



# WEST VIRGINIA HUMANITIES COUNCIL

## West Virginia Folklife Program Announces 2022-2023 Folklife Apprenticeship Participants

For Immediate Release  
November 20, 2022

Contact: Jennie Williams 304.346.8500  
williams@wvhumanities.org

*Charleston*—The West Virginia Folklife Program, a project of the West Virginia Humanities Council, announces its 2022-2023 cohort of apprenticeship participants in the third round of the West Virginia Folklife Apprenticeship Program. Seven apprenticeship pairs from across the Mountain State will study and practice traditions including soul food cooking, fiddle repair, and mushroom foraging. The Folklife Apprenticeship Program offers \$3,000 to recognize and honor West Virginia traditional artists or tradition bearers working with qualified apprentices on a year-long in-depth apprenticeship in their cultural expression or traditional art form. Participating apprentices are supported with \$500 to pay for starting expenses such as necessary tools and materials. These folklife apprenticeships facilitate the transmission of cultural knowledge, artistic techniques, stories, and traditional practices.

### The 2022-2023 West Virginia Folklife Apprenticeship Program participants:

**Sharon Briggs of Paw Paw in Hampshire County** will lead an apprenticeship in mushroom foraging with **Anthony Murray of Capon Bridge**. Sharon, a full time farmer and mycologist, owns and operates Peasant's Parcel Mushroom Farm and Mycology Lab. She has been foraging and mapping mushroom locations in the Eastern Panhandle and Potomac Highlands for over 20 years. When Anthony moved to the area, Sharon began to teach him how to identify and forage for mushrooms. He has been interested in mushroom hunting ever since. Anthony also helps Sharon on the farm and operates an apiary there.

**Chris Haddox and Mary Linscheid, both of Morgantown in Monongalia County**, will hold an apprenticeship in fiddle repair. A longtime musician, Chris studied luthiery from West Virginia instrument builders including Bob Smakula, John Blisard, and especially Gilbert Stiles, whom he apprenticed through the West Virginia Folk Arts Apprenticeship Program formerly supported by the Augusta Heritage Center. Mary is a multi-instrumentalist, song-writer, poet, and gardener whose art is inspired by Appalachians' connection with their homeland. Mary is excited to learn fiddle repair because the practice empowers her to fix her own fiddles and those of the community, which helps to ensure the continuation of local music-making.

**Joe Herrmann of Paw Paw in Hampshire County** will lead an apprenticeship in **clawhammer banjo** with **Dakota Karper of Capon Bridge**. Herrmann is a founding member of the Critton Hollow String Band and has taught old-time music to many students. Dakota has been playing old-time fiddle for over 20 years and currently tours with the band Hemlock & Hickory. In 2019, she opened a traditional roots music school in Capon Bridge called The Cat and The Fiddle. Joe and Dakota apprenticed together previously in 2004 when Dakota was 11 years old through the Augusta Heritage Center's former West Virginia Folk

Arts Apprenticeship Program, and again in 2020 to study old-time fiddle with the West Virginia Folklife Apprenticeship Program.

**Bil Lepp of South Charleston in Kanawha County** will lead an apprenticeship in Appalachian storytelling with **James Froemel of Madsville in Monongalia County**. Bil has been writing and telling stories on stage for over 30 years. He became a full-time touring professional teller by 2003 after performing at the National Storytelling Festival in Jonesborough, Tennessee in 2000. Bil is a five-time champion, and James a three-time champion, of the West Virginia Liars contest. James is also an accomplished storyteller and actor, having performed at multiple festivals and schools. They have both participated in the West Virginia Storytellers Guild.

**Enrica McMillon of Elkins in Randolph County** will lead an apprenticeship with **Barbara Weaner of Montrose in Tucker County** to study fiber arts. They will specifically study fiber processing, dyeing with natural dyes sourced from locally harvested plants, and spinning fibers using a variety of tools for knitting and weaving. Enrica grew up in Helvetia, during a time when traditional practices of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century were not still commonly taught. Enrica learned spinning, dying, and weaving at a young age from both of her grandmothers and has since utilized this knowledge as a foundation for her artwork. Enrica also researches large antique wheels traditionally used in West Virginia and has created a database of over 6,000. Barbara first learned to spin under Enrica's teaching in 1980. Over the years, Enrica and Barbara have both been active members of the Mountain Weaver's Guild in Elkins.

**Gerry Milnes of Elkins in Randolph County** will be leading an apprenticeship in old-time West Virginia fiddle tunes and techniques with **Annick Odom of Morgantown in Monongalia County**. Gerry is a documentarian, teacher, writer, and award-winning musician. He started documenting traditional musicians and singers in Webster, Braxton, and Nicholas Counties in 1976. For 25 years, Gerry traveled widely as the Augusta Heritage Center's Folk Art Coordinator, presenting old-time musicians at festivals throughout the country and producing traditional West Virginia Music recordings and films of West Virginia folklife. Annick is a Belgian-American musician born and raised in West Virginia. While she grew up playing classical violin, Annick is now a professional performer-composer, songwriter, and multi-instrumentalist with a strong interest in learning about the fiddle traditions of her home state.

**Born in Beckley of Raleigh County where he still resides, Xavier Oglesby** will lead an apprenticeship in soul food cooking with his niece **Brooklynn Oglesby, also of Beckley**. Xavier is a professional caterer and credits his knowledge of recipes and love of cooking to four generations of family members including his mother, father, and grandmothers. In the Black community, food traditions are often celebrated at church dinners and picnics. Xavier and Brooklynn are excited to work together so that this cooking tradition will remain in their family and in their community. In 2018, Xavier participated in the West Virginia Folklife Apprenticeship Program as an apprentice to Doris Fields (aka Lady D) of Beckley to learn and carry on the tradition of blues and Black gospel music.

The West Virginia Folklife Apprenticeship Program is administered by the West Virginia Folklife Program at the West Virginia Humanities Council in Charleston and is supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts. West Virginia Folklife is dedicated to the documentation, preservation, presentation, and support of West Virginia's vibrant cultural heritage and living traditions. For more information on the West Virginia Folklife Program, visit [wvfolklife.org](http://wvfolklife.org) and <http://wvhumanities.org/programs/west-virginia-folklife-program/> or contact Jennie Williams at [williams@wvhumanities.org](mailto:williams@wvhumanities.org) or (304)346-8500.

###

*The West Virginia Humanities Council, an independent nonpartisan nonprofit institution, is the state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities. With the support of the NEH, the State of West Virginia, and contributions from the private sector, the Council's mission is to support a vigorous program in the humanities statewide in West Virginia.*