



The Greatest Stories Never Told

In 2022, the West Virginia Humanities Council awarded 42 grants across the state, serving 374,000 audience members, or one in every five West Virginians. One major grant went to the Berkeley County NAACP and the county board of education in support of “Discovering and Sharing the Greatest Stories Never Told.”

This program brought the interactive production *On Golden Wings* to student and public audiences in Berkeley and Jefferson counties. Based on Louisa Jaggar and Shari Becker’s book *Sprouting Wings*, the play *On Golden Wings* tells the story of James Herman Banning, who in 1932 became the first Black pilot to fly coast to coast across the United States. Nearly a thousand students and members of the general public attended performances at Martinsburg’s Apollo Theatre and at Jefferson High School (above) in Shenandoah Junction. Some audience members were invited to join the actors onstage.

Jaggar and Becker developed a curriculum guide for teachers and students that posited key humanities questions contextualized by *On Golden Wings*: Why are stories important? If Banning’s story, like others, has already been “told” in history books, why is it that most people today do not know about this history-making aviator? What does this suggest about the importance of history education?

Students researched other unsung Black heroes, such as Greenbrier County native and NASA mathematician Katherine Johnson. Some shared the “greatest stories never told” about their own family and community members



who have made a difference locally. The Shepherdstown Public Library hosted a display of final projects, sharing important facts about history that might never have been known in the community if not for these young humanities scholars.

Fay Stump, chairperson of the local NAACP education committee and the project director, reports that 19 teachers participated in the program. The students responded enthusiastically to the play, and to uncovering more stories such as Banning’s. Stump notes that students learned about inspirational figures from history and their own communities, but, just as significantly, they developed skills documenting their research, ensuring its factuality, and presenting it in a thoughtful manner. She also noted that before this grant project only a few of the middle and high schoolers involved might have thought that history or research could be so much fun.

Stump credits the project’s success to a team effort, beginning with Shepherd University’s Julia Sandy, who wrote the grant and served as the humanities scholar; and to Jaggar, who came in for the performances and led an unpredictably lively question-and-answer session afterward.

“I was very proud to be part of this,” Stump says. “We’re very appreciative of everything the Humanities Council does, and especially letting us be part of that work.” 🍌

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The West Virginia Humanities Council

is a nonprofit institution governed by its Board of Directors. The next Board meeting is in Lewisburg July 14, 2023, and is open to the public.

Megan Tarbett, President
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Jane Sargent
Barboursville

Tom Sopher
Beckley

Pam Tarr
Charleston

John Unger
Martinsburg

Bryson VanNostrand
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The Council held its spring 2023 Board meeting April 14 at the First State Capitol Building in Wheeling. The building served as West Virginia's first capitol from 1863 to 1869 and, along with the current capitol in Charleston, is one of only two of our state's six capitols still standing. Board members reviewed Council programs, funding, and staff updates, and voted to fund 12 major grants and eight fellowships for the February grants cycle. The Board also recognized outgoing members Amy Pancake and Billy Joe Peyton for their years of service.



Board members in Wheeling.

Three new members were elected at the Board meeting: Cicero Fain III of Huntington, Michele Moure-Reeves of Mathias, and Pam Tarr of Charleston. Leslie Baker, George "Gib" Brown, Katrena Ramsey, Tom Sopher, and Bryson VanNostrand were elected to second terms. The Board appointed Leslie Baker to serve as Secretary.

The Council welcomes three new citizen members to its Program Committee. Tamara Bailey is an associate professor of history at West Virginia Wesleyan College and coordinates the college's study abroad program. Bill King is chair of the Humanities Division at Davis & Elkins College, where he teaches creative writing and literature. Mark Swiger is program director of Energy Express, a child literacy, nutrition, and national service program of the WVU Extension Service in Wheeling. They were elected by vote through ballots on the Council's website and in the winter issue of *People & Mountains*. The Program Committee recommends funding decisions to the Council Board of Directors. The 22-member committee includes 11 members drawn from the Council Board and 11 citizen members who represent the public.

Michael Keller Retires

Our winter issue of *People & Mountains* welcomed Stan Bumgardner as media editor for *e-WV: The West Virginia Encyclopedia* online. Stan follows in the footsteps of Michael Keller, who retired after 13 years with the Humanities Council. Mike will be missed for his work on *e-WV*, and for the marvelous photos he took for the Council and throughout his career. For 40 years, Mike documented most every aspect of West Virginia's culture and heritage. We wish him the very best!

West Virginia Humanities Council Staff

Eric Waggoner, Executive Director
Stan Bumgardner, *e-WV* Media Editor
Heather Campbell-Shock, Fiscal Officer

Michelle Parsons, Development Director
Erin Riebe, Grants Administrator
Tricia Stringer, Operations Manager

Kyle Warmack, Program Officer
Jennie Williams, State Folklorist
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Fellowships Awarded

Our 2023 Fellowship recipients cover a wide array of topics. 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.

Brooke Durham, *Suspicious Friendships: The 1957 Sensational Trial of Welfare and Development Workers in Revolutionary Algeria*

Enkeshi El-Amin, *Remembering the Bottom Through the Street and Feet of The Neighborhood: How Former Residents of Knoxville's Destroyed Black Neighborhood Remember Their Place*

Rae Garringer, *Country Queers: The Story of a DIY Rural Queer Oral History Project*

Sean Lawrence, *Arcadia Lost: German Money and Ottoman Nature at the End of Empire (1870-1923)*

Austin McCoy, *The Quest for Democracy: Black Power, the New Left, and Progressive Politics in the Post-Industrial Midwest*

Mason Moseley, *We Are the Water: Mobilizing the Masses for Environmental Justice*

Rhonda L. Reymond, *Joseph E. Dodd and the State of West Virginia's Participation in the American Negro Exposition of 1940 in Chicago*

Gordon Simmons, *Public Worker Organizing in West Virginia, 1969-2019*

Devin Smart, *A Refined World: Africa's Energy Transition in the Twentieth Century*

Jennifer Walker, *Hector Berlioz's Requiem*

The next Fellowships deadline is February 1, 2024. Visit wvhumanities.org to apply. Contact Erin Riebe at 304-346-8500, or email riebe@wvhumanities.org.

History Alive! Welcomes Back Karen Vuranch

After stepping away from the *History Alive!* stage for a few years, veteran storyteller, actress, and writer Karen Vuranch of Fayetteville is rejoining our roster. She'll be portraying Pocahontas County native and Pulitzer- and Nobel Prize-winning author Pearl S. Buck, as well as labor leader Mary Harris "Mother" Jones. Karen is a passionate, engaging scholar of West Virginia history and folklife. Her original one-person play *Coal Camp Memories* and her collaborative show *Potluck: Stories and Songs about Women, Wisdom and Food* are popular with audiences.

For more information about *History Alive!* visit wvhumanities.org/programs. To book a performance by *History Alive!* characters, contact Kyle Warmack at 304-346-8500 or warmack@wvhumanities.org.



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 \$2,000 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: \$20,000 Due: Sept. 1

For more information, applications, and guidelines visit wvhumanities.org, email riebe@wvhumanities.org, or call 304-346-8500.



Meet Our 2022-23 West Virginia Folklife Apprenticeship Pairs

Seven apprenticeship pairs from across the Mountain State will study and practice Appalachian traditions including soul food cooking, fiddle repair, and mushroom foraging.

The West Virginia Folklife Apprenticeship Program offers stipends of \$3,000 to recognize and honor West Virginia traditional artists or tradition bearers working with qualified apprentices on a yearlong in-depth apprenticeship in their cultural expression or traditional art form. Apprentices receive \$500 to cover startup costs for tools and materials and to share important cultural knowledge, artistic techniques, stories, and traditional practices. Follow Jennie Williams's blog at wvfolklife.org for regular updates.



Sharon Briggs (left) is leading **Anthony Murray** (right), both of Hampshire County, in a mushroom foraging apprenticeship. Sharon, a full-time farmer and mycologist, owns and operates Peasant's Parcel Mushroom Farm and Mycology Lab in Capon Bridge. She's been foraging and mapping mushroom locations for over 20 years. When Anthony moved to the area, Sharon began teaching him how to identify and forage for mushrooms. He's been interested in the process ever since. Anthony also helps Sharon on the farm and operates an apiary there.

Chris Haddox (right) is leading **Mary Linscheid** (left), both of Monongalia County, in fiddle repair. A longtime musician, Chris studied luthiery from West Virginia instrument builders Bob Smakula and Gilbert Stiles through the Augusta Heritage Center's former apprenticeship program. Mary is a multi-instrumentalist, songwriter, poet, and gardener whose art is inspired by the connections people in Appalachia have with the land.



Joe Herrmann (right) is leading **Dakota Karper** (left), both of Hampshire County, in a clawhammer banjo apprenticeship. Joe is a founding member of the Critton Hollow String Band and has taught old-time music for more than four decades. Dakota has been playing the fiddle for over 20 years and currently tours with the band Hemlock & Hickory. In 2019, she opened The Cat and The Fiddle traditional roots music school in Capon Bridge. Dakota apprenticed with Joe on old-time fiddle in 2004 when she was 11 years old through Augusta's apprenticeship program, and in 2020 through our folklife apprenticeship program.



Bil Lepp (right) of South Charleston (Kanawha County) is leading an Appalachian storytelling apprenticeship with **James Froemel** (left) of Madsville (Monongalia County). Bil's been writing and telling stories on stage for over 30 years and touring professionally since 2003. James is also an accomplished storyteller and actor, having performed at many state festivals and schools. Between the two of them, Bil and James have won the Vandalia Gathering's Liars Contest eight times. Both have participated in the West Virginia Storytellers Guild.

Enrica McMillon (right) of Elkins (Randolph County) is leading **Barbara Weaner** (left) of Tucker County in the study of fiber arts, including fiber processing, dyeing using locally harvested plants, and spinning fibers with various knitting and weaving tools. Growing up in Helvetia, Enrica learned these techniques from her grandmothers. She also has created a database of more than 6,000 individual large antique wheels traditionally used in West Virginia. Enrica first taught Barbara how to spin in 1980. Over the years, the two have been active in the Mountain Weavers Guild in Elkins.



Gerry Milnes (left) of Elkins (Randolph County) is leading **Annick Odom** (right) of Morgantown (Monongalia County) in old-time fiddle tunes and techniques. Gerry, an award-winning musician, began documenting West Virginia folkways in 1976. For 25 years he was the Augusta Heritage Center's Folk Art Coordinator, presenting old-time musicians at national festivals and producing recordings and films about traditional music and folklife. Annick is a Belgian-American musician born and raised in West Virginia. She grew up playing classical violin and is now a professional performer-composer, songwriter, and multi-instrumentalist who is learning her home state's fiddle traditions.

Xavier Oglesby (left) is leading his niece **Brooklynn Oglesby** (right), both of Raleigh County, in a soul food cooking apprenticeship. Xavier credits his knowledge and love of cooking to four generations of family members. In the Black community, food traditions are often celebrated at church dinners and picnics. Xavier and Brooklynn are excited to continue this tradition in their family and community. In 2018, Xavier participated in the folklife apprenticeship program as an apprentice to Doris Fields (a.k.a. Lady D) to carry on the traditions of blues and Black gospel music.





Erin Riebe

Welcome Michelle Parsons

We are happy to welcome new Development Director Michelle Parsons to the Humanities Council. A Charleston native, Michelle comes to us most recently from the state Department of Agriculture's

Business Development Division. She has extensive development, outreach, and leadership experience

with The Salvation Army Boys & Girls Club and the Girl Scouts of Black Diamond Council.

Michelle is enthusiastic about her new role at the Council, "I love traveling around the state, even in my free time. I really look forward to fundraising for all the Council's great programs and meeting our donors." Her background includes grant proposals and management, interaction with federal and state agencies, project design and management, and resource development initiatives—an excellent fit, in other words.

We wish the best of luck to Victoria Paul, our former development director, who moved to the Thomas Health Foundation in February.

Donations November 1, 2022 – March 31, 2023

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Let's work together to bring the world to West Virginia and West Virginia to the world. Our supporters continue to help the Council award numerous grants and fellowships statewide, and provide expanded educational programs, exhibits, and presentations, virtually and in person, in communities across the state. The Council invites its members to consider joining the 1863 Club—a community-building initiative through which the Council recognizes the support of donors who give at the Benefactor level or above. As ambassadors for excellent humanities



programming around West Virginia, our 1863 Club members enjoy first options for state tax credits through the Neighborhood Investment Program,

access to special events, direct input on Council programming suggestions, regular updates from the Executive Director, and other benefits. Participation in the 1863 Club may be anonymous at the member's request. For more information

on the 1863 Club, including a list of all member benefits, contact Development Director Michelle Parsons at parsons@wvhumanities.org or by phone at 304-346-8500.

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The West Virginia Humanities Council gratefully acknowledges support from the National Endowment for the Humanities; the West Virginia Department of Arts, Culture & History; and foundations, corporations, and individuals throughout the Mountain State and beyond.

West Virginia Day Open House

Please join us at the MacFarland-Hubbard House in Charleston at 1310 Kanawha Boulevard East on Tuesday, June 20, from 2 to 4 p.m., to celebrate West Virginia's 160th birthday—and the West Virginia Humanities Council's 49th! This year's guest speaker is Emily Hilliard, who previously served as the Council's state folklorist. Now program director of Folk and Traditional Arts with the Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation, Emily will discuss her book *Making Our Future: Visionary Folklore and Everyday Culture in Appalachia*.



Come enjoy some light refreshments, visit our historic property, and meet the Council team!



Our final **Little Lecture** in the 2023 series takes place June 25 at 2 p.m. at the MacFarland-Hubbard House. Historian Steven Cody Straley will discuss his new book from Charleston's 35th Star Publishing titled *A Constant Reminder to All: Stonewall Jackson, the Lost Cause, and the Making of a West Virginia Idol*. The book examines how West Virginians' attitudes toward the Confederate general have evolved since his death 160 years ago.

Originally scheduled for the Kanawha County Public Library on June 24, this event will instead be held on June 25 at Council headquarters. —ed.

— Save the Dates —

Mark your calendars for this year's **McCreight Lecture in the Humanities** at the University of Charleston on Thursday, October 19, at 7:30 p.m. Cory Doctorow, the featured speaker, is a noted Canadian-British science fiction author, activist, and journalist. Doctorow's work focuses on the complex interactions between technology and society. He will discuss the impact of new artificial intelligence and digital surveillance on classrooms, creative economies, and private and public life.

The **West Virginia Book Festival**, of which the Humanities Council is a charter sponsor, is a one-day event this year: October 21, Saturday, from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., at the Charleston Coliseum & Convention Center. Watch our website and look for details in the fall issue of *People & Mountains*.

People & Mountains is published three times a year by the West Virginia Humanities Council. The Council, an independent nonpartisan nonprofit institution, 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.