

**Final Report
Heirloom Seed Keepers and their Stories:
Growing community and sustainability through arts-based research**

Year 2

**University of North Georgia
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**ATP project date
February 1, 2013 – June 30, 2014**

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Final Report Narrative

Title of Project: Year 2 of Heirloom Seed Keepers and their Stories: Growing community and sustainability through arts-based research

Grant Period: February 1, 2013 – June 30, 2014

Grantee Name: Appalachian Studies Center, University of North Georgia

Project Director: Rosann Kent, Director Appalachian Studies
Dr. Chris Dockery, ATP faculty mentor and associate professor of art

Description of Project:

For the past two years, students have explored the question, *“How can cultural literacy provide reciprocal opportunities for students and community members to engage in the local food systems of Southern Appalachia?”* In Year 1, students used arts-based research methodology to build social bridges as they collected and shared heirloom seeds and associated ethno-cultural memories. The result was a communograph, a quilt-sized installation depicting seed migration routes within Lumpkin County along with seed keepers’ images and quotes. In Year 2, they expanded into an adjacent county to determine if the project was replicable, sustainable, and scalable. In addition to harvesting the seed demonstration garden, and processing seeds for the UNG Seed Bank, they also generated a second communograph, a series of garden flags featuring each new seed keeper.



ATP Participants (L-R, back row) Dr. Chris Dockery, faculty mentor; Steve Bordanaro, community volunteer; Sandra Hogue, community volunteer; Victoria Glass, biology major; Mary Lipold, psychology major; Sarah Ewing, art major; Kerby Wilkes, art major; Alissa Rice, art major; Elizabeth Guzman, history major; Carter McKenzie, history education; Zack Nissen, business; Sabrina Jones, biology. (L-R, front row) Cat Washell, community volunteer; Avery Alexander, middle grade education major; Kaity Bracket, middle grades education. Photo by Kyle Clark, student volunteer and ATP alumnus.

Note the addition of four community volunteers as well as increase in number of students in Year 2. For additional photos of this presentation, see [Facebook](#).

Activities:

In addition to the ATP conference presentation and poster, the Heirloom Seed Project fulfilled the following requirements in Scope of Work:

1. **Activities with community partner.** The new partner was [Loganberry Heritage Farm](#), a 60-acre sustainable heritage farm located in an adjacent county that focuses on heritage foods. Stewarded by a fifth-generation granddaughter, Sharon Mauney uses natural farming methods including composting, compost tea sprays, remineralization, crop rotation, and cover-cropping. Because Ms. Mauney also practices seed saving, with many of the seeds from family and community, we felt the farm would be an appropriate partner.

June 2014. To determine interest and feasibility of partnership, faculty mentors Rosann Kent and Dr. Chris Dockery communicated by phone and email with Ms. Mauney. She was especially interested in the students hosting a seed swap at the farm's annual [Garlic Fest](#) in order to draw younger community members to the farm and learn about heirloom seeds.



July 2013. We met with Ms. Mauney to tour the farm and create the students' schedule and outline respective roles. Ms. Mauney agreed to function as both gatekeeper (trusted member of the community who could introduce students to seed keepers) and a seed keeper (one of the area's original families who have continued to save seeds.) The farm would also serve as an experiential teaching tool to provide students with opportunities to learn about practical aspects of farming and challenges facing farmer's markets. We agreed that the farm would host students on selected class days, and students would provide the farm with packets of heirlooms seeds to distribute at Garlic Fest. By working with a new partner in an adjacent county, students were able to repeat the research cycle and improve its design and methodology.



July planning meeting at LoganBerry. L-R. Rosann Kent, ATP Faculty Mentor; Sharon Mauney, owner and community activist, LoganBerry Farm; Dr. Chris Dockery, ATP Faculty Ment

Aug. 23. Nine students created a new display for [Garlic Fest at LoganBerry Farm](#)



- **Sept** – Two students interviewed Ms. Mauney who donated five varieties of heirloom seed: Hunt’s pepper, Cain’s Elephant Garlic, Robert Palmer Winter Greens, Fair-Cain-Turner Whippoorwill Pea, and Hunt’s Cornfield Bean. Two more students photographed the farm, which provided images for the art installation as well as served as the foundation for an independent project on Appalachian rural life.

Sept/Oct – Two students returned on two weekends to staff Saturday Market. In the seed demonstration garden, students planted Ms. Mauney’s heirloom garlic “according to the signs.”

Nov. 19 – Partner and community presentation at the campus library. Ms. Mauney was invited to attend as well as members of the campus and community.

Dec. Ms. Mauney was invited to a potluck dinner to celebrate the end of the semester.

Feb. 2014 Ms. Mauney was consulted regarding planting dates for potatoes in the seed demonstration garden.

April 2014 Ms. Mauney was consulted regarding flea beetles in seed demonstration garden and maintenance of garlic.

May 2014 Ms. Mauney was consulted regarding maintenance and harvesting of the garlic.

2/3. Presentations of student research to community groups other than the primary partner. Links to social media are embedded below. For further documentation, see course syllabus and calendar in attachments.

August 2014

Garlic Fest, LoganBerry Farms, White County, Georgia.

See [PR here](#) and photos of [students in action](#) here.

September 2014

Pollinators for the People

Eight students and one community volunteer hosted a seed swap in collaboration with UNGs Center for Environmental Awareness. See photos of [students in action](#) here.

January 2014

Wylde Center, National Seed Swap. For photos of [students in action](#), go here; for media coverage, see page 6 of [Seedsaver Spotlight](#).

Feb. 2014

North Georgia Permaculture Guild, Cedar Hill Enrichment Center.

See PR for [Potluck and Presentation](#). See photos of [students in action](#) here.

Feb. 7, 2014

Mildred Haun Conference, Morristown, TN Four students presented reader's theater based on seed keeper interviews. See scholarly sessions listed on program at "[Voices of Appalachia.](#)" See more photos of [students in action](#) here.

March 7

The Birdhouse Knoxville, TN

Six students presented at the First Friday program. [See pr here.](#) See

[photos of students in action](#) here.

Students were also able to tour the Knoxville Farmers Market in preparation for the 2014-15 ATP.



**March 2014
Appalachian Studies Association
Conference**

Four students participated in three sessions, two panel presentations and a reading/performance.

1. [“Creative Inquiry in Appalachian Studies: The case for arts-based research”](#)

Faculty mentor, Chris Dockery, convened this session and Kaity Brackett, ATP student presented.

2. ["Tater Eyes and 'Possum Houses: A new role for storytelling in place-based pedagogy."](#) Faculty mentor, Rosann Kent with student performer Mary Lipold, Avery Alexander, Elizabeth Guzman, and Kaity Brackett.

April 2, 2014

19th Annual Research Conference at the University of Georgia

Two current students and two UNG alumni (who served as ATP volunteers) presented on the [arts-based research](#) aspect of the project. Three additional students presented on the [community connection](#) aspect.

April 2014

Bear on the Square Festival. Ten students and one community volunteer gave out approximately 60 packets of heirloom beans and corn at this local festival.

April 21, 2013

Board of Regents, University System of Georgia

Two student leaders presented both Year 1 and Year 2 projects to the Board of Regents' spouses during their visit to the UNG campus.



May 27, 2014

Chestatee Public Library in Dahlonega

One student leader and one community volunteer presented, ["Heirloom Seeds and Their Stories"](#) to the Lumpkin County Historical Society and the Master Gardeners.

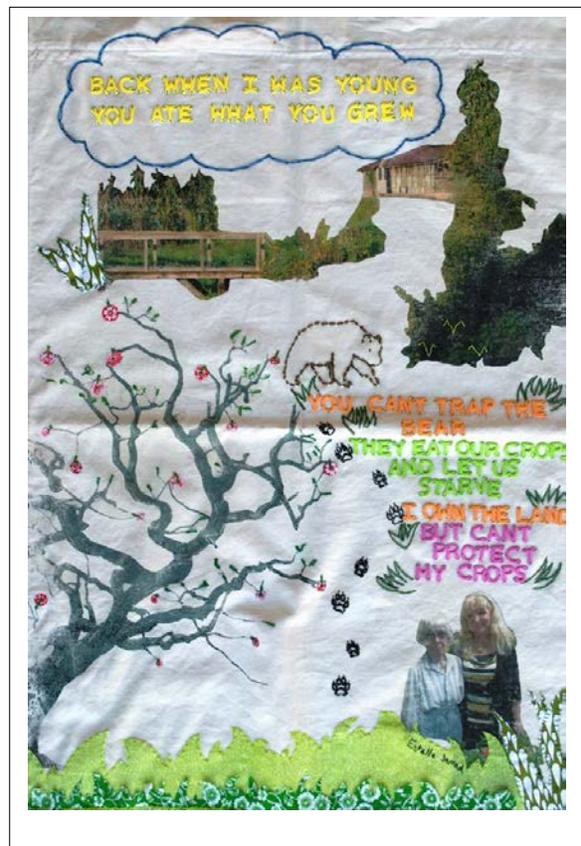
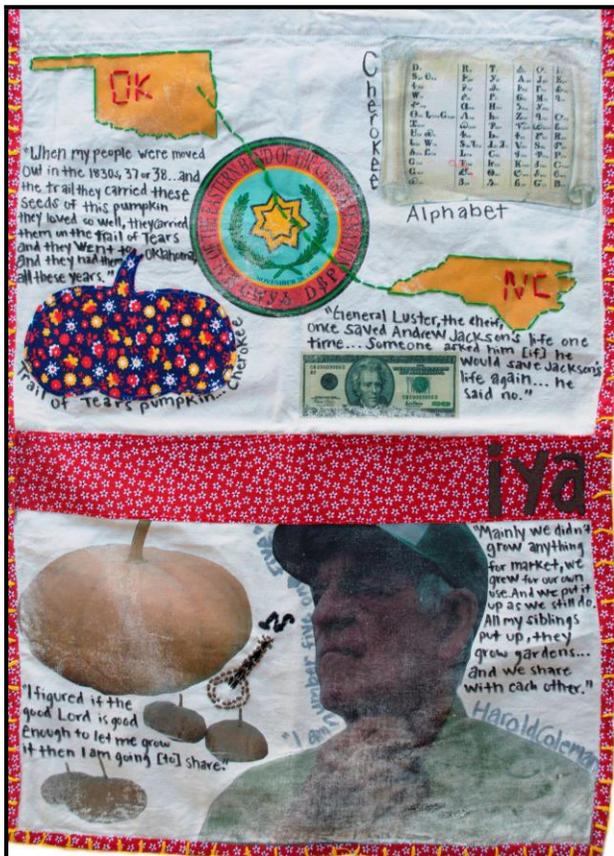
Project Outcomes:

The 13 presentations far exceeded the three listed in our original proposal. In addition to presenting to festivals, conferences, and community groups, students also accomplished the following activities and met all remaining outcomes.

1. Expand geographic collection of seeds and stories.

Students located seed keepers in two adjacent Georgia counties (White and Forsyth counties) as well as one additional state, North Carolina. Students collected 35 varieties of heirloom seed from 8 seed keepers as well as recorded and transcribed their interviews. Although the seed and story project began in 2007, its founder, Karrie Ann Fadroski, biology professor, reported that there had never been this many varieties located in one semester, nor had the accompanying documentation been this complete.

2. Construct communograph of heirloom seed keepers. Under the leadership of Dr. Dockery, students – most of whom were non-artists- created eight garden flags featuring the seed keepers they had interviewed. Community volunteer Cathryn Washell served as the artist in residence and taught students photo transfer, embroidery, quilting. For the rest of their stunning art work, [go here](#).



3. Student Blog Post.

ATP alumni, Jonathan Winskie, was invited by Dave Tabler, who blogs daily about Appalachian history blogger, to submit this [Connecting Communities through Seeds](#).

4. **Development of policies**, procedures, and forms related to memory and seed banking. These are available for other groups to use in their own community. See attached seed intake form.

5. Development of student leadership skills. Although every student was responsible for all arts-based research components (interviews/images/data analysis/communograph) and direct service hours with the community partner, they were also assigned to one of three teams. For example, Team Purple Hulls was responsible for making sure all ATP materials (communograph, Prezi, poster, and brochure) were ready for travel and exhibition. Team Leather Britches coordinated garden harvesting, seed packing, and seed shares. Team Greasy Backs were responsible for overall project management. They developed a timeline, a schedule of student teams and their interviewees, and their location as well as an annotation of related audio/video/photographic material. (See attached GASC Master Planning Document created by Dr. Dockery.)



Biology student, Sabrina Jones, developed the seed intake form, checked harvested seeds for quality, and coordinated new acquisitions for the UNG Seed Bank, which is housed in the Department of Biology.

Unanticipated outcomes

What started as an ATP project has resulted in a new model for integrated undergraduate research, curriculum delivery, and community engagement. We discovered that such a transformation not only requires more time and more resources but a radical shift in how we teach inside and outside the classroom. Here is a summary of the changes we made in the related course, "GASC 3100 Introduction to Appalachia." (See attached syllabus.)

- **Made curriculum contemporary and relevant**

- Emphasized sustainability, an issue of great concern to many students
- Explored a major societal change: restructuring of dominant food system (i.e. local and slow food movement, genetically modified organisms, or GMOs, food

- security and accessibility)
- Incorporated community engagement opportunities that gave students a sense of place, an important anchor in a global society
- **Significant course/curriculum improvements**
 - Began transition to an authentic performance-based assessment model
 - Redesigned course calendars to reflect community, arts-based approach
 - Selected new text book and reading lists
 - Wrote new study guides
 - Created new grading system based on student participation, collaboration, and documentation
 - Provided students with diverse learning styles and a variety of means to participate: writing, listening, art making, researching, presenting, performing
- **Developed new materials for collaborative learning techniques and monitored effectiveness**
 - Created rubric for students to self-evaluate collaboration with team members
 - Developed field notebook checks to review this collaboration as well as direct service hours earned, annotated readings, study guides completed, reflections written, IRB forms and other documentation included.
 - Each of the above required check sheets to be developed in addition to an extensive and detailed course calendar and assignments
 - Modeled action research in the classroom: Debriefings held after each community presentation; students made recommendations and implemented for next engagement

Another unanticipated outcome was the recognition the project received.

* 2012 ATP alumni, Jessica Murray, biology student, [wins national](#) award.

* Publication of reader's theater script in e-journal of Mildred Haun conference. (See attached submission.)

* Faculty mentor, Dr. Chris Dockery, was invited to collaborate with Robert Gipe, also an ATP faculty mentor, for his project, [The Higher Ground Project](#).

* Faculty mentor, Rosann Kent, and ATP alumni, Jessica Murray, were invited to be delegates to the Ukraine to present at the 2nd International Joint Ukrainian- American Scientific and Practical Conference. Carpathian-Appalachians: Human and Community Development in Highlands Regions. See news release at [Student sees similarities between Carpathians, Appalachians](#).

* Faculty mentor, Rosann Kent, was invited to travel to Sterling College in Vermont to showcase the seed project as a model of community and sustainability.

* An article about the pedagogical implications of arts-based research by Dr. Chris Dockery was accepted for an upcoming issue of *Journal of Appalachian Studies* for its Teaching Notes section.

Problems Encountered:

By creating and developing a student-led team approach, we were able to avoid problems typical of class projects directed solely by one professor. The problem we did encounter -- time constraints -- is expected in any undergraduate research project. However, because this project is embedded in three different disciplines – biology, visual arts, and Appalachian Studies – yet “housed” in one class, the coordination of schedules and work load is immense. Fortunately, students were extremely passionate about local food issues and this ATP project provides the only outlet for their ideas and hard work. Otherwise, these unusually high outcomes would not have been obtained.

Program Continuation and Sustainability:

The ATP has forced us as faculty mentors to think deeply about our teaching methods and goals of the Appalachian Studies Center. We have revised our mission statement, proposed a different leadership structure, and, most of all, integrated the project within and throughout the Center and two other departments: biology and visual arts. Because of the interdisciplinary nature of the project, its strong community champions, and a dedicated cadre of students, the program will be continued in 2014-15 and beyond.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Our two-year pilot followed this cycle: plan and plant in summer semester, create and engage in fall, and publish, present, perform in spring. In less than two years, we have far exceeded our expectations. Seed acquisitions for the bank, demonstration garden, seed processing and sharing is now student led. Students are not only making extensive community connections and creating stunning visual art installations but also creating readers' theater based on the seed keepers' stories. They excel at presenting research results through traditional outlets such as poster sessions, papers, and publications and are in high demand to bring exhibitions and performances for non-art venues such as conferences, seed swaps, farmers markets, festivals, libraries, churches, and non-profits. Their work has been well accepted not only in the north Georgia and Appalachian region but also has been recognized as national example of sustainability in action. Its critical place-based pedagogy was also profiled in Ukraine.

Recommendations

1. Continue to include community volunteers on the travel stipend. Although we had already planned to use volunteers to coach students in art making, writing, and speaking with current volunteers, we were delighted to learn that we could offer two of our volunteers travel funds to Washington. This was a “perk” we could offer to the four volunteers who attended class week after week as well as assisted students after hours and on weekends. As a result, we now have a solid base on which to build and students

were exposed to various teaching and mentoring styles. We hope the ARC will continue that practice in the future!

2. Consider allowing limited number (1-2) of ATP alumni to attend presentation using non-ARC funding. We realize that space is limited, but the students reported it was extremely valuable for two ATP alumni to attend the UNG's presentation. One had served as teaching assistant and coach for this year's project; another was student art coordinator and photographer. Both took leadership positions in the current project without compensation and/or academic credit. (They were in Washington to interview for internship positions as a result of ATP connections. Neither used ATP funds to travel.)



Kyle Clark, ATP alumnus, designed new seed packages using a print making technique. He supervised the cutting, folding, and stamping of more than 1,000 seed packets.

Attachments (in PDF format):

Note: *Most required documentation is available digitally and has been embedded throughout the report.*

For photos of students in action, see Facebook Page, [Saving Appalachian Gardens and Stories](#). Go to Photos, [Albums](#), and click on any of the 11 albums with ATP as a prefix. Photographs are also tagged as Appalachian Regional Commission or Appalachian Teaching Project.

Hard copy documentation attachments include the following:

1. GASC 3100 Syllabus and calendar for "Introduction to Appalachia"

2. GASC 3100 Master Planning Document
3. Seed intake form
4. SAGAS Brochure for ATP 2013-14
5. Submitted article for Mildred Haun E-Journal