



*From the Executive Director*

## Strange Days

**I**t seems ages ago that we last conducted our daily lives in anything like the usual ways.

The West Virginia Humanities Council held its last in-person meeting many weeks back. Staff began teleworking just ahead of the Governor's March 24 stay-at-home order. Since then the Council has handled all its regular business, and a great deal of new business, fully remotely. We have been glad to learn that even under extreme conditions, we can conduct much of our primary institutional business at a distance. At the same time, many aspects of our work have been made profoundly more challenging and difficult.

In an ordinary year this edition of *People & Mountains* would share exciting announcements of in-house programs, partnerships, and grant-related projects. The sheer diversity and richness of the Mountain State's cultural life is, oddly, one of our best-kept secrets, and spring and summer are two of the best seasons in which to enjoy it.

In this, a deeply abnormal year, hundreds of regular events and programs statewide have had to be postponed, converted to virtual delivery, or (in the very worst case) cancelled, as organizations balance their standing missions with the responsibility we all have to support public health. In the current moment, then, our community mandate is clear: The Council has an obligation to assist our partners, grantees, and members in every way possible, as we all adjust and respond to ongoing challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Here, then, is how the Council has been working to fulfill its mission during this public health crisis:

**To date, the West Virginia Humanities Council has disbursed nearly half-a-million dollars in "CARES Act Emergency Relief Grants" to West Virginia cultural institutions of every size.** This emergency funding, provided through the support of the National Endowment for the Humanities, allows West Virginia cultural institutions and organizations to pay staff salaries and to maintain rent, mortgage, and utility payments during a period of low or no revenue caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Nationwide, cultural and arts organizations between February and April experienced job losses at an average rate of 40 percent as a direct result of the pandemic (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics). Thousands of workers in West Virginia's cultural economy have been impacted by work stoppage, furloughs, or loss of income over the past two months. We are deeply privileged to help West Virginia's cultural organizations retain employees and ensure ongoing viability during this time of economic difficulty.

**The Council continues to conduct all regular and new business while considering public health a top priority for its staff, Board, members, and audiences.** Our Board of Directors has been, as always, unfailingly supportive and ready to provide wise counsel, even as we navigate uncharted waters. All committee and Board meetings are being held remotely until further notice. We are continually reviewing our events calendar, opting to postpone annual in-person Council events and programs, or to convert them to virtual delivery, in response to public health conditions and advisories. The Council shares program updates and announcements via press releases and direct emails, as well as on our main website and official calendar and across all social media platforms.

**The Council is working directly with its grantees and partners to problem-solve, as they respond to public health directives and conditions.** We are committed, as ever, to honoring our many partnerships. That commitment means working directly with our grantees, partners, and sister institutions of every size to make sure their programs and projects are impacted as minimally as possible by the pandemic. As our grantees and partners have adjusted their events, programs, and public services in accordance with public health advisories, the Council has worked in every case to help them meet those challenges creatively and successfully, so that our shared work may

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WV Folklife



## The West Virginia Humanities Council

is a nonprofit institution governed by its Board of Directors. The next Board meeting is July 17, 2020, in Fayetteville, and is open to the public.

Billy Joe Peyton, President  
Charleston

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Wheeling

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Megan Tarbett  
Hurricane

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Martinsburg

Bryson VanNostrand  
Buckhannon

**Ever-Evolving e-WV.** Now is a great time to visit the online version of *The West Virginia Encyclopedia*. e-WV recently added new articles on traditional musicians The Morris Brothers, internationally known jazz musician Bob Thompson, artist George Snyder, and a 1914 payroll robbery that resulted in a mammoth manhunt and gun battle in southern West Virginia. Visit [wvencyclopedia.org](http://wvencyclopedia.org) to view articles, exhibits, and interactive maps; or use our free "WV Classroom" resource.

The Council's **Little Lecture** series continues on Sunday, June 21, at 2 p.m. Dr. Billy Joe Peyton will present "East Enders: Architectural Heirlooms in Charleston's Oldest Neighborhood," chronicling the historic character of the East End and the fight to save many historic homes from ruin and demolition in the 1970s. Peyton is an acclaimed historian and scholar who teaches at West Virginia State University. In keeping with physical distancing advisories, Dr. Peyton's lecture will premiere on YouTube, Facebook, and the Council's website, [wvhumanities.org](http://wvhumanities.org), instead of being delivered at the historic MacFarland-Hubbard House in Charleston.



The Council's 2020 Little Lecture series runs May – September. The May video lecture by Nancy Bruns on "The History of Salt in the Kanawha Valley" may be found on our website. "The Council is committed to hosting its five scheduled Little Lectures this year," states Executive Director Eric Waggoner; "It's merely a question of whether we'll get to host our lectures at our historic office, just as we would in a normal season, or continue with offering digital alternatives. Either way, we couldn't be more excited about the speakers participating in the series this year." For the full schedule, please visit [wvhumanities.org](http://wvhumanities.org).

We welcome two new citizen members to the Council's **Program Committee**: Charleston-based photographer and writer Roger May and Danielle Parker, Executive Director of Elkins-based Preservation Alliance of West Virginia. Incumbent Rebekah Karelis was re-elected. Elections are held by public ballot presented in the winter issue of *People & Mountains*. The Program Committee oversees Humanities Council programs and recommends grants for approval by the Board of Directors.

*People & Mountains* is published three times a year by the West Virginia Humanities Council.

*The West Virginia Humanities Council, an independent nonpartisan nonprofit, is the state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities.*

We welcome letters, comments, and financial contributions. Please address correspondence to West Virginia Humanities Council, 1310 Kanawha Blvd E, Charleston WV 25301 or email [wvhuman@wvhumanities.org](mailto:wvhuman@wvhumanities.org).

### West Virginia Humanities Council Staff

Eric Waggoner, Executive Director

Kim Duff, Fiscal Officer

Emily Hilliard, State Folklorist

Mike Keller, Media Editor/e-WV

Victoria Paul, Director of Development

Erin Riebe, Grants Administrator

Tricia Stringer, Operations Manager

Kyle Warmack, Program Officer

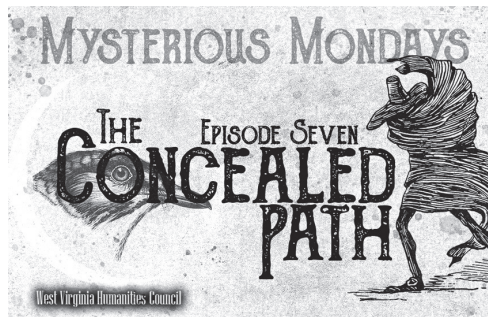
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The Board of Directors welcomes four new members who were elected at the April 17 Board meeting: Leslie Baker of Beckley, George "Gib" Brown of Clarksburg, Tom Sopher of Beckley, and Bryson VanNostrand of Buckhannon. Gayle Manchin of Charleston and Amy Pancake of Romney were elected to second terms. We would like to thank departing Board members Dan Foster of Charleston, Susan Hardesty of Morgantown, Gerald Milnes of Elkins and Lisa Welch of Shepherdstown for their dedication and years of service. New officers were also elected as follows: Billy Joe Peyton as President; Megan Tarbett as Vice President; Elliot Hicks as Treasurer; and Timothy Sweet as Secretary.

## New Digital Humanities Programs

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Council launched two new in-house digital programs that ran from March through June: "Poetry During a Time of Crisis: West Virginia Poets on Community, Resilience, and the Power of the Arts" featured WV poets reading original work in their own homes.

"Mysterious Mondays" featured annotated readings of stories by Harrison County writer Melville Davisson Post (1869-1930), drawn from his book *Uncle Abner: Master of Mysteries*, reissued in 2015 as a collaborative project between the Humanities Council and WVU Press. Both programs received national notice, and are available now on the Council's official YouTube channel.



With support from a Humanities Council grant, FestiVALL Charleston is presenting the 2020 Appalachian Authors' Roundtable on June 21 at 3 p.m. This virtual event aims to showcase Appalachian authors and provide an

opportunity for community members to learn more about the authors, their works, their processes and inspiration. This year's discussion is curated and led by WV Poet Laureate Marc Harshman. Participating poets include Jim Harms, Mary Moore, Elizabeth Savage, and Cameron Barnett. For viewing information visit [festivallcharleston.com](http://festivallcharleston.com).



Photo by Michael Keller

## CARES ACT Emergency Relief Grants

Since May 1, the West Virginia Humanities Council has awarded CARES Act Emergency Relief Grants to dozens of West Virginia humanities organizations including historical and archeological associations, local museums, performance spaces, community annual festivals, preservation societies, heritage centers, research centers, and more. The Council's CARES Act grants, which have been provided to statewide institutions as well as small regional and local organizations, have helped to pay staff salaries,

utility bills, mortgage and rent, and other operational costs for the many West Virginia cultural institutions that have been economically impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Observe West Virginia Day Online.** Please join us for a virtual celebration of the Mountain State's June 20 Birthday. Visit our website during the holiday weekend to engage with our online content, featuring an updated photo gallery spotlighting the historic MacFarland-Hubbard House renovations. Our social media platforms will also provide folklife apprenticeship video demonstrations, a West Virginia "watch this" film list, and online messages and performances from Humanities Council members and staff.

## Fellowships Awarded

Humanities Council Fellowships are awarded annually to college faculty and independent scholars for research and writing in the humanities. The \$3,000 grants are unique in the Mountain State. The 2020 Humanities Fellows and their subjects are:

**Viatcheslav Gratchev**, Huntington, *The Russian Avant-garde in the Memories of the Survivors: The Duvakin Interviews, 1967-74*

**Travis D. Stimeling**, Morgantown, *West Virginia Religious Music Survey*

**Johanna Winant**, Morgantown, *Lyric Logic*

**Michele Stephens**, Morgantown, *Domestic Violence in the Criminal Codes of Yucatán and Campeche, 1872-1915*

**Karen Culcasi**, Morgantown, *Muslim Men and Women's Experiences in West Virginia*

**Michael Kline**, Elkins, *Hippie Culture and Community Life in the Back-to-the-Land Movement: The Resettlement of Abandoned Lands in Rural West Virginia*

**Brian D. Ballentine**, Morgantown, *Data Collection, Curation, and Visualizations of Non-Human Animals*

**Kassandra Colón**, Morgantown, *Rootedness in West Virginia: Young Latinx Narratives of Community, Belonging and Home*

**Blevin Shelnutt**, Athens, *Marketplace Aesthetics: Making American Literature in Nineteenth-Century New York City*



Continued from page 1

proceed in the safest, most responsible way.

**A final thought: One of the most challenging aspects of this moment is the understandable necessity of postponing the Council's many public events—both at our home office, Charleston's historic MacFarland-Hubbard House, and out on the road.** The end goal of the humanities is human connection. Though there are many paths to that connection, I doubt many of us would suggest that the direct energy of a first-person experience can be fully replaced by digital means. So we'll have to wait a bit to see each other face to face again. But that doesn't mean we should wait to connect.

I am fortunate every day to work with the remarkable WVHC staff. They come from diverse backgrounds, and throughout their careers here and elsewhere have developed very particular skills and strengths. At all times they come together to deliver the Council's mission. In the present moment they have continued that work, and taken on many additional responsibilities besides. They have done so with unfailing good humor and, if anything, a reaffirmed spirit of collaboration. They are a constant source of inspiration and renewal of purpose.

Many of you know some of the Council staff; but many may not. For this issue of *People & Mountains*, and in the spirit of staying connected in a time of distancing, I've asked each staff member to speak directly to what it is about the Council's work that keeps them here. These are indescribably talented professionals, whose strengths would surely improve any organization. To all our benefits, they choose to work here. In this issue, and in their own words, they'll tell you why.

Until we can see each other again: Stay safe, stay informed, and stay connected. We're thinking of you all, and very glad you're along on this journey with us.

—Eric Waggoner

## *From the Council Staff*

### Kim Duff, Fiscal Officer

I am a native of West Virginia and have worked for the Council since 2009. I love working in an historic house with one of the best views in Charleston. I enjoy knowing that my job sends funding to all types of West Virginia organizations, from higher education institutions to hometown museums and festivals.

### Emily Hilliard, State Folklorist

What initially drew me to the field of folklore still drives my work today: to honor and celebrate the

creative contributions of everyday people—particularly those who have gone unrecognized by more formal conceptions of “Art” or have been marginalized in some way. I also find the work of a public folklorist to be well-suited to my personality and broad-reaching interests, as it blends direct fieldwork with diverse artists and communities with interpretation, research, and writing. The job requires academic rigor but is ultimately grounded in community and oriented to a broad public audience. I consider one of my primary roles to be an advocate for traditional artists, practitioners, and cultural communities.

At the Council, I have the opportunity to build a state folklife program from the ground up, documenting and engaging in dialogue with its constituents, designing programs, producing media, and creating grant opportunities that directly address their needs. The Council excels at supporting the Folklife Program's need for collaboration and flexibility, and our small but mighty staff means we can be nimble, taking on new projects and partnerships, and orienting fieldwork accordingly. While most state folklife programs are housed at state arts councils, working out of a humanities council allows us to include not merely “artists” and art objects, but practitioners, tradition bearers, and practices in our scope.

I believe that the best thing about West Virginia is its people, and my work enables me to meet so many incredible artists and tradition bearers: quilters, fiddlers, striking teachers, gospel singers, miniature makers, independent pro wrestlers, turkey call makers, and more. I've been welcomed into homes, barns, churches, and workshops, and spent long afternoons around kitchen tables, enjoying meals prepared by home cooks of diverse cultural traditions. The intimate glimpse I've been offered of this state has been entrusted to me with extreme generosity, openness, and trust. Through my work, I aim to return that gift by celebrating the creative contributions of West Virginians and supporting artists, practitioners, and communities in the Mountain State in sustaining their vibrant cultural heritage and living traditions.

### Mike Keller, Media Editor/e-WV

I enjoy working at the Humanities Council because of the wide range of projects we do and the skills required to accomplish them. I've

learned more about West Virginia history in my ten years working on *The West Virginia Encyclopedia* than I ever could have in school, and sharing that with students and teachers is very rewarding. Every time some fact or event is shared online from the *e-WV* website, the reaction it receives reminds me why people love “real history,” the history they remember from their own lifetimes or their parents’ lives.

### **Victoria Paul, Director of Development**

I was born and raised in West Virginia, and I love it here, although it wasn’t until I was an adult that I learned to appreciate the things that I grew up doing, such as gardening, berry picking, camping and versatile cooking with a cast iron skillet. I’ve worked in development for several nonprofits, but the Humanities Council’s work allows me to raise funding to help preserve and share West Virginia’s culture and stories. I especially love planning our Fundraising events, because together we are making West Virginia communities better.

### **Erin Riebe, Grants Administrator**

With a background in American history and material culture, I have a profound interest in the Council’s work. Our direct programs, such as *History Alive!*, historic house tours, and our exceptional folklife program, all contribute to why I work at the Humanities Council. I also believe in what we do, and in how the humanities contribute to our understanding of each other and the world we live in.

My responsibilities give me the opportunity to work with organizations and individuals from a wide variety of disciplines all across the Mountain State. This diversity guarantees that every day is a new adventure. In the past year I have visited with refugees in Berlin through a virtual portal at Moorefield High School, learned about our state’s musical past at an exhibit designed by the West Virginia Music Hall of Fame, and explored stories of recovery at [movableproject.org](http://movableproject.org). In the less than five years I’ve been at the Council, I’ve had the privilege of awarding more than 300 grants statewide. In doing that, I get a front row seat watching ideas grow into incredible humanities programming.

### **Tricia Stringer, Operations Manager**

Originally from the Midwest with a banking background, I am a latecomer to both West Virginia and the humanities. While my work continues in administration and operations, the feel of the work could not be more different. My work assists in helping the Council to support worthy programs and endeavors around the state that affect real people, not just the bottom line. I get to work in a beautiful historic house. I get to learn about the state’s history and hear inventive ideas for its future.

I feel lucky to have found a home in both West Virginia and the Humanities Council. This team believes in contributing, in each of our own ways, to the betterment of everyone involved with the Council. I feel proud to work with these amazingly talented colleagues and a truly dedicated Board of Directors at such a well-respected organization.

### **Kyle Warmack, Program Officer**

Day in, day out, what keeps me going are the stories we choose to tell. My first love is history, but whether it’s literature, cinema, folklore, poetry or song, these stories are an integral part of our inner lives as individuals and as a culture. I get to work with this stuff every day at the Council, and with practitioners in all these fields. It’s kind of like being neighbors with all of West Virginia at once, and life doesn’t get much better than that.

## **Grant Categories**

*The Humanities Council welcomes applications in the following grant categories.*

**Major Grants** support humanities events such as symposiums, conferences, exhibits and lectures. Maximum award: \$20,000. Due: Sept. 1, Feb. 1

**Minigrants** have a budget of \$1,500 or less and support small projects, single events, or planning/consultation. Due: Oct. 1, Feb. 1, April 1, June 1

**Fellowships** of \$3,000 support research and writing projects for humanities faculty and independent scholars. Due: Feb. 1

**Media Grants** support the production of electronic or film materials, or a newspaper series. Maximum award: \$20,000. Due: Sept. 1

**Publication Grants** are available to recognized nonprofit and academic presses, and support **only** the production phase of a completed manuscript. Maximum award: \$20,000. Due: Sept. 1

**Teacher Institute Grants** are available to colleges and universities and the state Department of Education, and support summer seminars for secondary and elementary teachers. Maximum award: \$25,000. Due: Sept. 1

For more information visit [wvhumanities.org](http://wvhumanities.org) for applications and guidelines, email [riebe@wvhumanities.org](mailto:riebe@wvhumanities.org) or call 304-346-8500.



In January 2020, the West Virginia Humanities Council welcomed the inaugural cohort of its **1863 Club**, an official giving society that allows the Council to recognize, honor, and celebrate the support of our top donors. 1863 Club members are loyal supporters of our work, committed ambassadors of the humanities whose contribution allows the Council to provide its many grants, programs, and partnerships everywhere in the state. The 1863 Club will cultivate those who share

the Council's vision of the humanities as vital to sustaining an informed, creative, and well-functioning society. Members share a firm commitment to the Council's mission of bringing the world to West Virginia, and West Virginia to the world.

To mark induction into the 1863 Club, new members are given a set of specially designed color note cards (above) featuring the 1863 Club's dedicated logo, designed by West Virginia artist Danielle Hunt, as well as a mug (right) designed by Gauley River Pottery in Mount Lookout, both crafted exclusively for our Club members. For information about the 1863 Club, contact Victoria Paul at 304-346-8500 or [v.paul@wvhumanities.org](mailto:v.paul@wvhumanities.org).



Photo by Michael Keller

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## West Virginia Folklife Seeks Documents of West Virginians' Creative Responses to COVID-19

The West Virginia Folklife Program, a project of the West Virginia Humanities Council, is collecting documentation of the various ways West Virginians are creatively responding to the COVID-19 crisis and sharing their experiences through music, stories, writing, craft, art, memes, mask-making, and more.

West Virginians can share documentation of those responses by emailing [hilliard@wvhumanities.org](mailto:hilliard@wvhumanities.org) or by leaving a voicemail on the toll-free West Virginia Folklife Hotline at 1-844-618-3747. Contributors must own the rights to their submission and should include proper crediting information. Photos and videos should be submitted in the highest resolution possible. By submitting, you are giving the West Virginia Folklife Program permission to share your name and materials. These documents will become part of the West Virginia Folklife archive, and will be shared in a future online exhibit.

Submissions received to date include recordings and videos of country, folk, and gospel songs, and photos of homemade masks, quilts, poems, doll clothes, paintings, and embroidery. So far, participating counties include Berkeley, Braxton, Brooke, Fayette, Jefferson, Kanawha, Logan, Pocahontas, and Wayne.

The West Virginia Folklife Program is dedicated to the documentation, preservation, presentation, and support of West Virginia's vibrant cultural heritage and living traditions. For more information on the folklife program, visit [wvfolklife.org](http://wvfolklife.org) or contact Emily Hilliard at [hilliard@wvhumanities.org](mailto:hilliard@wvhumanities.org) or 304-346-8500.

The West Virginia Humanities Council, the state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities, considers public health and safety top priorities for its staff, Board, program partners and participants, and grantees, as well as all humanity. You can read the Council's statement on COVID-19 on our website, [wvhumanities.org](http://wvhumanities.org).



A West Virginia Mothman meme

The Council's **McCreight Lecture** in the Humanities, currently scheduled for Thursday, October 22, in Charleston, features Deborah and James Fallows, authors of the best-seller *Our Towns: A 100,000-Mile Journey into the Heart of America*. The 2020 West Virginia Book Festival is rescheduled for 2021. Visit [wvhumanities.org](http://wvhumanities.org) or [wvbookfestival.org](http://wvbookfestival.org) for continued updates and additional details.