

(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)

**August 15, 2010-May 1, 2011**

(Date this document was submitted)

**May 23, 2011**

(Project director's name, title, telephone number, and email address)

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## **Final Report Narrative**

Name of Project: Mountain City Traditional Arts

Grant Period: September 1, 2011 – May 2011

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 2010, 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: Soap Making, Stringed Instrument Making, Pottery, Leather Tanning, Spinning, Knitting, Brandy Making, Jewelry Making, and Appalachian Blues Music. In addition, students booked and produced an educational performance by Appalachian Blues Musician Jeffrey Scott.

### **Project Outcomes:**

- ▶ The ATP Teaching Project as a work in progress was highlighted as part of a Poster Presentation for the annual meeting of the American Folklore Society in Nashville, TN in October.
  
- ▶ Presentation of research at Appalachian Teaching Project Conference in Washington, D.C, on 3-4. FSU had eight students attending accompanied by Sociology Instructor Mark Middleton.
  
- ▶ 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 and it is currently on display at Mountain City Traditional Arts.
  
- ▶ The ATP-MCTA Poster and a description of the teaching project was included in as part of the University Maryland Baltimore County Humanities Series Lecture Forum on March 30.

### **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 workshop introducing students to Windows Movie Maker. Technological compatibility became an issue for some of the students, causing a time delay in the completion of their projects.

As always, 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.

On a more personal note, as their instructor, I am generally the faculty member who accompanies my students to the ATP annual gathering in Washington DC. Given that I was in my final week of pregnancy at that time, I was unable to accompany my students. That situation presented some unique challenges, but I was delighted by the maturity my students demonstrated in the midst of such difficulties.

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 Allegany Arts Council, FrostburgFirst, the Frostburg State University Foundation, and the Maryland Traditions Program of the Maryland State Arts Council.

An ARC Governor's Internship was 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. Currently an ARC application to assist with funding student interns is currently under review.

**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, if students enrolled in this course continue to engage in audio/visual documentation as part of the project, I strongly believe that I need appropriate training. Currently, I'm considering attending a week long summer institute at the Center for Documentary Studies at Duke University. Finally, I would like to see Frostburg State University more actively publicize its participation in this project. In the meantime, I plan on shifting focus in FSU's ATP 2011 to focus more keenly on program development and performance production at MCTA.

On a very positive note, Frostburg State University has recently made a renewed commitment to Experiential Learning. I believe the Appalachian Teaching Project will provide a key model for such endeavors.

I am incredibly appreciative of the opportunities the ARC Teaching Project offers FSU students and I know that my students are grateful for the experience.