

Major Project Activities:

“Functional art” refers to aesthetic objects that serve utilitarian purposes—that is, beautiful things that are also useful. We expand that definition by adding to it things that are made to be useful but are also beautiful—what we term “Functional Artways.” Our project, Functional Artways of Appalachia, is an innovative arts program that will foster community interaction, connect area residents with regional artistic resources, provide an economic outlet for artists, and engage people of our region in hands-on workshops.

Each of 12 monthly events will feature two or more expert presenters who will demonstrate the skills and show examples. Many demonstrations will be hands-on, allowing active audience participation. Several demonstrations will be presented on the same day, so participants can interact with artists in different related media.

Many of the demonstrations will take place at the Unicoi Visitors Center. They include basket-weaving and broom-making, pottery, wood-carving and flint knapping, metal-working, textile weaving and fiber art, quilt-making, beekeeping, and landscape photography. The Unicoi County Heritage Museum will provide spacious outdoor areas for our watercolor painting classes. The historic Bogart-Bowman Cabin will host a Heritage Day that will showcase pioneer skills such as soap-making, quilting, chair caning, and children’s games. The Mountain Harvest Kitchen offers facilities for our Art of Local Food and Foraging program. Stegall’s Stoneware will offer tours of their pottery-making facilities and hands-on opportunities to interact with potters at work. Appalachia is rich in music and the rustic Farmhouse Gardens & Gallery will provide the venue for regional fiddlers and musicians to come together to showcase their Mountain Music, along with the award-winning Unicoi County High School (UCHS) Bluegrass Band. The ETSU Storytelling Program presents regional stories to groups throughout our area. Tellers will weave their stories in the Buffalo conference room, or perhaps in the UCHS auditorium, if attendance is large enough.

Our first artist-in-residence, master woodcarver Joe Pilkenton, will be on hand daily for one week to demonstrate the skills involved in planning and carving the Town of Unicoi’s Bison project, a life-size frieze created under a grant to the Town of Unicoi by the Tennessee Arts Commission. A second artist-in-residence, fiber artist Brittany Smith, will give hands-on demonstrations of needle felting for a week.

Our Town project funding will allow all these events to be well-organized and -publicized and offered free of charge, with the cost of necessary materials defrayed. Artist/presenters will be engaged to ensure that they connect well with the Functional Artways theme and with the participants. Our volunteer coordinator will ensure that facilities are maintained and cleaned by volunteers. The participation of art, storytelling, and drama students from ETSU and UCHS, along with other children and young adults, will help to ensure the impact of the project on younger generations who, we hope, will gain a fuller appreciation for the unique culture of the Appalachian region they call home.

tanasiarts.org

