



Singing Behind the Plow

2023 ANNUAL REPORT



Dear Friends,

Since 1925, the Folk School has been an anchor institution in western North Carolina and southern Appalachia. In 2023, the Folk School marked its 98th year transforming lives through experiences in learning, community life, and self-discovery. While we have adapted over the decades to meet challenges and opportunities, every Sunday I remind new students that four core values—joy, kindness, non-competitiveness, and stewardship—are still at the core of our work together, all these years later.

In 2023 the campus felt fully alive as 5,765 students across 850 classes engaged in craft, music, dance, nature studies, foodways, writing, and more. We provided 118 scholarships worth \$101,273 for students who otherwise could not attend; welcomed 62 work exchange students through our work study and host programs; hosted four immersive mentorship experiences for 15 students in traditional Appalachian craft; and served over 275 young people through our Little Middle Folk School, Intergenerational Week, Artist Innovation Mentorship, and Junior Appalachian Musicians programs.

2023 also welcomed back the full panoply of our events, including free community events like Friends & Family Day and Forge After Dark, which culminated in our first live Blacksmith & Craft Auction since 2019, raising over \$35,000 for our programs. Our 47th Annual Fall Festival saw record numbers, attracting 229 craft and food vendors and 13,000 people to Brasstown. And at the holidays, we revived the long-standing traditions of our community-centered Olde Folks and Kids parties, celebrating our past and embracing our future with 250 elders and children.

As I enter my second year as executive director, I continue to be awed and humbled by the generous support of our Folk School family and all that you make possible here on campus and in our community. In the coming pages, we recognize our supporters, present our audited financial performance, and highlight just some of the things that made 2023 a great year. You will see that we are moving beyond the deepest effects of the pandemic and towards our centennial year with both strength and confidence.

I hope to see you on campus soon.



Bethany E. Chaney
Executive Director



About the cover

Campfire Gathering in Front of the Clay Spencer
Blacksmith Shop, Forge After Dark 2023.

John C. Campbell Folk School STRATEGIC PLAN

Vision

A community that awakens, enlivens, and enlightens the world.

Mission

The Folk School transforms lives, bringing people together in a nurturing environment for experiences in learning and community life that spark self-discovery.

Values

Joy

We bring originality, creativity and passion to all endeavors
—we sing behind the plow.

Kindness

We treat everyone with respect, humility and warmth.

Stewardship

We honor the traditions and spirit of the Folk School as we guide its evolution and preserve it for the future.

Non-competitiveness

We support and affirm each other in lifelong growth.

Priorities & Goals

Programming

The Folk School's programs inspire lifelong learning in a diverse audience.

Human Capital

The Folk School attracts, nurtures, and retains people who personify, support and further the school's mission and values.

Community Relations

The Folk School cultivates authentic relationships that inspire our community's ongoing support and involvement.

Physical, Environmental and Technological Infrastructure

The Folk School's infrastructure effectively serves and supports our students, staff, instructors, visitors and community.

Finances

The Folk School continually strengthens its financial position.





Sienna Shute trims a bowl created for Empty Bowls 2023.

2023 Supporters

The individuals and organizations listed here contributed to the Folk School in 2023. We appreciate their generosity, which is critical to our mission and supports all of our core values.

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Bread Baking instructor Emily Buehler teaches students how to shape a baguette in the Cooking Studio.

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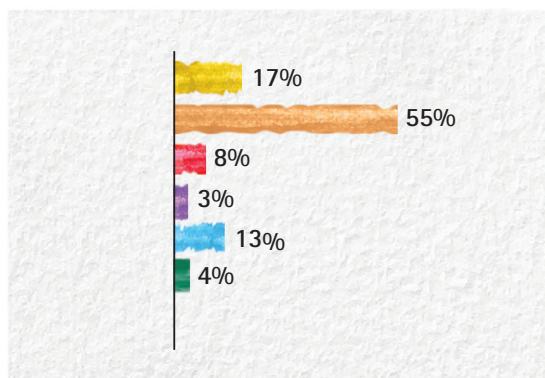


Operating Financial Information

	2023	2022
Operating Income		
Contributions, grants and funds released from restriction	\$1,576,766	\$1,944,945
Tuition, housing & meals	5,131,770	4,287,400
Sales*	738,397	665,060
Investment return	276,199	182,384
Realized/Unrealized gains (losses)	1,181,809	(1,955,855)
Other	353,172	683,333
Total Operating Income	\$9,258,113	\$5,807,267
Operating Expenses		
Instruction	\$1,196,574	\$1,171,730
Services	1,535,519	1,405,633
Programs	1,173,092	1,165,567
Marketing	747,398	806,435
Facilities	925,612	931,838
Administration	2,289,884	2,312,360
Fundraising	242,798	272,753
Total Operating Expenses	\$8,110,877	\$8,066,316
Change in Net Operating Assets	\$1,147,236	\$(2,259,049)

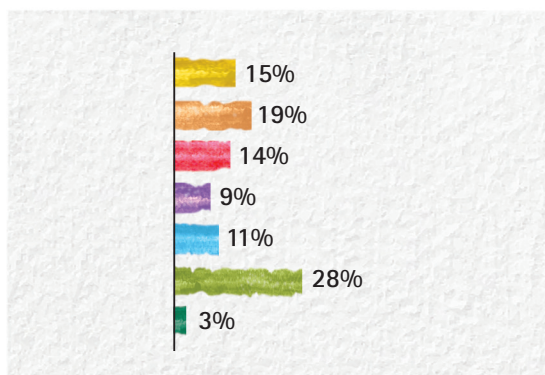
Operating Income Fiscal Year 2023

Contributions and grants:
 Tuition, housing & meals:
 Retail shop sales:
 Investment Return:
 (Unrealized gain/loss):
 Other:



Operating Expenses Fiscal Year 2023

Instruction:
 Services:
 Programs:
 Marketing:
 Facilities:
 Administration:
 Fundraising:



Clockwise from top: Students in the JAM Program play for a dance in the Keith House Community Room, workstudies hold cornbread made from corn they milled from our garden, instructors Jan Bouterse & Robert James share a "thumbs up" in the Woodworking Studio after a successful weeklong class: Build a Stickley Table.

Audited Financial Information

Balance Sheet	12/31/2023	12/31/2022
Assets		
Cash and investments	\$13,740,575	\$12,623,724
Property and equipment, net	4,402,441	4,590,562
Other	593,477	661,126
Total Assets	\$18,736,493	\$18,775,412
Liabilities and Net Assets		
Liabilities	\$2,247,607	\$2,533,762
Net assets	16,488,886	15,341,650
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$18,736,493	\$18,775,412

* Sales include Craft Shop and Class Material Fees.

A full copy of the audited financial statement is available on request.

Olive Dame Campbell Society

One of the Folk School's four values is Stewardship, which directs us to honor the traditions and spirit of the school as we guide its evolution and preserve it for the future. Our co-founder Olive Campbell was the first to guide the school's evolution and, with her inclusion of the Folk School in her will, she demonstrated her commitment to preserving it for the future. Those who name the Folk School as a beneficiary in their estate plans are stewards themselves and, as such, are honored members of our Olive Dame Campbell Society.



Olive Dame Campbell

Estate gifts can help us withstand financial crises such as the Covid pandemic, which forced us to close for many months. The gifts are typically allocated to our endowment, dividends from which help fund our annual operating budgets.

There are several ways to include the Folk School in your will:

- A specific dollar amount or percentage of your total estate
- A percentage of your retirement accounts such as an IRA
- Securities such as stocks and bonds
- Proceeds from the sale of property such as real estate
- Life insurance policy benefits

If you are interested in including the Folk School in your estate plans, please contact Mackenzie Harkins at mackenzie@folkschool.org or 800-FOLK-SCH, x.111.

We offer our deepest appreciation to the following living supporters who have made provisions for the school in their estate plans:

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Scott Cole & Sheryl Koch	Sam Hibbs	Jennifer Reis	Beth Woody
John Combs	Nancy Hinds	Owen Riedesel	Angela Wynn
Nick Cook	Beth Holmberg	June Rollins	Alan Young

Grantmakers and Other Institutions

Community Foundation of Western North Carolina
 Country Dance and Song Society
 Folk Education Association of America
 Fred A. Moss Charity Trust
 Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies
 Wayne C. Henderson Music Festival Inc.
 North Carolina Arts Council
 North Carolina Community Foundation
 North Carolina Museum of Art Artist Innovation Mentorship
 Windgate Foundation





Richard Carter Demos at Woodcarving Community Night, Tammy Elwell in Batik Dyeing Class.

Scholarships Transform Lives

Each year, the Folk School awards donor-funded scholarships to those who would otherwise be unable to attend due to financial limitations. These scholarships are provided to a diverse range of recipients who are welcomed into our nurturing environment. We thank the 38 generous donors who provided \$101,273 in scholarship funding in 2023. 118 students received scholarships providing partial or full financial support for tuition, housing, and meals. There are two ways to fund scholarships:

Individual Scholarships: Provide a single scholarship for tuition, housing, and meals with a gift of \$1,800. Share the Folk School experience by donating online on our [Scholarship Giving page](#), or visit our [Studio Support pages](#) to make a scholarship gift to a specific program area, like Clay or Jewelry.

If you are interested in this option, please contact Mackenzie Harkins at mackenzie@folkschool.org or 800-FOLK-SCH, x.111.

2023 Board of Directors

You often hear us say that the Folk School is a place to bring folks together. Well, these are the people who help do that. They work to make sure the Folk School stays true to its mission of providing educational experiences that are joyful and enlivening.

Mary Ackerly	Lillian Gantsoudes	Dina Norris
Jess Austin	Joanna Haas	Wil Posey
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Chris Dockery	Maritza Maxwell	Jack Smoot



The lists in this report are accurate to the best of our knowledge. If your name was omitted or is incorrectly listed, please call our Development team at 1-800-FOLK-SCH or 828-837-2775 x.111 and we will update this digital report accordingly. Our listing convention is to list alphabetically by last name and then alphabetically by first name.



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