

NEWS

APPALACHIAN CENTER
BEREA COLLEGE



LETTER

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Looking Forward

April 17-22: Spring Dulcimer Week, Augusta Heritage Center, Davis & Elkins College. Heidi Cerrigione, Patty Looman and Mark Wade will offer instruction (beginning, intermediate, intermediate/advanced) in the hammered dulcimer; Bob Webb, Heidi Muller and Larry Conger (novice/beginning, advanced beginning, intermediate/advanced) will teach mountain dulcimer. (Instruments will be available for loan or rental.) You can also receive tutelage on the autoharp from John Cerrigione and Karen Muller. Every afternoon, participants can enjoy performances by guest artists and resident instructors, and on April 21 there'll be a big evening concert. For full information, write the Augusta Heritage Center, 100 Campus Drive, Elkins, W.Va. 26241, or www.augustaheritage.com; phone 304/637-1209.

April 22-24: Second annual Smoky Mountain Banjo Academy, Wa-Floy Retreat, near Gatlinburg, Tenn., directed by Jack Hatfield; information from Hatfield Productions, 800/426-8744.

April 28-May 1: 18th annual MerleFest, Wilkes Community College, Wilkesboro, N.C. An acoustic jamboree featuring the Doc Watson guitar championship and the Merle Watson bluegrass banjo contest, along with numerous other events, in which everybody seems to be at least a superstar; the list of performers includes Bela Fleck, Loretta Lynn, Earl Scruggs and an array of other notables. For details, phone 800/343-7857; www.merlefest.org.

May 4-7: 15th annual Boxcar Pinion Memorial Bluegrass Festival, Raccoon Mountain Campground (just off I-24), Chattanooga, Tenn. Opening on Wednesday evening with a jamming-under-the-tent session with the James King Band, the festival will move on for the rest of the week with J. D. Crowe, Ronnie Reno, the Nashville Bluegrass Band, the Lonesome River Band and other worthies. You can get full details from Cindy Pinion at 706/820-2228.

May 6-8: 36th annual Appalachian Festival, Coney Island, Cincinnati, sponsored by the Appalachian Community Development Association. There's a small admission fee, \$7 (\$3 for seniors, \$1 for kids). Along with music, dancing, storytelling and crafts, you'll find a "living history" village. The ACDA's mailing address is P.O. Box 996, Cincinnati, Ohio 45201; phone 513/251-3378. Web address: www.appalachianfestival.org.

May 21-22: Spring fair, Kentucky Guild of Artists and Craftsmen. After more than three decades at Indian Fort Theater near Berea, the fair is now moving permanently,

spring and fall, into town, to Memorial Park on West Jefferson St. Some 120 guild members will display their work, which will of course be available for purchase. A highlight again this year will be the Japanese pavilion, featuring several artists from Japan. You can get more information from the guild office: 859/986-3192. The guild also invites anybody looking for information about exhibitions, workshops, or art and craft learning opportunities in Kentucky or the Southeast to tap into the Art & Craft Insight Network: www.kyguild.org/insight.php.

May 27-29: Old-Time Fiddlers and Bluegrass Festival, Fiddler's Grove Campground, Union Grove, N.C. Held every year during Memorial Day weekend, the festival, which dates back to the 1920s, is the oldest event of the kind in North America. It's also a colossal affair, bringing together some 80 old-time and bluegrass bands; this year's special guest will be instrumentalist/folklorist David Holt of PBS fame. There'll be the usual competitions, involving more than 50 old-time bands, and in the grand finale, artists will vie for the title "Fiddler of the Festival." If you show up a day early, you'll find jam sessions already going on. Information: 704/545-3437; Website: www.fiddlersgrove.com; fiddlersgrove2@aol.com.

June 2-4: Appalshop's Seedtime on the Cumberland Festival of Mountain Arts, Whitesburg, Ky., featuring a variety of performing artists. The festival opens with a concert on Friday evening, to be followed by a full day of activities on Saturday. Find out more from Appalshop, 306 Madison St., Whitesburg, Ky. 41858; phone, 606/633-0108.

June 5-11: Blue Ridge Old-Time Music Week, Mars Hill College, Mars Hill, N.C. In "an atmosphere of friendship and encouragement" you can spend a week in banjo, dulcimer or other sessions, guided by an array of mentors that includes Laura Boosinger, Kirk Sutphin and Travis Stuart, different levels of banjo; Eliot Wadopian, bass; Mac and

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F Is for Failing Health

Forget coal mining. Congressman Hal Rogers, Appalachian Kentucky's most potent politician, made quite a stir recently when he declared in a public meeting that the most hazardous job in the area has become that of driving a UPS truck. "Brown," as the company likes to be known these days, delivers drugs from on-line, unlicensed prescribers to e-mail customers in the area, and sometimes eager users

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see to it that the cargo doesn't get to the destinations on the package labels.

"If a driver goes up one of these hollows and comes up on six or eight people who know he has drugs on there," said one sheriff, "they may decide to take them." In the old days, the drivers would probably have had somebody riding shotgun.

Paying careful attention, FedEx executives decided that Rogers's statement applied to their company too and moved quickly to suspend deliveries in the area except to central points. UPS presumably will follow suit.

The congressman has a reputation for bringing home the pork for his district, but he certainly can't be accused of ignoring big problems either. In response to the horrific current epidemic of drug abuse in the mountains, he spearheaded the creation of a drug task force called Operation UNITE (Unlawful Narcotics Investigation, Treatment and Education), which is pushing legislation to regulate online sales of prescription drugs.

Football, Too?

Keeping busy on many fronts of the problem, UNITE worked with local police to identify 22 dealers in one small county (Martin), one of them being a former magistrate. In another county (Letcher), the task force encountered a familiar old problem. Having agreed to provide money for drug counselors in 44 school districts, UNITE refused to

go along with school superintendent Anna Laura Craft's choice of the high school's new football coach for the job. The coach is a fine fellow, it appears, but has no training in the drug-counseling field. Football had nothing to do with it, said Craft, though the coach was coaxed to Letcher County to create a strong program for the new county central high school and the UNITE money would be welcome. But never mind, said Craft—the school system will pay the coach whatever it wants to, out of its general fund.

Just to round things out, while this discussion was taking place a Letcher County school board member resigned after a grand jury indicted her on sex and drug charges involving a 15-year-old student.

On health in general, central Appalachia received low marks from speakers at a recent conference. "Open up the obituaries," said Bruce Behringer, assistant vice president for rural health at the East Tennessee State University College of Medicine, "and you'll be surprised at how many people die before they reach 65."

The culprit? The same as before: poverty, said Wayne Myers, a health-care consultant, "is the defining characteristic of central Appalachia" and is at the root of the health-care problem. But the news media could help, said Al Cross, director of the new multistate Institute for Rural Journalism. Judy Owens, director of the University of Kentucky's Center for Rural Health, agreed, saying that "it's imperative in this age that someone provide a voice for people living in these rural communities. Reporters really should be that voice."

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Jenny Traynham, country harmony singing; Betty Smith, dulcimer; and Sheila Kay Adams, "song-catching and story-weaving." More information from www.mhc.edu/oldtimemusic or at 828/689-1646.

June 5-25: Summer session, New Opportunity School for Women, Berea, Ky. Successful applicants (up to 14 per session) to this popular program for low-income women 30-55 spend three weeks learning about jobs and how to get them, and also about themselves and what they can do. The school offers career counseling throughout the year and also puts on a number of workshops that are open to anybody; the school has now produced 455 graduates. There's no tuition fee, and room and meals are provided as well. You may apply if you're a high school graduate or have a GED certificate or are actively working on a GED. *The deadline for applications is April 15.* For full information, contact Kim Short, executive director of the school, at 204 Chestnut Street, Berea, Ky. 40403, or phone 859/985-7200; www.nosw.org.

June 12-18: 28th Appalachian Family Folk Week at the Hindman Settlement School. As always, this year's session will be a total immersion in traditional music, dance and other aspects of Appalachian culture, and you can come by yourself or bring the whole family. Jean Ritchie, Lee Sexton, Ron Pen, Ray Slone, Rich Kirby, Don Pedi, Bruce Greene, Tommy Bledsoe and Angelyn DeBord will be among those providing entertainment; the chairmaker Terry Ratliff will return, and you can also watch basket maker Darvin Messer at work; also, the kids won't want to miss Randy Wilson, the "pied piper of children." For full

details, write the school at P.O. Box 844, Hindman, Ky. 41822, or call 606/785-5475; e-mail: jss@tgtel.com; hindmansettlement.org.

June 19-24: Sixth annual Mountain Dulcimer Week, Western Carolina University, Cullowhee, N.C. This show continues to get great reviews from participants; speaking of his experience last year, one said, "If you can go to only one mountain dulcimer workshop, this is the one." Those who come to learn have access to more than 25 course instructors, who deal with pretty much everything having to do with dulcimers—that takes care of mornings; the afternoons are devoted to workshops. This year there's a new dulcimer-building course conducted by John Huron. Contact the university at 828/227-7397; e-mail: hensley@wcu.edu; Web page: cess.wcu.edu/dulcimer.

June 20-July 29: 24th annual Hindman Settlement School summer tutorial program "for children with learning differences/dyslexia." The program accepts 50-55 students, now including a limited number coming from outside the school's service area; scholarship assistance is available. See Hindman contact information for June 12-18.

July 3-30: Swannanoa Gathering, a series of week-long workshops held on the campus of Warren Wilson College, outside Asheville, N.C. Guided by a gigantic and varied staff, this jamboree begins with dulcimer and sing and swing weeks (July 3-9), proceeds through Celtic music (July 10-16), old-time music and dance (July 17-23) and fiddle and contemporary folk (July 24-30); the fiddling is new this year. Also, Eric Garrison will conduct a performance lab

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FESTIVAL TIME

Spring and summer are coming, and so are gatherings, music weeks, workshops and plain old festivals—as all the events listed in this issue make clear.

Shown here are the members of the James King band on stage at last year's Boxcar Pinion Memorial Bluegrass Festival in Chattanooga. This May they'll be joining in again.



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(July 17-23). “The worst part about the gathering,” a student once complained, “is that there are only 24 hours in the day and three of them are wasted sleeping”; gathering@warren-wilson.edu; www.swangathering.org.

July 8-10: 28th annual Uncle Dave Macon Days Old-Time Music and Dance Festival, Cannonsburgh Pioneer Village, Murfreesboro, Tenn. Picked by tourism specialists as one of the best 100 events in North America (just two per state), while maintaining its status as one of the top 20 July events in the Southeast, this family-oriented jamboree—named for the first person to be featured on the Grand Ole Opry as an individual performer—is expected to draw more than 45,000 people and offers \$5,400 in prizes; it's the home of three national championships—old-time banjo, old-time buckdancing and old-time clogging. There'll also be a blues harmonica competition honoring DeFord Bailey, the first African-American to appear on the Grand Ole Opry. There's lots more, too—as the sponsors say, something for everybody in the family, from grandparents to the stroller set. If you want overall details, get in touch with Wendy S. Bryant, P.O. Box 5016, Murfreesboro, Tenn. 37133; phone, 615/893-6565 or 800/716-7560; www.uncledavemacondays.com.

July 10-August 14: Music, crafts, dance and folklore, spread out over five theme weeks—guitar and Cajun/Creole; blues and swing; Irish, Bluegrass; dance, old-time and vocal; Augusta Heritage Center, Davis & Elkins College. Aside from the “theme weeks” workshops, you can take individual classes, including such new offerings as flintknapping, Celtic enameled jewelry and batik. There'll also be, of course, such standards as blacksmithing, basketry and quilting. You may pick your week and pick your pursuit. The summer will be capped by the three-day Augusta Festival (August 12-14), with the big craft fair on Saturday the 13th as the centerpiece. For full details, consult the contact information for April 17-22.

July 21-24: Summer edition of the 58th annual fairs, Southern Highland Craft Guild, Asheville Civic Center, Asheville, N.C. (The fall edition will come out October 20-23.) These

exhibitions present the best of the work of the organization's 900 members. You can find out more by calling 828/298-7928; www.southernhighlandguild.org.

July 31-August 5: 28th annual Appalachian Writers' Workshop, Hindman Settlement School. The list of mentors for this summer's renewal of the yearly jamboree includes the customary mixture of clever young stars and crafty veteran luminaries, including Meredith Sue Willis, Lee Maynard, Silas House and George Ella Lyon. To find out more, check the contact information for Hindman, June 12-18.

EYE on Publications

My Old True Love, by Sheila Kay Adams (Algonquin Books). You will note, elsewhere in this issue of the *Appalachian Center Newsletter*, that in June Sheila Kay Adams will take part in the Mars Hill College Old-Time Music Week. And what will this well-known performer of Appalachian ballads be doing in Mars Hill? “Song-catching and story-weaving,” the sponsors of the program tell us.

No surprise there, of course. But that phrase also happens to constitute a pretty good description of what Ms. Adams has managed to do in *My Old True Love*, a historical novel in which singing is the vital activity that weaves families and generations together and in which ballads appear throughout, serving as themes and providing counterpoint to the action, and turning the book itself into one long ballad with all the classic lyricism and harshness found in the music.

The novel is set in the North Carolina mountains in the years leading up to the central trauma, the Civil War, and then works itself out in the times that followed. It's based, the author informs us, on family history, with the main characters appearing with their real names. Commenting on the book, Lee Smith thanked Sheila Adams for being “willing to share her heritage with us, in song and story.”

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Dictionary of Smoky Mountain English, by Michael B. Montgomery and Joseph S. Hall (University of Tennessee Press). In an article published several years ago, Michael Montgomery attacked the widespread "myth" that people in parts of Appalachia speak Elizabethan English. One of his most persuasive points was that no permanent settlers came from England to America till the reign of James I and that, even then, nobody went straight from the British Isles to Appalachia. What's supposed to have happened in the intervening time to the language immigrants brought with them?

Nevertheless, Montgomery says, the myth of Shakespearean English in the mountains has served various purposes for diverse persons, from tourism promoters to president William G. Frost of Berea College a century ago to political self-promoters like Georgia's Zell Miller today. It has provided a good weapon of defense against charges that mountain speech is simply illiterate and nothing more.

But what, then, is mountain speech? In the new dictionary, Montgomery delivers a substantial (5-lb.) answer to the question, at least for the Smokies. Based in good part on the pioneering field research of Joseph Hall, going back to the 1930s, the book presents a language of "conservatism and persistence of vernacular forms, but great inventiveness as well, a varied picture that contradicts the persistent popular belief that mountain speech has changed little from the colonial era, if not from an earlier or 'Elizabethan' time." There's Montgomery's answer in summary.

The dictionary gives the reader a lengthy discussion of

the grammar and syntax of Smoky Mountain English and then 668 pages of A-Z definitions with dated illustrative examples; the book looks very much like an *OED* for Appalachia—which means that it is a prime work of scholarship.

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In Appalachian Heritage ...

From Editor George Brosi: The next issue of *Appalachian Heritage* is still the Winter 2005 issue we talked about in the last *Newsletter*, but it has changed from our preliminary ideas before Christmas! Chris Offutt will hopefully be our featured author sometime in the future, but not for this issue. Instead it will be Gretchen Moran Laskas, the author of *The Midwife's Tale*, which last year won both the Weatherford Award in fiction and the Appalachian Writers Association's Book of the Year Award for Novels. Meredith Sue Willis contributes the first comprehensive literary evaluation of Laskas's work for this issue. In addition to a story by Laskas, the issue will feature a story by Cathryn Hankla of the Hollins College faculty and the first published story by Floyd D. Davis of Floyd County, Kentucky. Poets include Kathryn Stripling Byer, who was recently named poet laureate of North Carolina, Jeff Daniel Marion, Jeff Mann, Jeannette Cabanis-Brewin, James B. Goode, Julie Dunlap and Richard Hague.

Appalachian Heritage is available (\$6 a copy, \$18 for one year, \$34 for two years, \$50 for three years) from the Appalachian Center, C.P.O. Box 2166, Berea, Ky. 40404.

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