WCU'S MOUNTAIN HERITAGE AWARD PRESENTED TO HCC'S PROFESSIONAL CRAFTS PROGRAM

CULLOWHEE – Western Carolina University presented its Mountain Heritage Award for 2005 on Saturday (Sept. 24) to the Professional Crafts Program of Haywood Community College, which has become a model for crafts education programs around the country during its 29-year history.

Haywood Community College's Professional Crafts Program received the 2005 Mountain Heritage Award during festivities at Western's 31st annual Mountain Heritage Day on Saturday, Sept. 24. HCC representatives (right to left) Gary Clontz, chair of the department of professional crafts; Catherine Ellis, fiber arts instructor; and Bill Rhodarmer, assistant vice president for academic services; accept the award from Clifton Metcalf, Western's vice chancellor for advancement and external affairs.

Clifton Metcalf, Western's vice chancellor of advancement and external affairs, presented the award to Gary Clontz, chair of HCC's department of professional crafts, during an awards presentation ceremony at the university's 31st annual Mountain Heritage Day.

HCC's Professional Crafts Program is the only crafts program in the nation that provides both a hands-on craft curriculum and business skills development in the four craft areas of focus – clay, fiber, jewelry and wood. In addition to the core craft courses, students take classes in marketing, studio and business planning, and craft photography.

The program is affiliated with HandMade in America, the Southern Highland Craft Guild, and NC Real (Rural Entrepreneurship through Action Learning.) Each member of the faculty is a working craftsperson, and is active in regional crafts groups and serves on the boards of nationally-recognized crafts organizations.

Clontz noted that HCC's Professional Crafts Program began the year Western gave out the first Mountain Heritage Award – in 1976 – and that the program's originator, the late Mary Cornwell of Waynesville, was the recipient of the award in 1989.

“Winning this award is a tribute to her (Cornwell), her idea, and how we've been able to follow her vision,” said Clontz, who has taught in the program since its beginnings. “We are honored to receive this recognition in our own backyard, from our neighbors. It's confirmation of the hard work the faculty, staff and students have done over the years. These crafts document mountain culture and give a contemporary interpretation to them.”

HCC's Professional Crafts Program is the 30th recipient of Western's Mountain Heritage Award. The award is given in recognition of outstanding contributions to the preservation or interpretation of the history and culture of Southern Appalachia; or in recognition of outstanding contributions to research on, or interpretation of, Southern Appalachian issues. Award winners are chosen by a special committee.

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