

I came here in 1985 with a scholarship to Wesleyan and there met my husband, Chip Keating, who has been a philosophy professor at Wesleyan since 1977. We homeschooled our three kids and I worked part-time for many years. In 2010 I started learning about fracking and in 2014 I got involved in fighting pipelines to save our water, our great biodiversity, and our working families who need better jobs, as well as our planet, the only one we have. I think of myself as an environmental advocate, as I try to give voice to the environment in a time when it has little, and for the people affected by its degradation the most, who are usually poor, as many of us here in Deep Appalachia will tell you.

I'm from here. My mother, Iris Bell, wrote our state and centennial song, "This is My West Virginia," which became the centennial song soon after it was declared by the legislature to be our state song back in 1962. The centennial designation was to celebrate the state's 100th birthday. To my mother, it was a tribute to this land she loved so very much. Every year, when its birthday comes around again, I am sad that I haven't done more to get the song out there. It is my dream to have the song taught to all children in West Virginia Schools by grade 5. My three kids are all musicians, like both my parents were, and they are always up for a spirited conversation, which they take from their father, the philosopher, and their mother, the activist.

Being from Charleston, and having spent two years in Ann Arbor Michigan as a young child, I thought of myself as a city girl. Ann Arbor shaped my views of this state and the world in ways I could never have been shaped had I not moved outside the state. I was sad to leave Ann Arbor, but am now glad I moved back. I have found myself welcomed, loved, and appreciated, despite my quirks. I have made life-long friends, and found some of the most generous and loving people, people of beauty and character, right here in this small town. I am excited about the changes that we are making together as a

community, am excited by the productive energy, and I feel blessed to be a part of it.

My time here hasn't always been perfect, but it has helped me grow in ways I never expected. As you present me with this award today, I want to thank Buckhannon for what you have done for ME. I didn't know it until now, but I am home.