

DISCOVER



# THE WOMEN OF APPALACHIA PROJECT



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# CONTENTS

2 INTRODUCTION

3 TIMELINE

5 READY, GET SET...

7 MARKETING & MEDIA

9 PARTNERS

11-20 FINE ART

21 APPALACHIAN ADVOCATE AWARD

23-31 WOMEN SPEAK

WOMENOFAPPALACHIA.COM

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LEFT:  
"When I moved to Athens county 18 years ago I never could have imagined the amazing network of women that would lead and encourage me into the field of ceramics. I have often felt that few places could have provided me with the grassroots kind of experience that I have been able to be a part of here. Becoming involved in the Women of Appalachia Project only seemed a natural progression for me. There are so many talented women. WOAP provides opportunities for exploration in the arts, encouraging all of its participants to reach higher, be proud of who we are and where we are from."

– Laurie Vancouver  
Clay  
The Plains, OH

# INTRODUCTION

If you are from Appalachia, you grow to realize early on, that many people have an image of an Appalachian woman, and they look down on her.

The Women of Appalachia Project was created to address discrimination directed at women from the Appalachian region by encouraging participation from women artists of diverse backgrounds, ages and experiences to come together, to embrace the stereotype, to show the whole woman; beyond the superficial factors that people use to judge her.

## Working together, women united, we:

- Seek out venues where women's issues can be examined, addressed, dissected, embellished, and safely shared with audiences and each other through presentations of visual and spoken word art.
- Empower and strengthen Appalachian visual, literary and performing women artists through fellowship and positive community connections.
- Provide opportunities for a diverse group of woman to share their art, receive recognition and encouragement, and build strong networks so they continue to thrive, while introducing diverse populations to one of Appalachian's greatest assets, its artists.

We believe that all women are capable, courageous, creative and inspired.

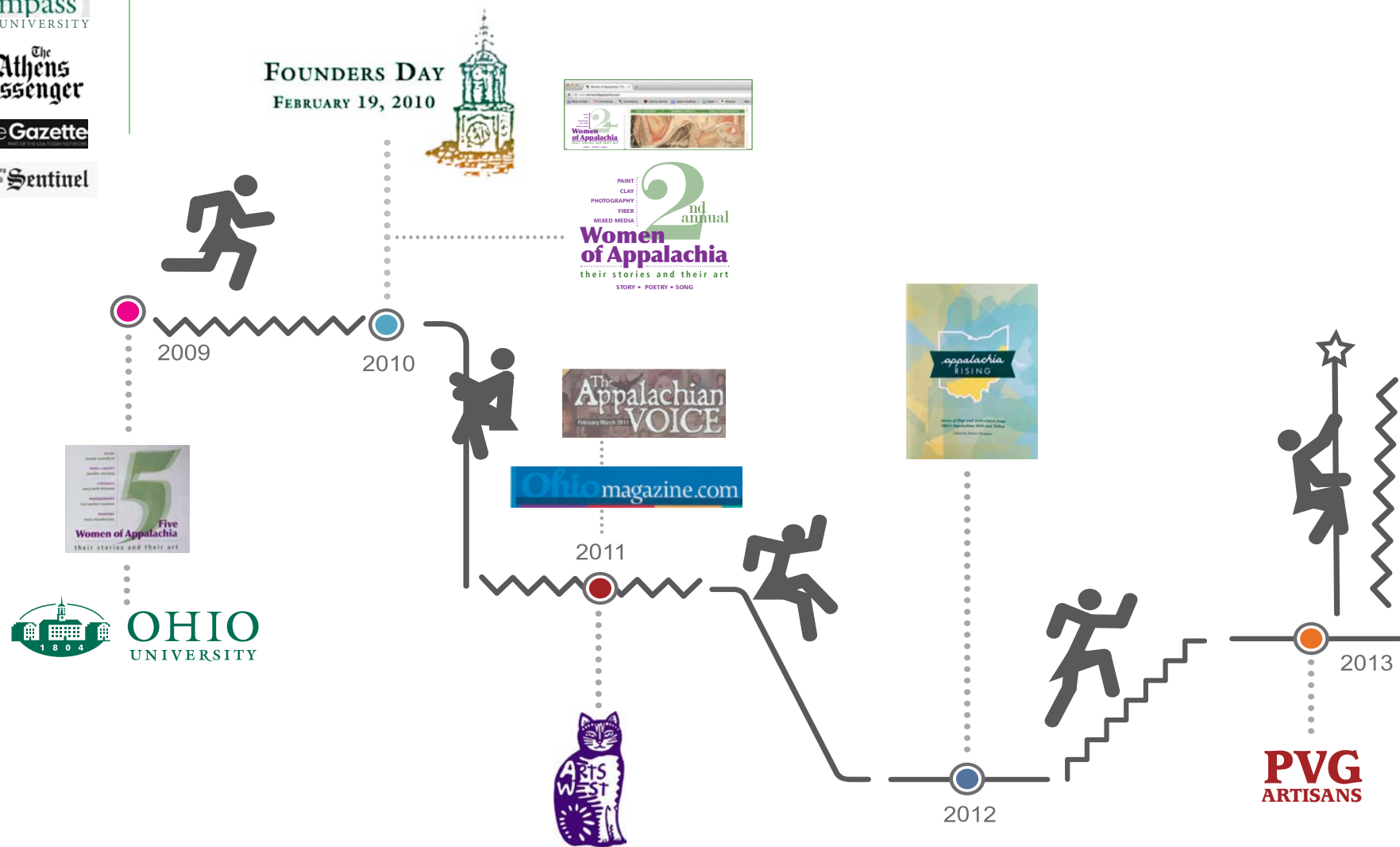
We tell our stories through our art.



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# TIMELINE



**2009** Ohio University's Multicultural Center Art Gallery agrees to partner with WOAP. The project begins as 5 *Women of Appalachia*. The first event showcases five visual artists, additionally featuring four spoken word artists. All artists are from Athens County.

**2010** Events become *Women of Appalachia Project*. An open call for art goes out to women throughout all 420 counties of Appalachia. The WOAP logo is designed. The Website is launched.

The Office of the Ohio University Vice President and Provost chooses to honor the Women of Appalachia Project exhibit in conjunction with OHIO's Founders Day Convocation.

**2011** OHIOmagazine.com features WOAP. ARTS/West agrees to partner with WOAP and hosts *Woman Speak* for two presentations in its performance space. *The Appalachian Voice*, Boone, NC, features WOAP in its tabloid magazine.

**2012** WOAP is chosen to be featured in Ohio University's publication *Appalachia Rising: Stories of Hope and Achievement for Ohio's Appalachian Hills and Valleys*.

**2013** PVG Artisans, Chillicothe, OH invites WOAP to exhibit in their Second Street Gallery, hosting a gala fine arts opening event and evening of *Women Speak*.

**2014** The Parkersburg Art Center, Parkersburg, WV, extends an invitation to host the WOAP fine art exhibition in their gallery during the December holiday season, creating three venues for the fine art exhibit and three venues for *Women Speak*. The WOAP Facebook page is launched.

**2015/16** With the closing of PVG Artisans, The Pump House Center for the Arts, Chillicothe, invites WOAP fine art and spoken word artists to their gallery. *Women Speak* is invited to perform at The Bowen House, Logan; Sips Coffee House, Mt. Vernon and the Columbus Poetry Forum. Ohio University Southern invites WOAP fine art and *Women Speak* to their gallery space.

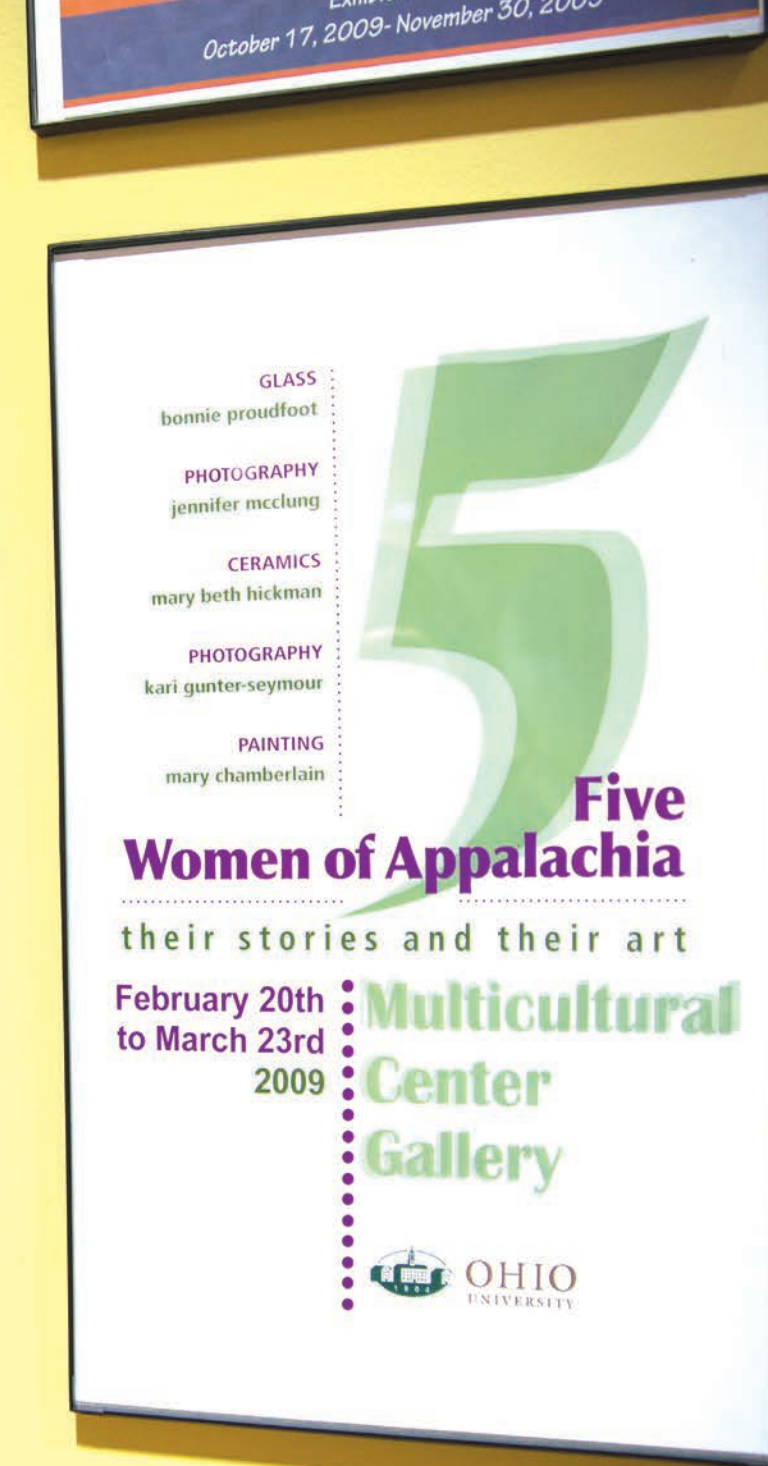
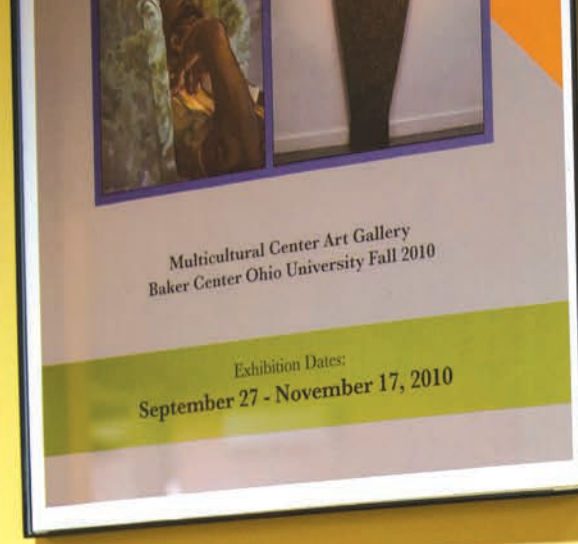
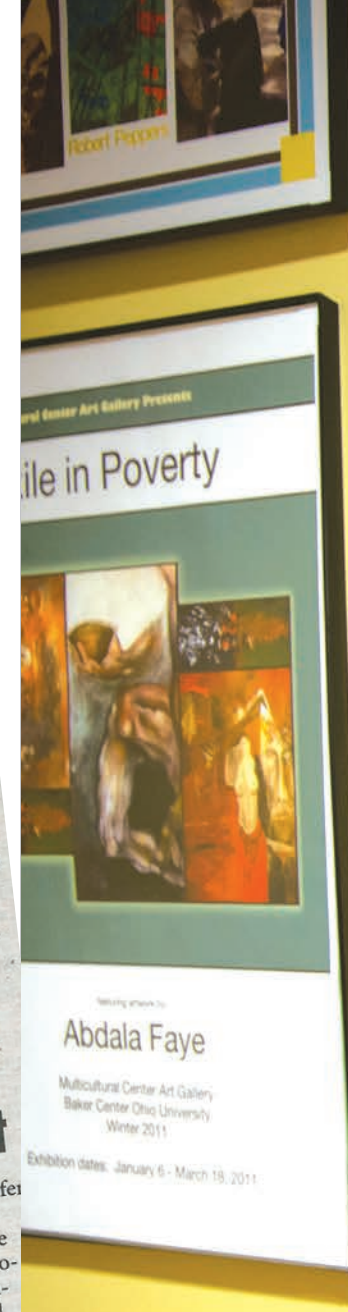
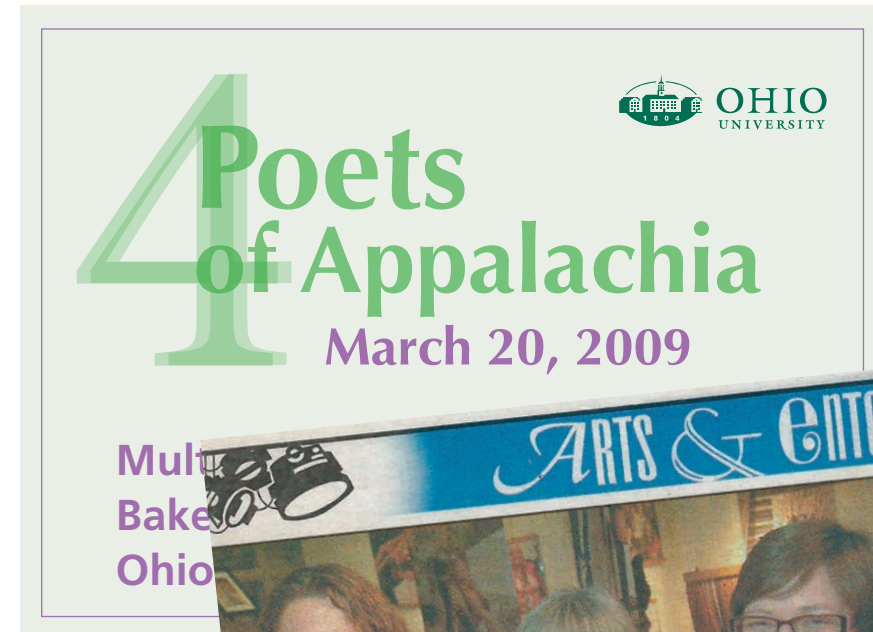
The Inaugural WOAP Appalachian Advocate Award is presented. ClutchMOV.com lifestyle magazine for the Mid-Ohio Valley features WOAP. Ohio University's School of Art + Design design chapbooks *Women Speak*. Volume one is printed. *Women Speak*,

**2017/18** West Virginia University extends an invitation to host WOAP *Women Speak*. Volume three of *Women Speak* is published. The second WOAP Appalachian Advocate Award is presented. *Morgantown Magazine* and nationally renowned *Women Arts* blog feature WOAP. Ohio University's *Backdrop Magazine* features WOAP.



## 5

– Winsome Chunnu-Brayda,  
strategic director for diversity and inclusion  
and multicultural programs and initiatives,  
Multicultural Center Art Gallery curator



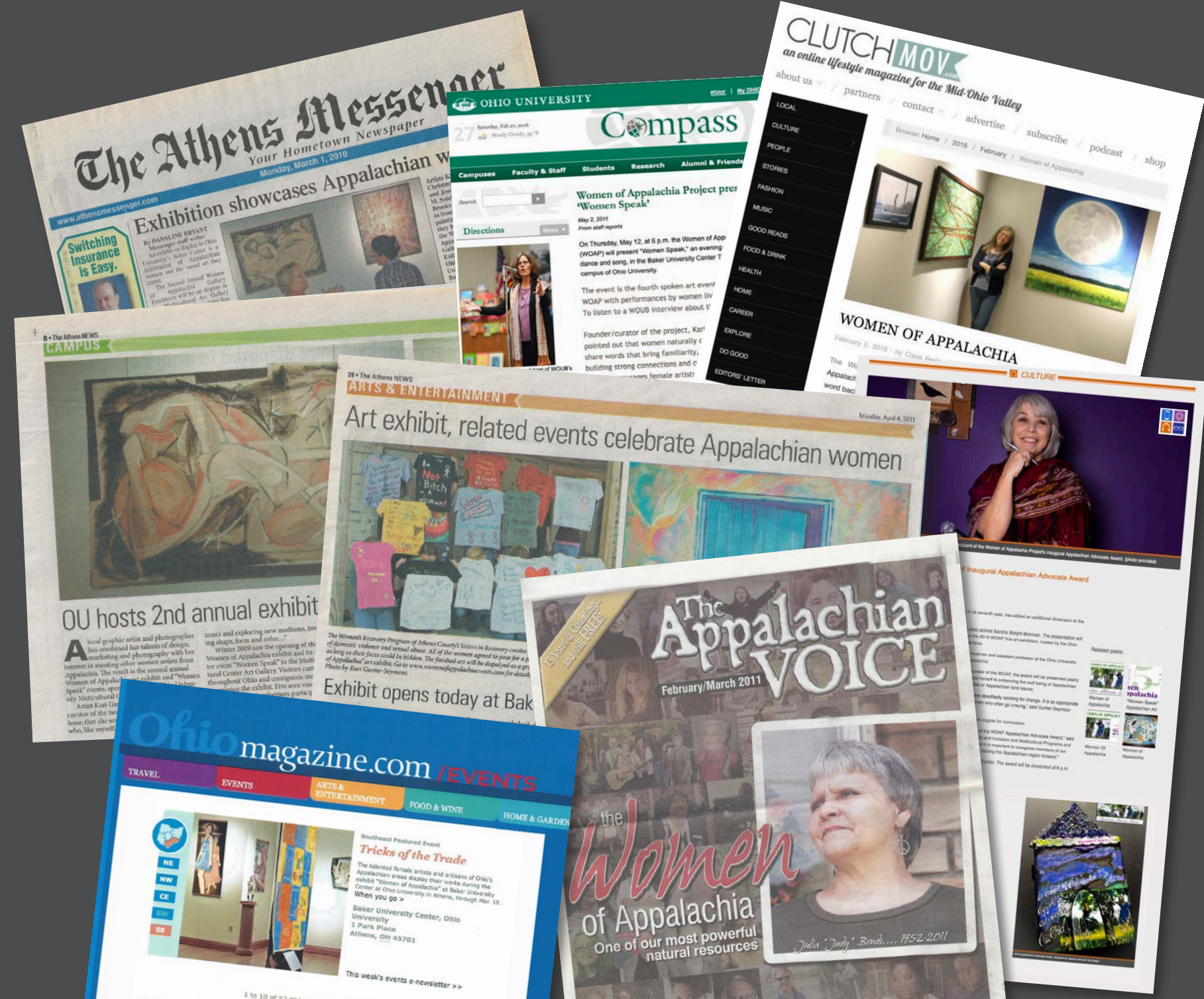


## 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Women of Appalachia their stories and their art STORY • POETRY • SONG

A friend once told me "It's a easier to make a job, than to find one." I began thinking it would be easier to make a show, make a performance than it would be to actually find an exhibit or performance that would be sensitive to my needs as an Appalachian woman. How could I help myself and others like me, female Appalachian artists looking for an environment that would welcome emerging artists as well as established, of diverse ages, backgrounds and artistic genres - a "safe" space, in which to be completely creative.

The Women of Appalachia Project started with nine artists – five visual artists and four spoken word artists, all from Athens County. The following year the "Call for Art" went out to women from all 420 Appalachian counties. This year marks the seventh year of the project and includes visual and spoken word artists from throughout Ohio, West Virginia and Kentucky.

– Kari Gunter-Seymour Peterson  
Director, Women of Appalachia Project  
Photographer/Poet







# PARTNERS

①

**ARTS/West**  
132 W. State St.  
Athens, OH

②

**Columbus Poetry Forum**  
Bossy Grrls  
2598 N High St  
Columbus, OH

③

**Bowen House**  
196 N Market Street  
Logan, OH

④

**Parkersburg Art Center**  
725 Market St.  
Parkersburg, WV

⑤

**West Virginia University**  
1549 University Ave.  
Morgantown, WV

⑥

**Multicultural Center Art Gallery**  
Baker University Center  
Ohio University  
Athens, OH

⑦

**Pump House Center for the Arts**  
1 Enderlin Circle  
Chillicothe, OH





## FINE ART

“I WANTED TO BE A PART OF WOAP because it is important to me to be part of a woman's art exhibit that is associated with the place I live. I have been entering other area shows for the last 10+ years. This is one show I am always happy to participate in. The Women of Appalachia Project provides an opportunity to be proud of belonging totally to the place I call home.

The fine art and written/oral works that come from this group of women is outstanding. This project has powerful energy, creating many new friendships and collaborations. I feel privileged to be part of this show and will continue sending in my application with new works yearly.

– Danette Pratt  
Fiber, Ceramics, Paint  
Coolville, OH

FAR LEFT:  
“I feel very strongly that women of Appalachia have always been the backbone of their own communities. Female artists traditionally have had a lot of trouble getting exposure, have had a lot of problem even getting recognized as artists. It's really important that women in the 20th century are starting to get exposure, and people are going ‘Oh you're an artist?’ not ‘Oh isn't that cute?’ It's important that we all work together and support each other.”

– Barbara Fisher  
Mixed Media  
Athens, OH



“ I MET SO MANY GREAT WOMEN ARTISTS that I still keep in contact with. I find it very inspiring to see what other women are creating. Thanks to WOAP, my sculpture “Trunk” was featured on the front page of several newspapers and web articles – great exposure, the most I have ever had from one show!

*The variety and mastery of artwork in this group exhibition brings a new modern face to the Appalachia woman.*

– Lavana Lemley  
Mixed Media Sculptor  
Parkersburg, WV

FAR RIGHT:  
“Parkersburg, Virginia? Is that near Richmond?” I hear that a lot.

When the ‘West’ is emphasized the second time through, I get *The Look* – a very real thing that any woman from my region will recognize immediately. It’s a dismissive look, the thesis behind Kari Gunter-Seymour Peterson’s ‘Women of Appalachia Project.’

WOAP’s burgeoning group of female artists all know very well that it is not nearly enough to make loud denials. The Women of Appalachia: with Their Stories & Their Art, do the best possible thing one can do with an impression: they cover it with paint, layer it in language, put it on tape or in a frame behind glass, and generally hang it out there so the sun shines all over it. The resulting exhibits are rowdy, (dare I say “girl-strous?”) often brilliant, a little rough around the edges. It is neither apologist nor placating. In the two years our museum (392 miles from Richmond) has been associated with the ‘Art’ part of Women of Appalachia, the show has grown from a colonic to a chrysalis.”

– Abby Hayhurst,  
Executive Director  
Parkersburg Art Center, Parkersburg, WV







“A WONDERFUL EXPERIENCE OF SISTERHOOD. I have been making and selling pottery for 30+ years but when I took a few years off to “finish” remodeling my 100 year old farmhouse the isolation was overwhelming.

A piece that I made and thought might never be exhibited seem to epitomize what WOAP is all about. “Scarred Woman” (and I) was accepted for the 2013 exhibition. She developed a crack/scar across her cheek in the glaze fire. As it turned out, it was the scare that made her so unique.

The farmhouse is still not “finished” but a whole new generation of women have moved into my neighborhood, I have been encouraging them to enter their art in WOAP, a show that empowers and nurtures all women.

– Carol McDonough  
Glass/Clay/Mixed Media  
Rutland, OH

FAR LEFT:  
“I participate in WOA because I work in an isolated rural environment. It is a way to get my work out to the public along with a group of women who probably also work in fairly isolated situations. I use social media to connect with other artists as well as participating in several shows a year, but I believe the WOA strives to exhibit both what it is like for women artists in our area and the varied types of art that women are creating here. We don’t fit into a mold, the work is all different.”

– Beth Nash  
Paint/Mixed Media  
Whipple, OH



“EACH YEAR I START EARLY, MAKE A PLAN concerning the work I want to create to enter in the Women of Appalachia exhibit because it gives me a great sense of pride. I love that I am part of an exhibit that travels and highlights so many talented women artists. Appalachia is such a rich environment to work in and this exhibit enables all of its participants to explore the possibilities of what we can do individually as well as together.

– Kelly Kalfs Lawrence  
Clay/Mixed Media  
Athens, OH

FAR RIGHT:

“My photography has been published and displayed in exhibitions all over the world. I spend hours packing my pieces for shipping. It’s costly to ship the work and I am almost never able to travel to the locations for opening receptions, and so miss out on meeting other artists or seeing other artists work.

I submitted to the Women of Appalachia Project because of its reputation and the exhibition galleries are only hours from my home. I not only have been able to participate in all of the opening receptions, but I have helped transport art and hang the exhibits – very special times of art fellowship.”

– Marcia Nighswander  
Photography  
Athens, OH







“*THROUGHOUT MY CHILDHOOD, I heard sermons about the depravity of homosexuality and how all of the sick, perverted gays were going to burn in hell. I grew up feeling terrible about myself, wishing I could change, and being completely terrified that I was going to hell and there was nothing I could do about it.*

*As an adult, I’m an introvert, easily overwhelmed. I have not been active in attending receptions, networking with other artists, or submitting to exhibitions or contests as I should have.*

*A friend told me about the Women of Appalachia Project. I’d never entered a juried exhibition before. I created a painting called “God Hates Fags.” As requested, I also submitted a paragraph that distilled my thoughts of how living in Appalachia has influenced me and my work. I thought it would be poorly received. The last thing I expected was an acceptance email!*

*A reporter from the “Parkersburg News and Sentinel” heard about the story behind my paintings wrote an article—the first time I have ever had any sort of attention like this, and it wouldn’t have happened if I had not taken a chance entering my work in WOAP.*

*Needless to say, my self-confidence is much improved having received such great feedback. It gave me the courage to enter other exhibits. I am now scheduled for a solo exhibition at the Wheeling Artisan Center in Wheeling, West Virginia in October of this year. I’m creating a brand new body of work!*

– Chris Sturm  
Paint  
Washington, WV





photo provided by Marcia Nighswander

# APPALACHIAN ADVOCATE AWARD

February 12, 2016, Ohio University Mutcultural Center Art Gallery, Athens, OH:  
THE INAUGURAL WOMEN OF APPALACHIA PROJECT, “APPALACHIAN ADVOCATE AWARD” was presented to local activist Sandra Sleight-Brennan, center, by Jack Wright, left, musician, retired assistant professor in the Ohio University School of Film and longtime advocate of Appalachia, and Kari Gunter-Seymour Peterson, right, Founder/Curator of the Women of Appalachia Project.

THE AWARD WILL BE GIVEN YEARLY TO AN OUTSTANDING APPALACHIAN WOMAN WHO HAS DEDICATED HERSELF TO ENHANCING THE WELL BEING OF:

- APPALACHIAN CULTURE
- APPALACHIAN WOMEN’S HEALTH
- APPALACHIAN FAMILIES
- APPALACHIAN LAND ISSUES

The inaugural award was designed and created by collaborative artists Jessica Held and Tere Sager, well known for their series *House of Love*. A new artist(s) will be selected annually to design and create each year’s one-of-a-kind award.



“WOAP has led to new artistic opportunities. We’ve sold many of our pieces during WOAP exhibitions. Participating motivates us to create new work and led to the first time our artwork was published, when WOAP was chosen to be featured in *Appalachia Rising: Stories of Hope and Achievement for Ohio’s Appalachian Hills and Valleys*, our piece was included with the article.

Needless to say, we were incredibly pleased to have been selected to create the very first WOAP Appalachian Advocate Award!”

Jessica: “The artwork in WOAP exhibits have a variety of individuality and together as a group becomes a cohesive whole. The openings feel like a celebration of us all!”

Tere: “I love making art with all of my heart, but I don’t particularly love showing my art. WOAP has changed that for me.”

— Jessica Held and Tere Sager  
*Mixed Media*  
Athens, OH





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# SPOKEN WORD

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## WHERE DO THEY GO?

– by Wendy McVicker

When the dead leave us,  
where do they go?  
Are they lolling on clouds,  
watching us weep as they play  
instruments they never touched  
in this life?  
Are they wandering  
in murk and mist, howling?  
Have they crossed  
the black river, forgotten  
our names?

Is that his voice I hear  
when the geese fly over  
in September?  
Has the blue of her eyes  
entered this stone, this shimmer  
at the edge of the sea, the blue  
jay's feather?  
And that cool touch I feel  
at dusk on the trail  
by the water--?

What is forever,  
if not this moment,  
when I turn toward you  
in the warmth of our bed,  
and feel your pulse  
echoing my own?

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### FAR LEFT:

"I have been involved with Women Speak since the beginning, when we were four poets reading in the context of a richly various art show. It has been exciting to watch this project grow to include women of many ages, spread over an ever-wider geographical area, and exploring a variety of expressive forms: poetry, always; but also essay, song, story, dance. Through sharing our experience of living in these green hills, we show that we, too, contain multitudes: we are many, various, and strong."

– Wendy McVicker  
*Poetry*  
Athens, OH

"What is heredity and what causes us to look backward? There seems to be a human need to seek what came before and to identify with a story. I am a story teller and I found my people through the Women of Appalachia Project. This project fulfills my need to look back while moving forward through the artistry of storytelling. Through the project I began collaboration with my great friend Wendy McVicker. Wendy invited me to play with her at a poetry reading in 2010. Our collaboration turned into the group 'another language altogether.' We have traveled all over Ohio performing and showing off our unique Appalachian arts community. I like that this project honors our heritage and our histories."

– Emily Prince  
*Story/Song*  
Nelsonville, OH



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## POCKETS

– by Becky Banasiak Code

I love pockets; yes I do. Like Peter Pan, I am a pocket pushover: I will gladly settle for any kind of pocket that Wendy will sew onto my tunic, simply for the pleasure of having one.

My days of wearing tights and flying about the room may be long gone, but I still love pockets of all kinds. I have grown quite attached to that little “pill” pocket usually found on a pair of blue jeans just within the top of the right-front pocket, into which only a finger or two can be inserted. The additional Velcro pockets on cargo-style pants are like dessert to me: excessive, but oh-so-pleasurable where I can stash my Chapstick, Swiss Army knife, fingernail clippers. But I am especially enamored of those seemingly bottomless pants pockets in which I unconsciously bury my hands and arms practically up to the elbow.

I have never carried a purse, never cared for a one. I remember, as a little girl, fiercely resisting my mother’s valiant attempts to dress me in a coordinated Easter outfit: matching hat, gloves and pocketbook. Pocketbook! What a misnomer! Neither a pocket nor a book, either of which I’d readily take over a purse.

Perhaps I’m a pocket neurotic ...

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“Before becoming involved with WOAP, I felt alone and isolated as a writer, not knowing if my work held any value or was worthy of being shared with other people. Hearing the work of other writers in the Women Speak community instills me with the confidence to put my work out there , inspired me to dig deeper to submit more of my work for publication, be more authentic and vulnerable on the page.

Women Speak events provide so many opportunities for me to read my work in public and to receive feedback from the audience at the receptions afterwards. Audience members often share their memories, similar experiences that my writing has described and leads to fruitful discussions that typically don’t happen when just submitting your work into the nebulous void of print publication. Establishing these soulful connections with complete strangers and knowing that my work has struck a chord gives me the courage to keep writing.”

– Becky Banasiak Code  
Essay  
Albany, OH





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## MY GALAXY

– by Megan Womz Bihn

I tried to write you, but the postman won't deliver  
Outside of this atmosphere, so I wish you'd reconsider  
Coming back to town,  
Coming back down

So I set up a telescope out in the back yard  
I've been checking out the Pleiadies, Venus and Mars  
But I don't see your face, anywhere out in space

And you used to be so close to me  
You used to sleep in my bed  
And I didn't need a telescope to see  
You were in my galaxy  
Anywhere close to me

I look through the eyepiece and I'm finding Orion  
And the Nebula and Sirius, space debris flyin'  
And the satellites, they all seem so close tonight

Then I turned the glass two degrees to the south  
Just to catch you in the distance, walking right out  
Of the Milky Way, 24,000 light years away

And you used to be so close to me  
You used to sleep in my bed  
And I didn't need a telescope to see  
You were in my galaxy  
Anywhere close to me

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"Appalachia is a refuge. I keep coming home here. I love the way the natural world blends right into the lives of the people. It's a slower pace. There's enough time to be considerate and creative. The Women of Appalachia Project encompasses all of this, gives it's artists room to breathe and grow."

– Megan Womz Bihn  
Song  
Athens, OH







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## DINNER BUCKET

– by Sarah Diamond Burroway

Dinner bucket. Lunch pail. Grub box. It doesn't matter what you call it. It was a worn, rugged part of the uniform for every man punching a time clock. Shiny and silver when new, now rough and grayed. A black handle curved to fit the hand as well as any work glove. Once, it sat by the kitchen door, a testament to hard work and purpose. Now, the dinner bucket sits idle, shoved to the back of a rarely opened cupboard.

When I pull it from the dark corner of the shelf, I remember how Daddy carried his dinner bucket to the west end gate at the Ashland Works of the American Rolling Mill Company every day. For thirty-one years at Armco, gripped firmly in his leathered fist, it was as much a part of his steelworker's mantle as his steel-toed boots.

I loved that dinner bucket. It was, to a seven year old girl, part of Daddy. And so, it was important to me that it was my job to help Mommy fill it every night, right before time to climb the stairs to bed.

Miracle Whip, never mustard, spread ever-so-carefully, all the way to the crust's edge. Yellow cheese from a big block, cut thin with a curious wire stretched at the end of a wooden handle.

“Don't run your finger on that wire or you'll slice it off ...!”

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“The Women of Appalachia Project has sparked a fire in me. Being selected as the first Kentuckian was wonderful and I loved the warmth and acceptance I experienced when meeting the other women. When we share our work, reading and reciting, I hear so many voices – beautiful, poignant, some tragic or dark – but all pages from the same Appalachian book, written by talented, expressive women. WOAP has inspired me to pursue my Master of Fine Arts in Writing.”

– Sarah Diamond Burroway  
Story  
Flatwoods, KY





LEFT:

"Through *Women Speak*, the literary project of Women of Appalachia Project, I've found additional opportunities for understanding, growth, and a sense of regional community greater than I'd known before. The probing, experiential, historical, and imaginative literary work related to Appalachia has encouraged me to believe that there can be, will be, change.

This is a special group of women.

Women Speak has been providing opportunities to share increasingly artful literary work for many years, providing women a chance to develop public speaking skills and to help people inside and outside of the region realize that women of Appalachia are thoughtful, strong women with a keen sense of humor, resourcefulness, and place. Serving as a juror to choose promising writers to participate in the public readings has enriched my understanding of the spirit of this beautiful but troubled area."

— Kathleen Burgess  
2015-16 Juror/Poet  
Chillicothe, OH





FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Kari Gunter-Seymour Peterson

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GUNTER-SEYMOUR  
PHOTOGRAPHY