



Overview of Catch the Spirit of Appalachia, Inc.

** Established in 1989, Catch the Spirit of Appalachia, Inc., is a nonprofit 501 (c)3 heritage & art organization, cofounded by The Ammons Sisters, with an 20-member Board of Directors.*

CSA Vision and Mission

“Planting seeds of heritage through the arts.”

The purpose of CSA is to awaken people of all ages to their self-worth, to the wisdom of their ancestors, and the beauty of their natural environment and culture. Situated in Jackson County, North Carolina, our organization’s main thrust is to draw attention to the need to conserve, protect and save the natural and human heritage of the local mountain people in our region. Our mission is to accomplish our goals through environmental and cultural education in the primary grades and by involving the community in honoring and preserving the local heritage lifestyle and “sense of place,” thereby “uplifting the individual and community spirit through valuing our regional Appalachian Mountain heritage and creativity.”

The CSA Board of Directors

The CSA’s participatory Board of Directors & Advisors believe in the mission of the organization & extend themselves, involving the goals of CSA into their private lives.

Community Work: Publishing local writers; Radio & Online production of “Stories of Mountain Folk,” Offering Appalachian Studies Scholarships to graduating seniors for Southwestern Community College; Festivals; Mountain Youth Talent Contests.

The Ammons Sisters

Cofounders of the organization, the Ammons Sisters represent the 7th generation of a family whose ancestors pioneered the mountains of WNC. Performing as a team for over 30 years, the Ammons Sisters present “Heritage Alive!” As storyteller Amy Ammons Garza tells stories of growing up in the mountains, her sister Doreyl Ammons Cain spontaneously illustrates them on two 4’ x 6’ easels. Amy was editor/feature writer for “*Fun Things to do in the Mountains*” for 21 years, has won numerous writing awards, has written 11 books based mostly on family history, and publishes other local writers. Doreyl has won numerous awards for her pastel paintings and illustrates books. She has completed numerous historical murals throughout WNC, and is currently acting Director of The Appalachian Mural Trail.



Artist & Author — Vision of work:

The flame in the dark is the breath of story lighting the way from one generation to the next. Each of us is unique and wonderful in our own way, each of us is the carrier of the flame...it is up to us to pass along and keep the flame burning, to keep our “Heritage Alive!” As the storyteller is heard and the rendering of the story is seen at the same time, the listener sees the story come alive and can relate; it is stored in the memory sense and the audience will never forget. *Examples of work:* Creative Writing & Visual Art Residencies and Workshops within the schools; Drama Workshops; Storytelling & Spontaneous Art Presentations; Interviewing people who live in Western North Carolina.

Community Awards: Western Carolina Women’s Coalition’s Women to Match Our Mountains Award, 2004; Mountain State Fair Community Booth First place (4 years) 2nd place (2 years); Duke Energy Citizenship & Service Award 2012; Western Carolina University’s Mountain Heritage Award, 2013.

Description of Achievements

Traditional Heritage Walk



Greening Up the Mountains Festival in Sylva, NC—(since 1996) Catch the Spirit of Appalachia (CSA) is one of the founding members of this festival, hosting the “Traditional Heritage Walk” section where local crafters demonstrated and sold their old time crafts. The nonprofit also began their Heritage Alive! Mountain Youth Talent Contest in this festival., along with providing a stage for our local entertainers to perform. *The festival is now run by the Town of Sylva. Amy was the Event Planner for the town for three years.*



The Mountain Craft Fair at the GSMR's Railfest in Bryson City, NC—(since 2002) CSA organized the Mountain Craft Fair since it's inception in 2002, providing opportunities for crafters to demonstrate and sell their crafts. They also produced the Heritage Alive! Mountain Youth Talent Contest in this festival. *After 11 years, CSA has passed the organization of this festival on to Maggie Valley Craft Shows as of 2013.*



The Patchwork Folk & Fabric Festival in Cullowhee, NC—(since 2006) CSA organized and ran this show for six years, which also showcased our local crafters. *In 2012, the festival was turned over to Jackson County Parks & Recreation, who has hosted the show from the beginning.*



Colorfest, Art & Taste of Appalachia in Dillsboro, NC—(since 2009) CSA organized this art festival with partners Jackson County Arts Council & the Jackson County Chamber of Commerce & TTA, originally in downtown Sylva (six years). In 2012, the festival moved to Dillsboro. This street festival has been produced to showcase the artist talents of our local people, and to provide an outlet for our local musicians. Each year before this festival, CSA held a reception for the artists to celebrate their talents and achievements. ***Since 2014, the festival has been organized by the Dillsboro Merchants Association.***

Other festivals conducted by CSA: The Festival of Many Colors (Sylva); The Appalachian Arts & Craft Bazaar (Cullowhee); Gateway Heritage Day (Whittier); Saunooke Village Folk Festival (Cherokee).

Heritage Alive! Mountain Youth Talent Contest (since 1997—2011)

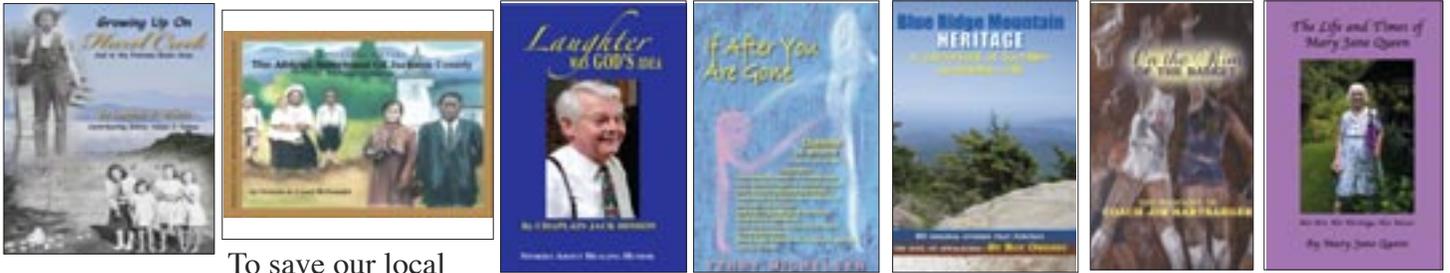
CSA began the traditional heritage talent contests in hopes of encouraging a continuing "sense of place" for our young musical mountain youth. Festivals were chosen as a venue, for they provided an audience for the kids.



Best of Show winners of the three talent shows got to be featured on the Heritage Stage at WCU's Mountain Heritage Day.

In 2011, the Jackson County 4-H Youth Development assumed the talent contest with hopes that the contests will go on indefinitely.

Book Publishing (since 1995—continues)



To save our local heritage before our knowledgeable elders were lost to us, CSA began conducting creative writing and visual art workshops to assist those who wished to save their stories, and that led to becoming a publisher of books. As of April, 2021, CSA has published 145 books, with more in the wings. For 35 years, CSA produced a “Celebration of the Writers” program where the writers read from their works, and grew from standing before the public. Go to www.csabooks.com to view library of books.

Stories of Mountain Folk, an Online Radio Show (since 2008—2016)



The people featured on our program are “real” everyday people—from children to those over 100 years old—those who are still making a difference in our Appalachian world. In their interviews they shared their memories of life as it used to be; sometimes they included us in their dreams of a better world; sometimes they talked of their unique talents, and then picked a little or sang a little. We actually went into the homes of our interviewees to assure them a “safe” place to tell their stories, recording the interviews and then designing the program. A radio announcer, recording and production professional, Neal Hearn, patiently and carefully spliced the show together in such a way to create a vision of our well-rounded heritage here in Western North Carolina. The show was a one hour weekly program, containing four interviews per program: *Creative Corner* with Doreyl Ammons Cain; *Stories of Mountain Folk* with Amy Ammons Garza, *Down Another Road* with Judy Rhodes (Asheville); *Stories of the Cherokee* with Shawn Crowe. *Black Roots of Appalachia* with Victoria A. Casey McDonald passed on to Mary Sue Casey in 2014 when Victoria passed away. Joe Rhinehart (Webster) presented *This is My Home*.

In January, 2012, Hunter Library’s Digital Programs which creates online access to regional material, began archiving all the programs of Stories of Mountain Folk. As of March, 2021, you can listen to the interview through the Jackson County Public Library in Sylva, NC.

Scholarships for Appalachian Studies (since 2007—2015)

To support and encourage the youth of Jackson, Swain, Haywood and Macon Counties in honoring and preserving our local authentic Appalachian heritage, CSA provided four scholarships in the amount of \$500 each for “Appalachian Studies,” presented to four deserving seniors within these five western NC counties each year.

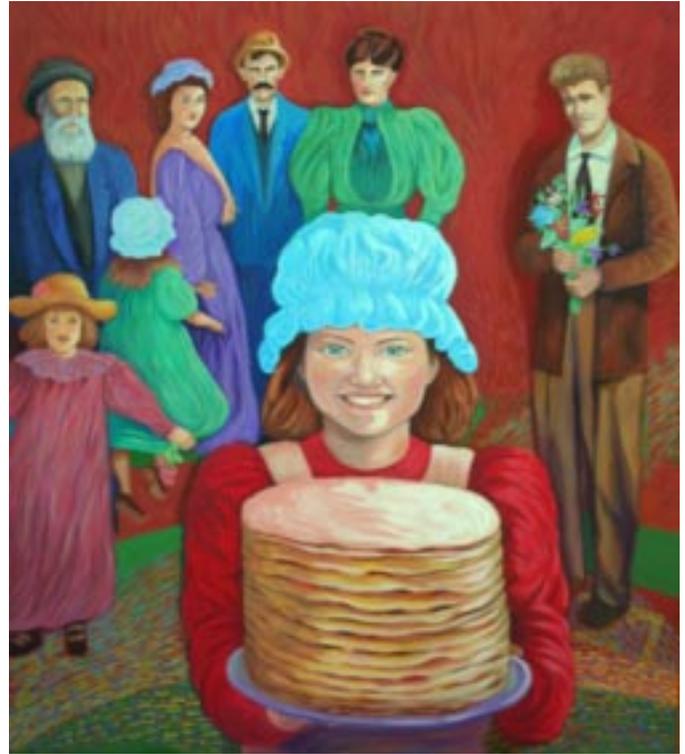


In 2016, through the undying efforts of our Board of Directors and co-founders, CSA established a 20,000 Scholarship with Southwestern Community College, in Sylva, NC.

Historical Murals by Doreyl Ammons Cain (since 2000)



One large pastel mural for Cumberland Gap National Park "History of Cumberland Gap"



One panel of 4 panels for the Jackson County Library "Cakewalk"



Unveiling of the Dillsboro Mural
"On Hallowed Ground"
ColorFest, October 5, 2013

The Appalachian Mural Trail by Doreyl Ammons Cain (since 2016—continuing)

After 10 years of research, the Appalachian Mural Trail (AMT) came alive in 2016 at the hands of Doreyl Ammons Cain and her husband Jerry Cain. The project has now blossomed into a viable, expanding success with over 100+ North Carolina and Virginia historical murals on the trail. Doreyl is currently the acting Director of the Mural Trail and co-founder of a non-profit organization called Catch the Spirit of Appalachia, while Jerry is the Designer and Website Engineer of AMT.

"The honoring of our stories through the arts is the core essence of the AMT's vision and now it is becoming a reality through the hosting of community murals in small communities to large cities throughout the surrounding Blue Ridge. These murals are spotlighting the creativity of our talented local artists. We believe this is enhancing the visitor's experience and uplifting community spirit!"