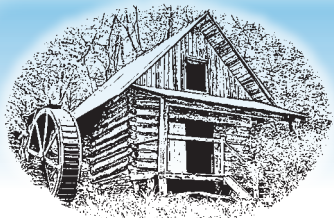


2009



# Foxfire News

## Strike While the Iron's Hot

Even though blacksmiths are relatively scarce these days, phrases like "too many irons in the fire" and the title above are still in common usage, showing how deeply ingrained in our heritage the smith's trade really is. In many Appalachian communities, the blacksmith's shop was the hub of local news, as well as where everyone went to get their metal tools, pots and pans, and farming equipment repaired.

There's something hypnotic about the flames in the forge and the steady rhythm of hammer on anvil. If you don't believe this, just ask Barry Stiles. Beginning years ago with the repair of a family home, Barry became familiar with the maintenance of older construction, and has worked various preservation efforts, most recently in the Sautee-Nacoochee area in northeast Georgia. Recognizing the benefit to historic structures' purity, Barry originally pursued blacksmithing so that he could make his own traditional tools for accurately repairing period structures. He has been smithing for over 5 years now and is thoroughly enjoying the frequent opportunities to share his hobby with tour participants.

Most guided-tour participants stand transfixed as Barry makes a simple J-hook or a twisted S-hook with just a few minutes' hammering during his demonstrations, proving that people's fascination with fire and metal still lives. Available for groups of 6 or more, guided tours can be scheduled by contacting Foxfire at 706-746-5828 or foxfire@foxfire.org.



*Since taking on curator duties for the Foxfire Museum and Heritage Center last December, Barry Stiles has added some fire to Foxfire (literally) by firing up the blacksmith's forge at the Museum for many of his guided tours (above, with students from last year's Magazine class) as well as other events. For Foxfire's new Children's Heritage Day workshops, Barry heated nails and held them with tongs (far left) while each child hammered a nail into their own souvenir J-hook (left).*

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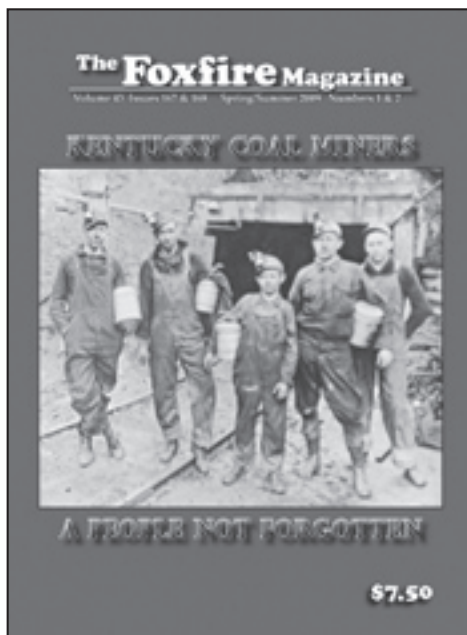
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# The Foxfire Magazine Program

The Foxfire Magazine has been in continuous production since it began in 1966. Created by an English class at Rabun Gap-Nacoochee School, the Magazine operated there until 1977, when it moved to Rabun County High School. The Magazine program has never been a typical classroom endeavor. It came into being because of an open dialog between teacher and students about *how* to learn their required course material. From this beginning, the program grew to maintain the role of student leadership in the program. The stories of early Appalachia that struck such a chord with readers of the fledgling magazine were drawn directly from residents of the region surrounding the school. The program recognized the value of personalizing learning by drawing from the students' own community to aid their learning. The wide-spread appreciation of the students' work became clear as more and more people clamored for copies of the Magazine—from across the United States and abroad. The program quickly accepted that the presence of an audience beyond the normal peer/teacher dynamic tended to encourage students to work harder in their pursuits.

Working from these three fundamental concepts, Foxfire's students produce two double-issues of *The Foxfire Magazine* each school year. In doing so, the students are also developing skills in writing, communication, collaboration, time management, desktop publishing, decision-making, and problem-



**Issue 167/168 of The Foxfire Magazine, featuring stories from the coal-mining region of southeastern Kentucky.**

solving. Leadership, teamwork, self-discipline, and responsibility are also vital pieces of the program. Through their hard work and the acceptance of the audience beyond the classroom (subscribers and readers), the students gain confidence in their own abilities, competence, and self-worth—all while preserving the genuine stories, personalities, skills, and lifetimes of the people of the Southern Appalachian mountains, sharing this unique heritage with the world.

This fall, the Magazine continues its 43rd year of production. English teacher Justin Shook, from nearby Young Harris, Georgia, is beginning his third year providing the Magazine students with language and grammar expertise. New to the program last year, technology teacher Justin Spillers, from Clermont, Georgia, takes on a second year with the program. He received his business administration degree from North Georgia College and State University and teaches a mixture of

computer applications classes. He comments, "I was familiar with the heritage of the magazine prior to accepting the position at Rabun County High School, and I am excited to be a part of the program. I feel a great level of responsibility to continue building on this tradition that is a source of pride within our community."

For more information on *The Foxfire Magazine* program, or for details on subscribing to this student-produced publication, please visit [www.foxfire.org](http://www.foxfire.org), or contact the classroom by email at [magazine@foxfire.org](mailto:magazine@foxfire.org).



**Justin Shook (left) and Justin Spillers (right), the classroom facilitators for The Foxfire Magazine.**

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Lee Carpenter, *Foxfire News*, P.O. Box 541, Mountain City, GA 30562; Phone: 706-746-5828; FAX: 706-746-5829; [foxfire.org](http://foxfire.org); [www.foxfire.org](http://www.foxfire.org)  
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# Students: Leadership & Scholarships

Again this year, some dedicated students gave up a few precious days of their summer vacation to learn a little more about interviewing, photography, and Foxfire. Classroom facilitators joined six students from the magazine program at Rabun County High School for a week-long training session, funded by proceeds raised by the annual Fall Heritage Festival event.

Former Foxfire student and staff member Kaye Carver Collins once again worked with students and facilitators to give them more information on how to produce *The Foxfire Magazine*, covering roles and responsibilities in the classroom, interview skills, and procedures, before accompanying the students and facilitators on an interview. Facilitators Justin Shook and Justin Spillers talked with the students about the classroom experience and strategies to employ during the coming year.

This year's Leadership students were visited by truly special visitors—three gentlemen from Harar, Ethiopia, who came to visit Foxfire to learn about how Foxfire has gone about documenting the Southern Appalachian heritage, in an effort to begin preserving their own rich, unique culture. Read the article on page seven of this newsletter for more details.

For over 30 years, Rabun County High School students involved in Foxfire programs have received scholarship funding from The Foxfire Fund, Inc. These scholarships are currently funded through an endowment established by philanthropist Julia B. Fleet, who came to Foxfire looking for a way to express her affinity for the mountains of north Georgia and the people she met here. The Julia Fleet/Foxfire Scholarships are awarded based on four main criteria—student participation in Foxfire programs, each student's



*Participants in this year's Festival-proceed-funded Magazine Leadership Training session included (L to R) facilitator Justin Shook, students Keifer Phillips and Richelle Coalley, facilitator Justin Spillers, and students Stephanie Dunlap and Ben McClain. Not shown: Alex Owens.*

potential for success, their demonstrated financial needs, and their academic achievements.

To receive this scholarship, students must have either participated in *The Foxfire Magazine* program at Rabun County High School or have contributed at least 80 volunteer hours to Foxfire during the previous year. Consideration is given to quantity and quality of participation—Foxfire classes taken, number of articles written, leadership positions held, and involvement with any special projects, events, or committees. Scholarship recipients are encouraged to maintain active volunteer involvement with Foxfire—a way to help the students maintain ties to Foxfire itself, and, most importantly, to their home community.

Each student's application and information is anonymously ranked by the Scholarship Committee of the Foxfire Community Board and by Foxfire staff. Individual scholarship awards are then calculated based on the available funding, weighted by each student's overall ranking. Community Board members Emma Chastain, Bill Fountain, Ramey Henslee, and Juanita Shope served as this year's scholarship committee.

In the scholarship program's 33 years, 301 local students have been awarded a total of approximately \$785,000. For the 2009/2010 academic year, five new scholarships were awarded to Casi Best, Samantha Fountain, Krystal Harkins, Viola Nichols, and Anna Phillips. Six Rabun County students are continuing their higher education this year with the assistance of the Julia Fleet/Foxfire Scholarships. These students are Chelsea Forester, Ashley O'Shields, Taylor Patterson, Sheri Thurmond, Jessica McKay Woodall, and Heather Woods.



*Five graduating Rabun County High School seniors were awarded new Foxfire/Julia Fleet Scholarships, joining six previous graduates in sharing this year's \$25,000 in scholarship funding. (L to R) Krystal Harkins, Viola Nichols, Samantha Fountain, Anna Phillips, Casi Best.*



# Museum Events—Living History D

This year's Living History Days was an even more expansive hit than last year, with well over 500 people visiting the Museum during the event's two days, Friday and Saturday, April 17–18. Scores of families and curious adults came to watch and take part in the wide array of activities presented by local home-school families and friends of Foxfire. Dressed once again in their period clothing, the demonstrators gave everyone a glimpse into the traditional Appalachian settler's life of 200 years ago. While following the tour trail through the grounds, visitors again saw the Museum brought to life by mountain folk cooking in a stone fireplace and working iron in a coal-fired forge. They were able to participate in children's games and traditional church services, and try their hands at quilting and making rope from twine. There were many new attractions added to this year's event, too. Several folks were scattered around the Museum, sharing information and tales of Appalachia and the Museum's artifacts with curious visitors. Other new demonstrations were in place, as well—dyeing wool yarn with natural plant materials, crafting toy dolls from corn shucks, and making fine wooden buckets were among the new ideas that the home-school families and others brought to Living History Days this year.

Once again, both the enthusiasm of the demonstrators and the event's attendance and reception by the public are the truest validation of the care and hard work invested by Foxfire students over the last four decades, in order to preserve the knowledge, methods, and tools of their charismatic and resourceful Appalachian forbearers—so that others may enjoy it for generations to come.

A new offering at the Museum this summer, Children's Heritage Day events were a big hit with the kids who participated (and the parents who tagged along). Organized by Michelle Bourlet and Laura Lane, two of these Saturday workshops for kids were held this summer for ages 7-12. Each event featured a varying mixture of demonstrations and hands-on activities.

After learning a little about spinning and weaving from The Village Weaver (Sharon Grist), the kids wove their own hot mats or coasters on cardboard looms. After watching Foxfire curator Barry Stiles use anvil and hammer in the Museum's forge, each child worked the mechanical bellows and hammered a 60-penny nail into a decorative J-hook. Broom-maker Carole Morse demonstrated her craft, and then assisted the 10-and-up participants (due mainly to the strength required) in making their own small souvenir brooms from broom straw and twine. Perry Bourlet demonstrated the use of a shaving horse and draw knife, along with a few other woodworking tools, before letting the children use them to peel bark and shape their own hiking sticks. Other activities included the assembly of climbing bears and other simple toys from the past, and a session of traditional games including kick the can (a more challenging version of hide-and-seek), hide the hanky (guess who's holding the handkerchief behind their back), and marbles.

*For its second year, Living History Days grew to offer a new level of immersion in the ways of pioneer Appalachia. This year's event offered many glimpses of the old days, including demonstrations of soap-making (at right), hands-on experiences (below, left to right) ranging from utilitarian (rope-making) to purely entertaining (making corn shuck dolls), and a variety of woodworking skills (splitting oak shingles).*

*Foxfire artists-in-residence, broom-maker Carole Morse (below) and weaver Sharon Grist (right), joined in on the fun during the Museum's Children's Heritage Day events, sharing their love of their crafts with the children taking part in one of the new workshops.*





# Days and Children's Heritage Days



*It's smiles all around for both groups (above) of kids who took part in this year's first two Children's Heritage Day events at the Museum. (left) Keely Hill and Zoe Nuhfer "ride" the shaving horses, cutting bark from their hiking sticks. (bottom left) Eli Bundrick concentrates on "over, under" as he tries his hand at weaving. (bottom center) Courtney Kucharik says "Missed it by that much!" as her brother Robert prepares to take his shot in a game of marbles. (below) With curator Barry Stiles handling the hot iron nail with tongs, Riley Vinson works the hammer as his brother Ryan cranks the blower. (bottom) Paul Bourlet, Jeremy Nash, and Lewis "Roo" Reeves try to look innocent during a game of "hide the hanky."*





# Piedmont's Foxfire Approach Courses

This summer has seen another round of successful Foxfire teacher courses offered through the partnership with Piedmont College in Demorest. The Foxfire Course for Teachers models the Foxfire Approach to Teaching and Learning, including its pedagogical underpinnings. The Approach is neither a "method" nor a recipe for success. Each practitioner must be willing to rethink his or her own teaching methods and adapt the Approach to their particular subject areas, students, and curriculum requirements. Course participants engage in experiences that challenge and refine their own teaching practices, then shifts focus to the implementation of the Approach in their own classrooms, with provision for support and continued contact with other Foxfire-trained teachers.

Piedmont College professor and Course facilitator Hilton Smith conducted the summer's first K-12 Course at the Foxfire in May, between the end of regular classes and the beginning of summer school. This presented an opportunity for new Masters Degree-level teachers to assimilate the Approach into their planning prior to entering their first classroom. Hilton commented that this tactic produced an "unencumbered experience that seemed to work very well" and that there are plans in the works to repeat this course offering next year.

The second K-12 Course, held in June, was led by Hilton and Haley Beasley, and was attended by a mix of teachers representing several backgrounds, grade levels, and subject areas. This Course's experience was notably enhanced by some very special visitors from Harar, Ethiopia. Abdul Muhemen, Ahmed Zekaria, and Imran Ahmed traveled from eastern Africa to the United States in pursuit of beginning their own heritage preservation efforts. Their trip to Mountain City for



Visitors from culturally-rich Harar, Ethiopia, spent a week at the Foxfire Museum in Mountain City, taking in some other local offerings between participating in an Approach course and the Magazine Leadership Training program, including a visit to one of Mountain City herbalist Patricia Howell's medicinal plant classes. (L to R) Imran Ahmed, Abdul Muhemen, Patricia Howell, Ahmed Zekaria, Paulette Carpenter (of Foxfire).

the Course coincided with this summer's Magazine Leadership Training program, so the Harari fellows were able to experience a Foxfire-filled week of Approach training and interaction with Foxfire students (*see next page*). Hilton mentioned that, "By Wednesday, they had made the connection between [Foxfire's] oral history work and the Foxfire approach to instruction, leading Ahmed, for example, to consider returning to teaching high school in Harar so he could influence students in multiple ways, including oral history."

This year's third K-12 Course, held in July, was also an international event. Facilitators Connie Parrish and Sara Alice Tucker worked with a core group of Piedmont College graduate students that were joined by Daisuke Fujii, an education student from Tokyo, Japan, who is focusing on the Foxfire Approach in

his PhD dissertation, and by Sara Lam and Kiel Harell of the Rural China Education Foundation, an organization working with rural China schools to "empower students to improve their lives and their communities" and "bring together rural teachers, community members, education experts, and volunteers from inside and outside of China to pioneer new models of education based on the needs of rural China." Taking note of the collaborative and discussion-friendly nature of the Course, Sara Lam expressed that she "could not have learned everything [she] did without sharing in the rich and varied experiences of the other teachers who participated in the class."

Foxfire Approach courses are provided through a partnership with nearby Piedmont College in Demorest, GA, and can be taken for continuing education credit. Separate, focused courses are offered for K-12 teachers and for college professors. Contact Hilton Smith, Secondary Education Chair at Piedmont College, for more information by email at [hsmith@piedmont.edu](mailto:hsmith@piedmont.edu) or by telephone at 706-778-8500, ext. 1297.



The July Course for Teachers group (L to R): facilitator Hilton Smith, Lauren Hill, Sara Lam, facilitators Sara Tucker and Connie Parrish, Kiel Harell, Lisa Carnes, Audra Thomas, Barbara Ellingson, Daisuke Fujii, and Sharla Gladden (kneeling).

# Foxfire—Heard ‘Round the World

This summer, Foxfire hosted three visitors from almost halfway around the world—literally. On their first trip to the United States, Abdul Muhemen, Ahmed Zekaria, and Imran Ahmed of Harar, Ethiopia, visited Foxfire. Many years ago, Abdul was taught by visiting American teachers who had recently returned to Ethiopia and were urging him to visit the States. Meanwhile, Abdul’s former student Ahmed had begun researching ways to prevent the loss of Harar’s rich heritage and diverse culture. Ahmed’s connection came through U.S. Embassy staff member Michael McClelland, a Kentucky native who had grown up reading Foxfire publications and made the initial connection between Ahmed’s work and Foxfire. As a result of this convergence of influences, a trip was arranged and Abdul, Ahmed, and Ahmed’s student Imran came to Mountain City to learn how Foxfire students have preserved Southern Appalachia over the last four decades. During a packed week including a little sight-seeing and some American ice cream, Ahmed, Abdul, and Imran spent time with Foxfire staff and friends of the program, participated in Piedmont College’s training course in the Foxfire Approach to Teaching and Learning, took a tour of the Foxfire Museum, and visited the Magazine Leadership class to talk directly with current Foxfire Magazine facilitators and students. The article below (condensed from the original) was written by Foxfire student Ben McClain, highlighting some of the wealth of information that they learned about the Harari culture during Ahmed, Abdul, and Imran’s time here.



## A Heritage Apart From Our Own, by Ben McClain

Although many know of the country of Ethiopia, few are aware of the many unique cultures of the area. Ethiopia is located in the horn of Africa, near the continent’s eastern coast. At nearly twice the size of Texas, it boasts an estimated 80 million residents, making it over twice as densely populated as the Lone Star state. Ethiopia is one of Africa’s oldest countries, and contains over 80 different cultures and languages (each with multiple dialects). With that many ways of communicating, the language barrier can sometimes be a hassle, especially when trying to communicate the history and way of life of their ancestors.

Harar is one of the oldest cities in Ethiopia. Until 1875, when it was conquered by the Egyptians and lost its independence, its residents were considered “Devotedly Religious” and it was labeled a forbidden city. The people of Ethiopia believe that the major religious icons of Judaism, Christianity, and Muslim all lie hidden somewhere within the walls of Harar and Axum. Those icons, respectively, are The Ark of The Covenant, a piece of the cross on which Christ was crucified, and the tomb of the earliest Muslim followers.

One thing the city of Harar is unique for is its ritual feeding of the Dermeshseh. Dermeshseh, translated into English, means “young priest,” but these priests are unlike any you would find in the United States. What the people of Harar refer to as Dermeshseh, we call hyenas. Every night, the hyenas come out from their dens as scavengers to clean the city of Harar. Once a year, however, they are fed a porridge called werabashure, to renew their special past. The holiday that is dedicated to this ritual is called Ashura.

Another tradition of Ashura is the breaking of gourds. This tradition started when the citizens of Harar questioned the tolerance of alcohol within their city. While doing research on the topic, they came across a woman carrying a gourd in her hand and a baby on her back. When asked her opinion, she exclaimed, “Oh no! Do you know what alcohol has done for me?” She pointed to the baby on her back. “That is what alcohol has done for me! I used to carry my alcohol in this gourd. One night my older son drunk all of my alcohol, got very drunk, and raped me. I now have the shame of carrying not only my son’s brother, but also my son’s son on my back. Since then, I have been wandering, looking for a place where I can settle down and break this gourd.” The men doing the research were devastated, and they returned to their village and began breaking all of the alcohol bottles in their homes.

The final major activity of Ashura is the tradition of Prophetic Miracle. It is believed that on Ashura, many prophets were engaged with their survival miracles to transmit the belief of accepting the order of Creator. After the flood, Noah and his folk made thanks-giving porridge made from different cereals. Harar recalls this event and celebrates it by making special dinner porridge. On the tenth day of the first month of the Islamic calendar, the ritual feeding of the Dermeshseh, the breaking of gourds, and a dinner of porridge have been a festivity for the people of Harar.

As old as the city of Harar is, they still practice many of the rituals and traditions of their ancestors, and these are what Ahmed, Abdul, and Imran are trying to preserve. It would be a shame to let Harar’s rich history slip into the mists of time. I hope that anyone reading this will look into this wonderful East African country and its vast heritage. Places to learn more about Harar include websites [www.selamta.net/harar](http://www.selamta.net/harar) and [whc.unesco.org/en/list/1189](http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1189). There is also a recent novel, written by Camilla Gibb, called “Sweetness In The Belly.” I encourage anyone who has an interest in the religious history of Harar to read this novel.

The week spent with Ahmed, Abdul, and Imran was a real privilege. We learned so much from them, not only about their culture, but also about what they are doing to ensure that generations a hundred years from now can have the same opportunity to learn. Preserving heritage is a responsibility to humanity, and those who go the extra mile deserve recognition for what they do. There are quite a few miles between Ethiopia and Rabun County, and if we could thank Ahmed, Abdul, and Imran for every mile they traveled, we would. Sitting and talking with them has been a wonderful experience, and we hope that they can take something back from what we’ve shared with them.

During an exercise in the Magazine Leadership Training program, Imran Ahmed (front) works alongside Foxfire students Keifer Phillips (middle) and Ben McClain (back) as they each learn to make bark berry buckets—a traditional food-gathering container, made from poplar tree bark, that early Appalachian settlers adopted from the native Cherokee Indians.





# Saturday, September 26, 2009 FALL FESTIVAL

Each fall, Foxfire hosts a day of old-fashioned fun. On the guest list are local high school students who have been in Foxfire programs in Rabun County schools—especially those who have helped produce *The Foxfire Magazine* since 1966. Next on the list are Foxfire’s “contacts”—gracious souls who share their time, handiwork, and stories with Foxfire students, allowing them to preserve the culture that tamed the Appalachians. Hang on—there’s more! Storytellers, musicians, quilters, broom-makers, woodworkers, potters, metalsmiths, and more—folks who keep the traditions of Southern Appalachia alive today will be there, too. Is there room for more? The yard of the Old Dillard School is pretty spacious, so there’s one last group that Foxfire wants to invite—you and your family!

Join Foxfire for the 15th annual Fall Heritage Festival, from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. on Saturday, September 26, at the Old Dillard School in Dillard, Georgia (about 6 miles north of Clayton on U.S. Highway 441). Meet the students whose articles and interests fuel *The Foxfire Magazine*, and talk to some of the “contacts” - the folks whose lives are presented therein. Then take a stroll around and watch demonstrations of many of the skills that allowed the mountain settlers to

survive. Take time to talk with folks who enjoy keeping these skills alive—some of them will even let you try your own hand at their trades!

Please plan to make a day of it—lunch will be available at the event. There will be a game area for the kids and live bluegrass and gospel music on stage throughout the day. Don’t forget the Festival’s massive raffle—many dozens of unique items donated by regional businesses, typically including gift certificates, knickknacks, paintings, pottery, and much more (you don’t have to be present to win). All proceeds from the raffle and admissions help fund Foxfire student programs, furthering our students’ education and work experiences.

Come join the fun on Saturday, September 26, at the Old Dillard School (Dillard City Hall) from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m., and support the students of Rabun County and their preservation of Southern Appalachian heritage. Admission is \$4 for adults, \$2 for children ages 6-10, and ages 5 & under get in free. The Foxfire Fall Heritage Festival is sponsored annually by Foxfire’s Community Board and funded by donations from local businesses. For more information, contact Foxfire at 706-746-5828 or [foxfire@foxfire.org](mailto:foxfire@foxfire.org).



## Foxfire Fall Heritage Festival



*Experience* the heritage of Southern Appalachia as documented by local students and preserved by artists and crafters of the region. See dozens of exhibits and demonstrations of traditional trades and skills. Browse regional crafts and pottery available for purchase. Buy a ticket or two for something in the *huge* raffle. Let the young ones enjoy the kids’ games while you sing along with the live gospel and bluegrass music from local performers. *All event proceeds are used to support Foxfire’s student programs here in Rabun County.*



10:00 a.m. ‘til 4:00 p.m.  
at Dillard City Hall

**Lunch Available  
at the event**

**Admission: \$4 Adults,  
\$2 Ages 6-10, 5 & Under FREE**

# September 26, 2009

for more information, call 706-746-5828 or email [foxfire@foxfire.org](mailto:foxfire@foxfire.org)