

**“Documenting Community Traditions:  
Sustainable Agriculture in Northeast Tennessee**

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## **Final Report Narrative**

Name of Project: “Documenting Community Traditions: Sustainable Agriculture in Northeast Tennessee.” Grant Period: February 1, 2013-June 30, 2014  
Grantee Name: ETSU Project Director: Tess Lloyd

### **Description of Project:**

East Tennessee State University’s 2013 Appalachian Teaching Project course was APST/SOAA 5690, Documenting Community Traditions (DCT), taught by Dr. Tess Lloyd. This year’s class was the culmination of a project that ETSU’s DCT class has been doing in Unicoi County since 2010; the class has worked in Unicoi County since 2006. The central focus of the current project was to document the history of agriculture in Unicoi County from 1945-2013. The community partner was the Town of Unicoi. The project goals were to promote sustainable agriculture and to preserve Unicoi’s farming heritage. By bolstering sustainable agriculture, Unicoi County will increase job opportunities and per capita income and be better prepared to compete in the global economy. Students learned how to work with a local community and how to use a cultural survey as a tool in community development. Students also did research in print sources on the history of farming in the county.

Working with Theresa Hammons and Randy Sanders of the Reece Museum at ETSU, students made significant strides toward completing a museum exhibition on Unicoi County’s agricultural history, 1945-2013. The exhibition will be held at the Reece Museum October-December 2014, with exhibition panels to be donated to the county thereafter.

### **Activities:**

- Students toured four area museums to study how exhibitions are designed (Sept. 2-9, 2013). These museums were the East Tennessee Historical Society in Knoxville; the William King Museum in Abingdon; Tipton Haynes State Historical Site in Johnson City; and Rocky Mount Living History Museum in Piney Flats.
- Class met with community partners from the Town of Unicoi (Johnny Lynch and Larry Rea), Sept. 16, 2012, to tour sustainable development projects that the town has completed in the past four years. These sites were the trail head facilities at the newly opened Pinnacle Mountain Fire Tower Hiking/Biking Trail; the Bogart-Bowman Cabin and adjacent town park and soccer field; and the Town of Unicoi Visitors’ Center, which is the temporary location of the Tanasi Gallery.
- After receiving training in fieldwork methodology and ethics, each student conducted a one-hour, tape-recorded interview with a resident of Unicoi County involved in agriculture. These interviews, along with interviews collected by DCT students since 2010, became the basis for the museum exhibition. Additionally, the

interviews will be shared with Unicoi County leaders and deposited in the Archives of Appalachia, East Tennessee State University.

- DCT students wrote the first draft of forty-two panels for the museum exhibition on Unicoi County agricultural history (October-November 2013).
- Students gave a presentation and poster at the ATP conference in Washington on December 7, 2013.
- Students gave a presentation and poster to the local community leaders and farmers on December 9, 2012, at the Town of Unicoi's town hall.
- From January-May, 2014, one student from the DCT class continued to work on the exhibition panels as part of an independent study course, condensing the number as advised by Randy Sanders of the Reece Museum, and revising the prose.
- January-June, 2014, a recent ETSU graduate in photography, Megan King, joined the project to take photographs for the exhibition.
- January-May, 2014, former DCT students and Tess Lloyd met with Randy Sanders to continue designing the exhibition.
- May 9, 2014, DCT students, Tess Lloyd, and Randy Sanders met with community partners to finalize the plans for the exhibition.
- Timeline for completing the exhibition:
  - June 2-30: Exhibition panels will be reviewed by community partners and by Dr. John Lewis, who team-taught the DCT course with Dr. Lloyd in 2010 and 2011
  - May 15-August 31: Historic photos will be assemble by former a DCT student and residents of Unicoi County
  - May 15-August 31: Artifacts will be assembled by Tess Lloyd, Johnny Lynch, Larry Rea, and other residents of Unicoi County.
  - August 31: Photographer Megan King will have finished photographing and printing contemporary photos.
  - August 31-Oct. 1: Randy Sanders and Reece Museum staff will oversee the printing and mounting of panels for exhibition.
  - Oct. 21-Dec. 12: exhibition at Reece Museum
  - Nov. 6, 5:00-7:00 p.m.: opening reception of Reece Museum exhibition
  - Week of Dec. 15: panels delivered to the Town of Unicoi

### **Project Outcomes:**

Students learned how to design a museum exhibition. They also learned how to work with a community partner, conduct fieldwork (including interviews), analyze the data gathered in fieldwork, and use fieldwork projects to enhance sustainable economic development projects. They developed skills in collaborative work and leadership as they prepared their presentation and poster.

### **Problems Encountered:**

There were two problems:

- The project was not completed within the semester that the ATP course was taught. Compiling a museum exhibition takes a long time. The DCT class combined that effort with the equally demanding requirements of learning how to do ethnographic interviews, conducting those interviews, and preparing for the ATP conference.
- Because the previous director of the Reece Museum resigned without leaving directions as to how she planned to fund the printing of the exhibition panels and photos, the current museum director and Dr. Lloyd had to explore funding sources late in the process.

#### **Program Continuation and Sustainability:**

From October – December 2014, the exhibition on Unicoi County’s agricultural history will be shown at the Reece Museum. The exhibition panels will then be donated to the Town of Unicoi, which already has plans to use them in exhibitions at the town’s recently restored Bogart-Bowman Cabin and at the Unicoi Historical Society. Thus, the exhibition will become a part of the Town and County of Unicoi’s initiative to promote sustainable development, including sustainable agriculture, agritourism, and cultural tourism. Additionally, ETSU’s 2014 DCT class (to be taught by Dr. Ron Roach) will work with Unicoi community leaders on a new project.

#### **Conclusions and Recommendations:**

Allowing ETSU four years to complete the interviews and museum exhibition made it possible for ETSU students to complete a very large project. The exhibition panels can now be donated to the county, as was the local foods guide that the DCT class compiled for the community partner in 2011. The project benefits the community partner’s efforts in sustainable development in two ways: (1) The exhibition and interviews deal with agriculture and history, which the community partners want to foster as they develop agri-, eco-, and heritage tourism. (2) The town already has plans for future sites to exhibit the panels, and these local exhibitions will help preserve the community and will appeal to tourists. The collaboration between Unicoi and ETSU has been fruitful; community leaders remain enthusiastic about working with the university’s ATP class.

#### **Attachments:**

Text of panels.