

West Virginia Folklife Program 2020-2021 Master Artists & Apprentices

Text and photo by Emily Hilliard

The West Virginia Folklife Program, a project of the West Virginia Humanities Council, has announced its 2020-2021 class of master artist and apprentice pairs in the West Virginia Folklife Apprenticeship Program. In the program's second year, seven apprentice pairs from across the Mountain State will study traditions including old-time banjo of central West Virginia, seed saving, and midwifery. The Apprenticeship Program offers up to a \$3,000 stipend to West Virginia master traditional artists or tradition bearers working with qualified apprentices on a year-long in-depth apprenticeship in their cultural expression or traditional art form. These apprenticeships aim to transmit techniques and artistry of the forms, as well as their histories and traditions.

Ed Daniels of Mill Creek is leading an apprenticeship in **agroforestry/forest farming** with **Clara Haizlett** of Wellsburg. A ginseng digger and cultivator since he was young, Ed and his wife, Carole, own and operate Shady Grove Farm in Randolph County, where they grow ginseng, goldenseal, ramps, cohosh, and industrial hemp, among other plants. Clara, who was an intern in The Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage's "American Ginseng: Local Knowledge, Global Roots" project, plans to start a forest farm on her family's land in Brooke County.

Kathy Evans of Bruceton Mills is teaching "Sheep to Shawl: The Art of Raising Sheep and Creating Fiber Arts" with apprentice **Margaret Bruning** of Elkins. Kathy is a fifth-generation farmer and owner of Evans Knob Farm in Preston County, where she cultivates Certified Naturally Grown vegetables and raises sheep and poultry. She teaches and exhibits her fiber arts in West Virginia and across the country and has been featured in

Modern Farmer and *Morgantown Magazine*. Margaret grew up on a goat farm in upstate New York and has been a lifelong fiber artist. She and her husband, David, raise sheep at their homestead in Randolph County.

Joe Herrman of Hampshire County is leading an apprenticeship in **old-time fiddle** with **Dakota Karper** of Capon Bridge. Joe is a founding member of the Critton Hollow String Band and has taught old-time fiddle to many private students and at the Augusta Heritage Center. Dakota, a Hampshire County native, has been playing old-time fiddle for 20 years and runs The Cat and the Fiddle Music School. Joe and Dakota apprenticed together previously in 2004 (when Dakota was 11) through Augusta Heritage Center's former Apprenticeship Program.

Leenie Hobbie of Rio is teaching an apprenticeship in **traditional Appalachian herbalism** with **Jon Falcone** of Lost River (Hardy County). Leenie has been a family herbalist for over 30 years, originally learning the tradition from her grandmother, who used both garden-grown and wild-harvested plants at her home in the mountains of southwestern Virginia. She's studied with acclaimed herbalists across the country and taught the tradition within her Hampshire County community. Jon is a novice herbalist who hopes to apply his skills to his future homestead in West Virginia.

Kim Johnson of Dunbar (Kanawha County) is leading an apprenticeship in **old-time banjo of Central West Virginia** with **Cody Jordan** of Charleston. Kim began playing with fiddler Wilson Douglas in 1979 and has played with and learned from many acclaimed West Virginia old-time musicians, including Vandalia Award recipients Frank George and Lester McCumbers. She's taught locally and



Ed and Carole Daniels of Shady Grove Farm in Randolph County. Ed will be leading an apprenticeship in agroforestry/forest farming with Wellsburg's Clara Haizlett.

nationally and at Augusta Heritage Center, Allegheny Echoes, The Festival of American Fiddle Tunes, and the Berkeley Old-time Music Convention. Cody, who plays guitar in the Modock Rounders with Kim, tours across the state and region and is looking forward to expanding his knowledge of Central West Virginia old-time banjo traditions.

Angelita Nixon of Scott Depot (Putnam County) is teaching an apprenticeship in **home-birth midwifery** with **Christine Weirick** of Fayetteville. Angelita, who's been a certified nurse-midwife since 2003, has been a part of over 400 deliveries and taught multiple students the trade. Christine is a doula and an apprentice student midwife working towards her certification. Through their apprenticeship, Angelita and Christine are excited to explore the creative expression and storytelling aspects of community-based midwifery.

Mehmet Oztan of Reedsville is leading an apprenticeship in **seed saving and**

related storytelling with **Lafayette Dexter** of Fayetteville. Mehmet is the founder of the Morgantown Seed Preservation Library and owner of the Preston County-based heirloom seed company Two Seeds in a Pod, which focuses on preserving Turkish, West Virginian, and Appalachian heirloom seeds. He's spoken about his work at local and national seed swaps. Lafayette facilitates a community garden project at New Roots Community Farm in Fayette County and eventually plans to include seed saving in his market garden educational programming.

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