

Table of Contents

In Coal Country, the Mines Shut Down, the Women Went to Work and the World Quietly Changed

By [Campbell Robertson](#)

- Sept. 14, 2019

FLEMING-NEON, Ky. — In the pre-dawn hours when all is dark and quiet, Amanda Lucas leaves her house and begins the long drive to her job at a hospital an hour away.

In years past, it was the men who would empty out of the hollows of Letcher County before sunrise. All day long they would be underground, digging out coal as their fathers and often their grandfathers had done. Ms. Lucas's husband, Denley, had a job with one of the big mining companies, with good benefits and an income approaching six figures when all the overtime was added. She stayed at home to raise their four children.

"We had a good life," she said.

Then everything changed.

It has been a hot and mean summer in Letcher County, with a rash of coal mine bankruptcies and [layoffs even crueler](#) than the ones that came before. From the barstools at the American Legion post to the parking lot of the unemployment office, there was little debate: The coal business around here is going under. The only question was what would keep everyone afloat. [READ MORE](#)

Last updated on September 17, 2019.

[Print](#)

Table of Contents

NEWS

News & publications

The news about recent activities for needed peoples.

[More News](#)

23 Oct 2025

A New Home and New Opportunities for Service: Terri's Journey with AppalReD Legal Aid

When Terri Buskey moved to Kentucky two years ago, she knew she wanted to...

[Continue Reading about A New Home and New Opportunities for Service: Terri's Journey with AppalReD Legal Aid](#)

21 Oct 2025

Why Boo Shea Still Shows Up for Justice: Even in Retirement

This Celebrating Pro Bono Week, we're celebrating Beverly "Boo"...

[Continue Reading about Why Boo Shea Still Shows Up for Justice: Even in Retirement](#)

PDF downloaded from <https://www.ardfky.org/node/314/coal-country-mines-shut-down-women-went-work-and-world-quietly-changed>