

(Project Title)

Mountain City Traditional Arts

(Sub-Contract Grantee Name/Authorized Signatory/Address/Phone)
(This is not the same person as the ATP faculty director.)

Jonathan Gibraltar

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(ATP project date)

February 1, 2009 – June 30, 2010

(Date this document was submitted)

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Final Report Narrative

Name of Project: Mountain City Traditional Arts

Grant Period: September 1, 2009 – June 2010

Grantee Name: Frostburg State University Project Director: Dr. Kara Rogers Thomas

Description of Project:

SOCI 350: Folklore in Appalachia (FALL)

Dr. Kara Rogers Thomas

A partnership of the Allegany Arts Council, FrostburgFirst: A Main Street Community, and Folklore & Folklife Programming at Frostburg State University, Mountain City Traditional Arts is dedicated to the education, sales, documentation and perpetuation of traditional arts in the Appalachian region. Over the past year, students enrolled in Sociology 350: Folklore in Appalachia, under the direction of Dr. Kara Rogers Thomas, have been instrumental in documenting the work of traditional artists and developing programming featuring their work. Their efforts were key in promoting Mountain City Traditional Arts, which officially opened to the public on May 30, 2009, as a venue and shop.

Activities:

In Fall 2009, Sociology 350 students continued the documentation efforts begun by former students, using those materials to incorporate a deeper level of interpretation and display at the venue. Students also planned workshops and oversaw a series of events including small roots-music performances and jams. Several students will be worked on developing and managing a “Sublime Saturdays” workshop series.

Together these projects have assisted Mountain City Traditional in becoming a thriving community center. In addition to providing the area’s traditional artists with a supplemental income, Mountain City Traditional Arts and the offerings and opportunities it provides, is intended to increase foot traffic on Main Street and enrich the quality of life of many Frostburg residents.

Documentation Projects completed by students engaged in this year’s Appalachian Teaching Project include: Blacksmithing, Quilting, Goat Soap Making, Herbal Soap Making, Regional Music Jams, Woodcarving, Traditional Fiddle Music, Vegetable Dyes, and Ginseng Cultivation and Product Development.

In addition, students worked to develop and document Mountain City Traditional Arts hands on workshops highlighting: Basket Weaving, Culinary Herbs, Medicinal Herbs, Rug Hooking, Crochet and Knitting, Quilting, Needle Tatting, Traditional Music Jams, Performances by Jay Smar focusing on Appalachia’s Coal Mining Legacy, Book Readings, and a Photographic Exploration of Maryland’s Foodways.

Project Outcomes:

- Presentation of research at Appalachian Teaching Project Conference in Washington, D.C, on December 4-5, 2009. FSU had a very full representation with twelve students attending. FSU attendees were especially pleased to have

Cindy Herzog, Associate Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, join us in attending this event.

- ▶ Creation of a poster for presentation at the conference in Washington, D.C. Students unable to attend the DC Conference were charged with developing the poster. This poster was also used several times by FrostburgFirst: A Main Street Community to showcase the work of Mountain City Traditional Arts.
- ▶ Three students attended annual meeting of the Appalachian Studies Association in Dahlonega, Georgia, March 18-20, to present a Poster Session describing their work at Mountain City Traditional Arts. The poster developed for this presentation is on permanent display at Mountain City Traditional Arts.
- ▶ Presence at DelFest. Two students involved in the project represented MCTA at DelFest, a three day music festival held over Memorial Day Weekend hosted by Del McCurry situated in the Allegheny Highlands of Mountain Maryland. The students distributed materials advertising the venue and recruited potential participating artists.

Problems Encountered:

Planning time was our greatest obstacle. Because students working on the project were undergraduates, they were juggling up to six courses a semester. The level of engagement required by this project and the coordination of efforts it involved was perhaps overly taxing on students. Students enrolled in “Folklore in Appalachia” were sometimes stymied by situations beyond their control –such as last minute cancellations by artists.

In addition, technology became a great challenge for students who had little prior experience with video production and editing. To counter that problem, Frostburg State University’s Center for Instructional Technology provided two workshops for students and developed an introductory PowerPoint introducing students to Windows Movie Maker. Although several students had registered for these workshops, actual attendance was disappointingly low. In the future, such workshops will be held during our regular course time.

Time constraints were a constant issue. As an instructor, I found myself sacrificing course content to allow for ample project planning time. To achieve the goals of their documentation work, students needed to begin their projects early. But it was difficult for them to envision potential projects before being exposed to foundational ideas and theories of Appalachian Folklore.

Overall, I was pleased by the enthusiasm my students brought to their projects and their diligence in ensuring their work was completed by the end of the Fall semester.

Program Continuation and Sustainability:

MCTA has applied for and received funding from: the Appalachian Regional Commission, the Allegany Arts Council, FrostburgFirst, the Frostburg State University Foundation, and Maryland Traditions.

An ARC Governor's Internship is being used to support two student staff members in 2010-2011, both of whom have been involved with the ATP project for more than a year. Funding from the ARC and the Allegany Arts Council enabled Mountain City Traditional Arts to purchase a dedicated computer and monitor to display student documentaries. Student interns will work throughout the summer to show and display student documentaries.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

Given that I work with undergraduates, I find it difficult to achieve objectives within a single semester without sacrificing substantial course content. Ideally, I would like to develop a two course/semester sequence allowing students to more intensely engage in this project. Further, I would like to see Frostburg State University more actively publicize its participation in this project—though since the 2009 gathering I have seen some improvement along these lines.

Attachments:

Mountain City Traditional Arts highlighted in Frostburg State University's Alumni Magazine, *Profile*. <http://www.frostburg.edu/news/profile/pdf/profile.pdf> Page 5

Links to ATP related stories in the Appalachian Independent www.appindie.org

[FSU students present at ARC Teaching Project](#)

[FSU students gain new appreciation for mountain region](#) (written by student participant).