

Fiddles and banjos and more

We recently embarked on an exciting new venture here at the Humanities Council, with the hiring of West Virginia's first-ever official state folklorist. Emily Hilliard began work just before Thanksgiving, coming to us from the Folkways Recordings section of the Smithsonian Institution.

Sometimes described as "the art of everyday life," folklore and the closely related term, folklife, cover both our accumulated cultural heritage and current living traditions. That's a big definition, encompassing everything from the foods we eat to the work we do to earn our daily bread. "It's more than fiddles and banjos," as Emily recently put it in response to a reporter's question, though fiddles and banjos — and mandolins and accordions and even steel drums — are an important part of it. And of course there's more to it than music, or food, or work, with Emily also mentioning vernacular (or untaught) architecture, storytelling, and urban and ethnic culture among the concerns of modern folklore.

In her first months on the job, Emily has been working to create a website page and social media outlets, review prior folklife studies and West Virginia's rich history of the practice of folklore, and draft a work plan for the new position. Much of her time in this initial phase has been devoted to identifying and meeting with organizations and individuals engaged in folklife-related activity in the state and region. Early road trips have taken her to Elkins and Glenville, among other places, and recently to Talcott to pay homage to the ghost of John Henry at Big Bend Tunnel.

For the first year, Emily will conduct a statewide folklife fieldwork survey, documenting traditional artists, tradition bearers, and other current cultural heritage activity through recorded interviews, photos, and video. She will write a regular column for *Goldenseal*, West Virginia's quarterly folklife magazine, contribute to the online *West Virginia Encyclopedia*, and publish articles and media pieces in other regional and national publications. Later initiatives may include an apprenticeship program in the traditional arts and crafts, concerts and festivals, oral history workshops, heritage trails, exhibits, podcasts, albums, and more.

The National Endowment for the Arts provides partial funding for a state folklorist in every state, a position associated with the state arts council in most places. Not wanting to step on toes, we made sure to consult our colleagues on the arts side before seeking these funds, and we appreciate the support of the West Virginia Division of Culture and History and the state Arts Commission for our application to the NEA. In only one other state — our neighbor, Virginia — does the state folklorist work from the humanities council, and we are eager to make the experiment work here as well.

Emily Hilliard holds an M.A. in folklore from the University of North Carolina, and before the Smithsonian she worked at the National Council for the Traditional Arts and elsewhere. She's a fiddler and enthusiastic dancer — and in her spare time, a pie blogger. Yes, that's pie, as in what Mama used to put on the supper table, and while we deny hiring Emily just for that, we're pleased to sample any specimens she happens to bring to the office.

You may contact the new state folklorist by writing to hilliard@wvhumanities.org or by calling (304)346-8500.



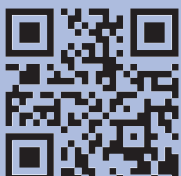
This split-bottomed chair was made by Humanities Council board member Gerry Milnes.

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Grant Categories

The Humanities Council welcomes applications in the following grant categories.

Major Grants (\$20,000 maximum) support major humanities projects, symposiums, conferences, exhibits, lectures.

Due: *Feb. 1, Sept. 1

Minigrants (\$1,500 maximum) support small projects, single events, or planning and consultation.

Due: *Feb. 1, April 1, June 1, Oct. 1

Fellowships (\$2,500) support research and writing projects by humanities faculty and independent scholars.

Due: *Feb. 1

Media Grants (\$20,000 maximum) support projects intended to produce audio or video products, websites, or a newspaper series.

Due: Sept. 1

Publication Grants (\$20,000 maximum) are available to nonprofit presses and academic presses, and support the production phase of a completed manuscript.

Due: Sept. 1

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

* Approaching Deadlines!

Visit www.wvhumanities.org for applications and guidelines, or call (304)346-8500.



Medical History

The Humanities Council recently funded a series of lectures on the history of medicine, inspired by the iconic pylons that have symbolized medical education at West Virginia University since 1956. Created by sculptor Milton Horn, the original pylons (left) are located at the WVU Medical Center in Morgantown. Now the WVU Health Sciences Center in Martinsburg is working in collaboration with the College of Creative Arts, as well as alumni from all WVU health sciences programs, to create life-sized reliefs from the original carved pylon castings for installation at the Martinsburg campus. The Eastern Pylons Project

includes a two-year public lecture series that begins this spring. Each presentation will center around one of the 15 dramatic historical events represented in the pylon carvings, from the time of Hippocrates forward. For more information, email nauk@wvumedicine.org.

Marshall Series Continues

Marshall University's Amicus Curiae lecture series, funded again this year by a Humanities Council grant, features noted scholars who speak on issues of historical and contemporary significance related to the U.S. Constitution. The lectures are free and open to the public. On February 25, Jonathan W. White presents "Abraham Lincoln and Civil Liberties during the Civil War." White is assistant professor of American Studies at Christopher Newport University in Newport News, Virginia. Professor Frederick E. Hoxie, Swanlund Professor of History and Law at the University of Illinois College Of Law in Champaign, Illinois, is tentatively scheduled to lecture on April 7 on "This Indian Country: American Indian Activists and the Place They Made." For more information call (304)696-2801 or visit www.marshall.edu.

Little Lectures

For 15 years, the Humanities Council's Little Lectures have featured experts on a variety of topics at our headquarters in the historic MacFarland-Hubbard House in Charleston. The talks take place on Sunday afternoons at 2:00 p.m., with refreshments following.

Author Glenn Taylor of Morgantown kicks off the

2016 series on March 6. His book *A Hanging at Cinder Bottom* was recently reviewed in the *New York Times Book Review*, and a previous novel was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award. Other Little Lecture dates are April 10, May 15, and June 12, with speakers to be announced.



Michael Keller

Ken Sullivan warms up a Little Lecture audience.



The Pulitzer Prizes

With special funding from the Federation of State Humanities Councils and the Pulitzer Prizes organization, the Humanities Council and West Virginia University are planning a conference honoring author Pearl Buck, our state's best-known Pulitzer winner. The event is set for September 11-13, at the Erickson Alumni Center at WVU, with further details to be announced. Other sponsors include the Pearl S. Buck Birthplace Foundation in Hillsboro and West Virginia Wesleyan College. The \$35,000 award to the Humanities Council commemorates the 100th anniversary of the Pulitzer Prizes, the first of which were awarded in 1916. Buck received her Pulitzer, for *The Good Earth*, in 1932.



Michael Keller

The Humanities Council welcomes the Appalachian Studies Association back to West Virginia. The 39th annual conference takes place at Shepherd University (left) in Shepherdstown, March 18-20. Council funds will support the keynote address, which will be delivered by poet Frank X. Walker, as well as conference sessions on dance traditions and folklife, storytelling events, and a photography exhibit preview and reception. The Appalachian Studies Association has supported writing, research, and teaching related to the Appalachian region since 1977. For information, visit www.appalachianstudies.org or email asa@marshall.edu.

Veterans Videos

With special funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Humanities Council is partnering with West Virginia military veterans to produce a six-part web series titled *West Virginia Standing Together: The Humanities and the Experience of War*. Lost Valley Studios filmmakers Calvin Grimm and Tyler Miller, both veterans, have completed the first two 30-minute episodes focusing on the stories of World War II and Korean War veterans, along with archival film footage and commentary by West Virginia State University history professor Billy Joe Peyton. Upcoming episodes include West Virginia veterans of Vietnam, the Cold War, the First Gulf War, and post-9/11. View online at www.wvhumanities.org.



James Vickers, who served in Korea, was among those interviewed.

Program Committee Election

Please help us choose citizen members for the Humanities Council program committee. Your vote gives the public a voice in our grants and program decisions. Vote for two of the candidates below:

__**Jason Gum**, Gilmer County, is archivist and reference librarian at the Robert F. Kidd Library at Glenville State College. He holds a degree in English from Glenville State and is currently working on a master's degree in Information Science from the University of North Texas. He has a special interest in the local history of north-central West Virginia.

__**Adam Hodges**, Fayette County, is a Fayette County extension agent and chairs the county Farmland Protection Board. He was State Museum director during the \$17.6 million renovation of the State Museum in Charleston and also oversaw satellite museums across the state.

__**Cassandra Pritts**, Mineral County, teaches history at Potomac State College of WVU where she was named outstanding professor of the year for 2015. She is a member of the Mineral County Historical Society and caretaker for its historic Barrick Cemetery, and also serves as secretary for the Westernport Heritage Society of Maryland.

__**Elizabeth Spangler**, Greenbrier County, is a retired software engineer from IBM Corporation. The past chair of the board of directors of Carnegie

Hall in Lewisburg, she is a Read Aloud volunteer, and a board member of the Greenbrier Historical Society and the Greater Greenbrier Valley Community Foundation.

Return your ballot by mail to the West Virginia Humanities Council or email your choices to payne@wvhumanities.org by February 29.

West Virginia Humanities Council
1310 Kanawha Blvd., East
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West Virginia Book Fest Returns



Poet Laureate Marc Harshman (right) converses with author Neil Gaiman at the 2015 Book Festival.

The West Virginia Book Festival returned October 23-24 to appreciative audiences after a two-year absence. Nearly 5,000 book lovers attended the free event at the Charleston Civic Center, enjoying programs by acclaimed authors such as Neil Gaiman, Jodi Picoult, Jeff Shaara, Jacqueline Woodson, and West Virginia's own Homer Hickam. The festival attracted people from at least 95 West Virginia communities and from a dozen other states as well, including Utah, New York, and Oregon.

Once again the event drew energy from the Marketplace that serves as the crossroads for festival goers of all ages. Here more than 50 vendors including authors from West Virginia and the neighboring region, publishers, book sellers, appraisers, and others greeted fans, signed books, and made available favorite titles. The Children's Word Play area offered fun and educational activities for kids. The Humanities Council's McCreight Lecture, by historian Eric Foner, was presented the evening before as a festival

"pre-event." Workshops on memoir writing by West Virginia authors Fran Simone and Cat Pleska and on self-publishing by University of Virginia professor Jane Friedman were filled. And as always the Kanawha County Public Library's huge used book sale drew hundreds of interested bargain book hunters.

The Humanities Council is a founding sponsor of the book festival, along with Kanawha County Public Library, the Library Foundation of Kanawha County, and the *Charleston Gazette-Mail*. The 2015 festival was also supported by the Friends of the Library Foundation of Kanawha County, West Virginia Center for the Book, the West Virginia Library Commission, West Virginia Public Broadcasting, and the Martha Gaines and Russell Wehrle Memorial Foundation.

Organizing the festival is a year-round job. The planning committee is now busy at work on 2016, confirming headline authors, securing sponsors and lining up vendors. Visit wvbookfestival.org and make plans to join us at the 2016 West Virginia Book Festival!

People & Mountains is published three times a year by the West Virginia Humanities Council. We welcome letters, comments, and financial contributions. Address correspondence to 1310 Kanawha Boulevard, E., Charleston, WV 25301 or sonis@wvhumanities.org.