

Mountain Heritage Awards recognize arts and heritage center, Cherokee artists

CULLOWHEE — Western Carolina University will present the 2022 Mountain Heritage Awards during the Mountain Heritage Day festival Saturday, Sept. 24 on the Harrah's Cherokee Casino Resort Blue Ridge Stage at 12:15 p.m.

Mountain Heritage Awards are presented each year to an individual and to an institution or organization to recognize exceptional contributions to Southern Appalachian history, culture and folklore. Recipients are selected by a committee comprised of community and university representatives.

Cowee School Arts & Heritage Center in Macon County, North Carolina, is the recipient of this year's **Mountain Heritage Award for an organization**. Cowee School was built with native stone in 1943 on the site of a former Civilian Conservation Corps camp, and served families and children as a public school for 69 years. Since 2012, it has served residents and visitors as an arts and heritage center.

Over the past 10 years, Cowee School Arts & Heritage Center has preserved and promoted mountain heritage through numerous programs including the Franklin Area Folk Festival, the Summer Concert Series, the Where We Live: History, Nature and Culture Lecture Series, and the Cowee School Farmers Market. The center hosts 10 permanent arts, crafts and educational uses in its former classrooms as well as the Smoky Mountain Quilters Guild, and offers community gardens and a shared-use kitchen.

The center stands at the entrance to one of North Carolina's largest historic districts, Cowee-West's Mill Historic District. It has been a leading partner in the interpretation of historic sites and worked with community members to secure a designation of Highway 28 through Cowee as a scenic byway and install bilingual English and Cherokee signs at community entrances.

Cowee School Arts & Heritage Center has become a regional leader in the preservation and promotion of mountain heritage. "On behalf of the board, the users of Cowee School and the people of Cowee, we are honored to receive this award," said Stacy Guffey, a founder and director of the center. "Through continued partnership with local, tribal, state, federal and community partners, we will continue to preserve and promote mountain heritage and culture well into the future."

This year's **Mountain Heritage Award for an individual** recognizes two people, **Louise Goings** and husband **Butch Goings**, of Cherokee, North Carolina. They are both Cherokee artisans and cultural preservationists of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians who carry on a strong family tradition of cultural preservation and community service.

"We were very surprised to hear that we had received these awards," Louise Goings said. "I'm just glad that someone recognized that we're trying to preserve what we have, to let people

know that we still carry on our traditions from when the first European people came to America.”

Louise Goings is a master basket maker. She is the daughter of Emma Taylor, a legendary Cherokee basket maker recognized with a North Carolina Folk Heritage Award in 1989 who shared patterns and techniques with Louise, who today works with materials such as maple, river cane and white oak to create some of the region’s most coveted and well-made baskets.

Butch Goings carves beautiful figurines from wood and stone. He started carving wood at a young age with his father, George Goings, and is highly regarded and respected among the most talented carvers in the Southeast.

“When they attend Cherokee and Appalachian cultural events including Mountain Heritage Day at WCU, they bring authenticity, tradition and high-quality craftsmanship to every event,” said Lisa Lefler, director of the Culturally Based Native Health Program at WCU, who nominated Louise and Butch Goings for the Mountain Heritage Award. “They are consistently recognized by their and other indigenous communities as the standard for quality, creativity and tradition of Cherokee arts.”

Louise and Butch Goings are also highly respected community members, Lefler said. “They are involved in civic duty and kindness and take their role as cultural and traditional elders seriously. They continue to serve and share their time and energy with others. They are highly valued members of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and their community. They are indeed Tribal and national treasures.”