

Brandon is Ashley Dennison's husband and father to their boys: Owen and Will. Born and raised in West Virginia, he is Founder and CEO of Coalfield Development, which incubates social enterprises designed to diversify Appalachia's coal-based economy and cultivate opportunity for people facing barriers to employment. Dennison graduated from Shepherd University with a B.A. in History and a B.S. in Political Science. He holds a Master of Public Affairs degree from Indiana University. In 2017, Brandon was named West Virginian of the Year by WV Living Magazine. He is winner of the JMK Social Innovation Prize, is a DRK Entrepreneur, and is an Ashoka Fellow. In 2019, he was awarded the Heinz Award for Technology, the Economy, and Employment. He recently testified before Congress on how the Coalfield model could be used to combat climate change.

Being born and raised in West Virginia, Brandon never forgot seeing people his own age desperate for paying work. In 2010, Brandon founded Coalfield Development Corporation as a community-based non-profit organization designed to rebuild the Appalachian economy from the ground up. Coalfield Development Corporation offers on-the-job-training, education, and mentoring to people in the southern coalfields. Brandon was quoted in the Bill Moyers "Making Change" series, saying, "Our responsibility is to create opportunity, then to provide encouragement and build the self-confidence necessary for pursuing opportunity." Coalfield Development has created more than 300 new jobs, over 50 new businesses, and more than 1,300 professional certification opportunities for unemployed people, including people of color, people in recovery from Substance Use Disorder, and former coalminers.