

ARKANSAS FOLK & TRADITIONAL ARTS

**FALL 2023
NEWSLETTER**

Dear Supporters and Fans of Folk Art

Since our founding in 2019, Arkansas Folk and Traditional Arts (AFTA) has grown from a solo project into a team of three dedicated scholars/folklorists, plus some exceptional support from Special Collections at the University of Arkansas Libraries. We've also grown our programming and outreach over the past five years. For our first bi-annual newsletter, we want to introduce you to our team and provide an overview of our programming and mission

Arkansas Folk and Traditional Arts (AFTA) is a statewide public folklore program of the [University of Arkansas Libraries Special Collections Division](#), supported, in part, by grants from the [Arkansas Arts Council](#) and [National Endowment for the Arts](#) and working in partnership with stakeholder organizations and individuals, such as [Arkansas State University](#) and [Mid-America Arts Alliance](#).

AFTA's work continues to evolve and mature through our guiding mission:

AFTA is dedicated to building cross-cultural understanding by documenting, presenting, and sustaining Arkansas' living traditional arts and cultural heritage. AFTA develops and supports projects and programming for and featuring Arkansas citizens from all walks of life, with an emphasis on including underrepresented communities and traditions.



Every February, the Eddie Mae Heron Center hosts a community hog butchering. This yearly event is host to many important traditions aside from the butchering advertised: cooking, sausage preparation, an auction, old-time music, and most importantly community fellowship.

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Our Team

Virginia Siegel directs AFTA and serves as the oral historian for University Libraries, the Special Collections Division. Previously Siegel worked as the Folklife Specialist for the Kentucky Folklife Program. She holds an MA in Folk Studies from Western Kentucky University.

Lauren Adams Willette is the Folk Arts Fieldwork Coordinator for AFTA, a role that focuses on outreach and programming. Willette has a Master of Arts in Heritage Studies from Arkansas State University and works for the University of Arkansas from Jonesboro.

Deena R. Owens is the Folk Arts Assistant for our program--a role which provides digital outreach and general support for statewide programming. Owens holds a Bachelor of Arts in Art History from the University of Arkansas.



Virginia Siegel
Director and Professor of Practice



Lauren Adams Willette
Folk Arts Fieldwork Coordinator



Deena R. Owens
Folk Arts Assistant

MAINSTAY PROGRAMMING

AFTA currently guides three mainstay programs: our Apprenticeship Program, our Community Scholars Training program, and our Arkansas Folklife Web Series.

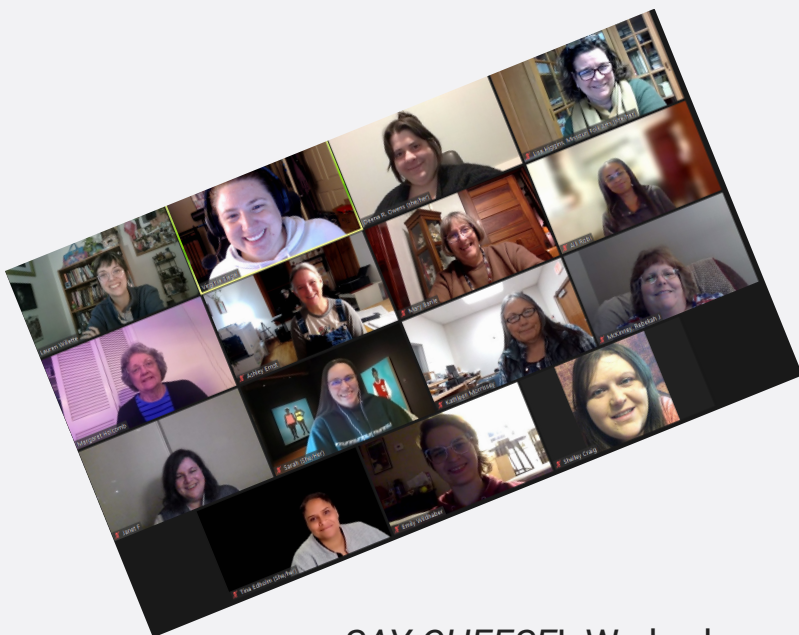
Since 2020, AFTA has offered our **Folk and Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Program**, which funds teams of mentor artists and apprentices who are committed to sustaining their artistic traditions and cultural heritage. Teams are required to develop a work plan for the upcoming project year, meet with each other regularly over the course of the year, and finally, share their experience with their communities at the culmination of the project. Since we began this opportunity for mentor artists and apprentices, AFTA has funded 10 Apprenticeship teams. AFTA has had more interest and applications in our apprenticeship program this year than ever before, and we will fund five apprenticeship teams during the 2023-2024 season.

- ✦ [Maria Christina Moroles](#) will mentor **Artemis Diaz** in the traditional art of curanderismo. Known as a curandera, a traditional healer in Mexican indigenous culture, Moroles provides limpieas (cleansings) and energy healings, along with herbal remedies. She is the matriarchal steward of Santuario Arco Iris (Rainbow Sanctuary), an intentional living community focused on women and children of color in Newton County.
- ✦ [Jerry Fisk](#) will mentor **John Lindsey** in the traditional art of bladesmithing. Fisk has been working as a master bladesmith for over 30 years and has taught classes internationally. He was the 1999 Arkansas Living Treasure recipient.
- ✦ [Clarke Buehling](#) will mentor **Kenneth Tillery** in the traditional art of five-string banjo. Buehling has been a banjo player for over 30 years and specializes in 19th century banjo. He plays with the Ozark Highballers and has recorded with the Skirtlifters and the Old 78s.
- ✦ [Ed Pennebaker](#) will mentor **Amanda Whatley** in the traditional art of blown glass. Ed Pennebaker has been practicing the traditional art of glass blowing for over 30 years. Pennebaker's work is featured in the Clinton Presidential Library among other galleries and locations.
- ✦ [Pat Bergman](#) will return to mentor **Lisa Crews**, a new apprentice, in the art of jewelry metalsmithing. Bergman has been a practicing metalsmith since 1979. Her jewelry uses a mixture of metals such as sterling, brass, and copper which are attached by soldering or riveting.

MAINSTAY PROGRAMMING Community Scholars Training

AFTA began [Community Scholars](#) training three times each year in 2022—offering Spring, Summer, and Fall sessions and have worked in the communities of Pocahontas, Fayetteville, Russellville, Fox, and Batesville. This fall, AFTA worked with the Missouri Folk Arts Program at the University of Missouri to bring a digital training to residents of both states. We had over 15 participants from Fayetteville, AR to Columbia, MO coming together to plan projects, share knowledge, and learn from each other. We hope to continue this practice in the fall of each year, working with a folk arts program from a different state bordering Arkansas.

During our trainings, participants are introduced to documentation techniques, ethics of working with communities, research and archiving methods, presentation of culture, grant writing, and project development. They become part of a statewide community scholar network—promoting, and advocating for traditional culture by sharing resources with fellow alumni of this program. A standard training consists of six biweekly sessions with short homework assignments. The program is flexible in format and content, based on the trainees' priorities and availability.



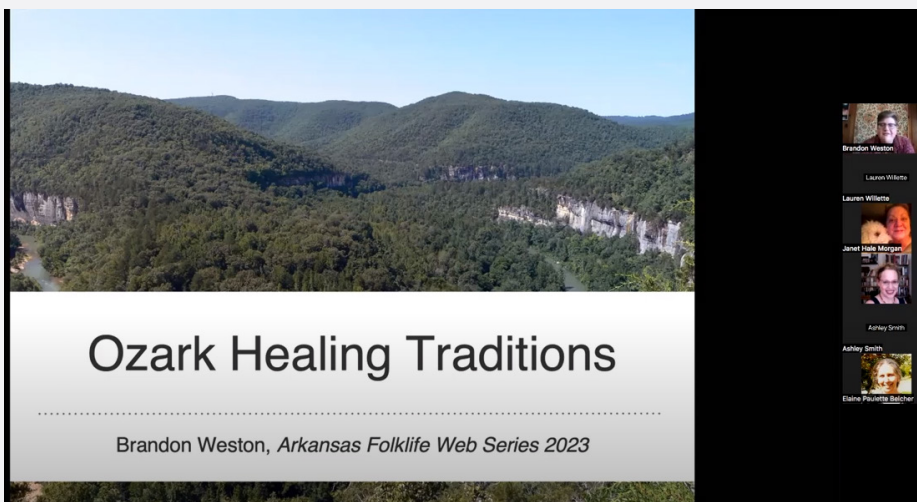
SAY CHEESE! We had a great time in 2023 with our Community Scholars and can't wait for 2024!

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MAINSTAY PROGRAMMING AR Folklife Web Series

The [Arkansas Folklife Web Series](#) is dedicated to bringing Arkansas folklife to a wide audience through using a digital format. Each month, host Lauren Willette speaks with a guest about the ways their work and lives intersect with folklore and local history. In October, Willette spoke with Arkansas author [Janis F. Kearney](#) about her most recent book [Only on Sundays: Mahalia Jackson's Long Journey](#) and her work in community activism and engagement with the [Celebrate! Maya Project](#). Then in November Willette spoke with Arkansas author and food historian [Kat Robinson](#) about Arkansas foods from pies to relish. Robinson has written many books on Arkansas Foodways, her most recent is [The Great Arkansas Pie Book: Recipes for the Natural State's Famous Dish From Our Favorite Restaurants, Bakeries, and Home Cooks](#). Willette has been joined by speakers who have covered topics from astrology to beekeeping to foodways. To watch previous Arkansas Folklife Web Series sessions, you can visit www.youtube.com/@arfolklife.



Brandon Weston gives a presentation on Ozark healing traditions in February 2023.

OUR SUMMER IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

One could have found all three AFTA employees in Washington, D.C. this summer. Owens was [selected](#) out of 125 applicants to serve as an intern at the American Folklife Center housed at the Library of Congress where she created a [resource guide](#) on the traditional art of shape-note singing. Willette and Siegel both acted as presenters for the *The Ozarks: Faces and Facets of a Region* program at the 2023 Smithsonian Folklife Festival. Willette says of this experience: "The Smithsonian Folklife Festival was a once-in-a-lifetime experience like no other. It was powerful to see so many talented, intelligent, and diverse folk and traditional artists come together from the Ozarks on the National Mall. To be a part of this work was beyond meaningful."



Deena R. Owens takes a selfie with the famous Minerva mosaic in the Great Hall on her last day at the Library of Congress in August 2023. Read her internship reflection here: <https://blogs.loc.gov/folklife/2023/10/new-research-guide-shape-note-and-sacred-harp-traditions/>



Lauren Adams Willette presented Nico Albert Williams from Burning Cedar Wellness as she prepares Three Sisters and Venison Stew. All recipes can be found on the archived event webpage:

<https://festival.si.edu/2023/ozarks/recipes>

A circular logo with a black background and a white border. The text inside is in a bold, sans-serif font, with 'ARKANSAS' and 'ARTS' in a larger size than 'FOLK & TRADITIONAL'.

**ARKANSAS
FOLK &
TRADITIONAL
ARTS**

A white, rounded rectangular badge with a subtle geometric pattern. The text is in a bold, red, sans-serif font.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit us at:

folklife.uark.edu



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