the room, alongside stories from their families and communities that painted a fuller, truer picture of a region that is so much more than its stereotypes.

### **A Week We Won't Forget**

We leave this week full — of good food, good music, and something harder to name. The people we met gave us their time, their trust, and their stories. In doing so, they helped bridge the miles between Miami and Eastern Kentucky and deepened our connection to the communities and individuals at the heart of our work together.

*To Brett, Carrie, Nell, Gwen, Candy, Valerie, the Pick and Bow students, Zoe Speaks, and everyone else who crossed our path this week: **thank you**. You opened your world to us, and we are better for it.*

To learn more about the wonderful people, places, food and music we enjoyed, click the links below to visit their site:

**Kentucky Traditional Music Project**  
**Appalachian Citizens' Law Center**  
**Hemphill Community Center**  
**Black Sheep Brick Oven Bakery**  
**Cowan Community Center**

## 🐾 "Em-paw-ee" Spotlight 🐾

The Rest KY team is full of devoted pet parents! Our furry friends keep us company, lift our spirits, and remind us to take breaks. Meet this month's featured Empawees:

### Meet Scout

*Chief Cuddle Officer & Outdoor Adventure Coordinator*



Scout is a mini-Australian Labradoodle and Daniela Moga's pandemic puppy, who will be celebrating her 6th birthday this July! This super smart pup is a cuddle enthusiast who thrives on human companionship. Scout loves outdoor adventures—especially hiking and playing in the snow—but draws the line at getting wet.

She's highly food-motivated and would do just about anything for a piece of cheese or meat. Scout is eager to please her people and has cleverly figured out how to use those skills to charm her way into extra treats!

## **Meet Max**

*Stroller Transportation Coordinator & Button Communication Specialist*



Max is a rescued barn kitten from Bourbon County with a larger-than-life personality. During his formative years in Lexington with Mairead Moloney, this tuxedoed gentleman spent his time fetching sparkle balls like a retriever. Since then, Max and his family made the move to Miami. Max has very particular tastes—he only eats seafood-flavored foods and is notably the only cat who doesn't like Churu. His true obsession? His pet stroller! When Max is ready for balcony time overlooking Biscayne Bay, he jumps into his stroller and meows until he's zipped in and escorted to the fresh salt air, where he either falls asleep or chirps at

seagulls. Max is also learning to communicate via buttons and currently uses "pets" and "play" daily. This attention-loving cat has a strict "two person minimum / two person maximum" human policy, but he secretly adores his adopted sisfur Gracie—and occasionally even grooms her.

*Thank you for being part of the REST-KY community. Wishing you a healthy and restful summer!*

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**Beyond** the Script

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