New Jersey
Communities, Traditions, Cultures

Diversity is one of New Jersey's most significant and valuable characteristics. The State's many geographic and demographic settings are interwoven with ethnic, cultural and occupational networks, creating a dynamic array of communities. With them, folk and traditional arts are valued for their ability to express identity and strengthen group ties.

Native American Water Drums, Lenape Tribe
Made by Mark "Quiet Hawk" Gould
Photo: Down Jersey Folklife Archive

The network of Regional Folklife Centers in New Jersey plays a key role in providing resources to all interested in folk arts, traditions and cultures.

The Folklife Centers facilitate communication between artists, communities and organizations and work to educate audiences about community based aesthetics, meanings and values as expressed through various art forms.

We invite all New Jersey residents to join us in the ongoing celebration of the many unique traditions and cultures in our state.

Glass Pitcher Me
Made by Robert
Photo: NJ State Council

Front Cover: Wycinacz Polish Papercutting
Made by Pauline Syslo
Photo: Folklife Program for NJ / Middlesex Publication

Hand-Sewn Quilt
Made by Delia Dungan
Photo: Perkins Folklife Archive

New Jersey State Council on the Arts - Folk Arts Program

To support the cultural richness of New Jersey, and to broaden public appreciation and understanding of our diversity, the New Jersey State Council on the Arts has established a multifaceted *Folk Arts Infrastructure Program* and has supported the development of several regional Folklife Centers in the state. The Centers work in partnership to encourage deeper cultural understanding by conducting fieldwork research in their regions and presenting programs aiming to preserve and highlight the abundant variety of folk arts and traditions practiced in New Jersey.

Chinese Knotting. Made by Sheupin Lin
Photo: NJ State Council on the Arts Archive

The State Arts Council supports folk arts programs that enable communities to pass on their most valuable artistic traditions while preserving our state's rich cultural resources. Organizations may apply for *Folk Arts Grants* to help preserve and share with a broader public the unique traditional arts that are practiced in New Jersey communities.

old, Cherry
Broschart
on the Arts Archive

Burmese Weaving. Demonstration by KaHlaw Meh, Karenni community
Photo: NJ State Council on the Arts Archive

The *Folk Arts Apprenticeship Grants* support cultural communities and encourage master artists to continue passing on their valued traditions to others by instructing apprentices, who are committed to preserving their cultural heritage.

Grants are awarded to apprentices who are willing to study with master artists and develop greater skills unique to their culture and art forms. The Council also offers folk artists opportunities to participate in its *Artists-in-Education Program*.

Eel Trap with Cap. Made by Diamond Frandsen
Photo: NJ State Council on the Arts Archive

Down Jersey Folklife Program at Wheaton Arts and Cultural Center

Italian Palm Braiding Workshop with LuAnn Decoma Photo: Down Jersey Folklife Archive

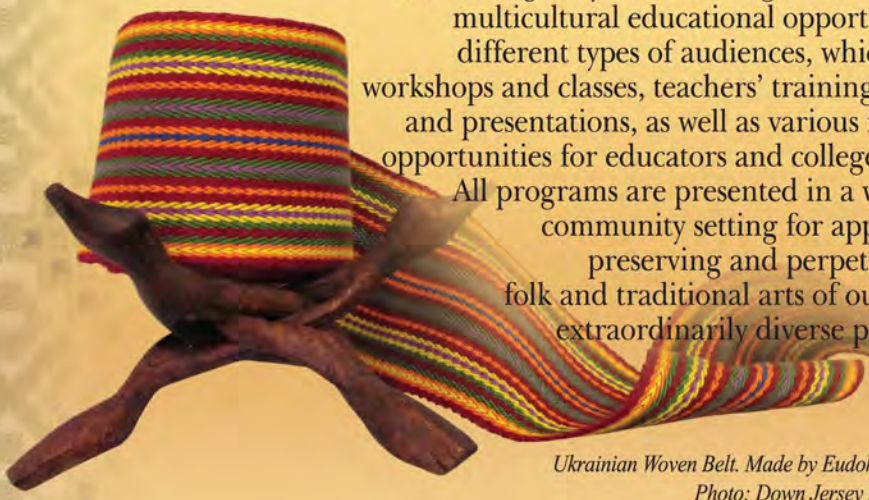
The Down Jersey Folklife Program is an integral part of Wheaton Arts and Cultural Center, which is located on a 50+ acre beautiful setting and is widely recognized as an art, historical and cultural treasure of South Jersey. The Down Jersey Folklife Program has provided multicultural, multigenerational programs and educational resources since 1995, engaging and serving more than 55 ethnic and cultural groups throughout South Jersey.

Roberta Jones "Manyfeathers" Flores in Her Traditional Lenape Regalia Photo: Down Jersey Folklife Archive

Japanese Kime Komi Dolls Made by Fusaye Kazaoka Photo: Down Jersey Folklife Archive

The research area of the Down Jersey Folklife Program includes the eight southernmost counties in New Jersey. It provides public programs such as exhibitions, different types of performances and other artist-driven initiatives that result from careful research and planning. Some examples of art forms presented include: African American oyster-shucking songs and quilt making, the South Jersey tales of the Jersey Devil; Japanese *hoh-daiko* drumming and *minyo dances*; Greek and Bulgarian *hora* (circle dances), Guatemalan and Romanian weavings; Native American bead work and pine needle baskets; Ukrainian *nyzynka* embroidery; Italian and Slovenian bobbin lace, Turkish *ebru* painting, Mexican ceramics and woodcarvings; Indian *mehendi*, Philippine *rondalya* music, Cambodian court dances, and Albanian harvest songs.

The Down Jersey Folklife Program also provides multicultural educational opportunities for different types of audiences, which include workshops and classes, teachers' trainings, lectures and presentations, as well as various internship opportunities for educators and college students. All programs are presented in a welcoming community setting for appreciating, preserving and perpetuating the folk and traditional arts of our region's extraordinarily diverse population.



Ukrainian Woven Belt. Made by Eudokia Sorochaniuk Photo: Down Jersey Folklife Archive

The Jersey Shore Folklife Center at Tuckerton Seaport

The Jersey Shore Folklife Center at Tuckerton Seaport researches, documents, supports and presents the diverse communities and traditions of the Jersey Shore and the Pinelands. The Center is committed to providing quality programming that incorporates documented living traditions representing the diverse communities that have thrived along the coastal and Pine Barrens regions of New Jersey.

Decoy Carvers Fred Reitmeyer and Paul Scarlett working in Parker's Decoy Shop Photo: Jersey Shore Folklife Archive

Old time Country and Bluegrass Music at Tuckerton Seaport's Pickin ' on the Porch Music Jam Photo: Jersey Shore Folklife Archive

Santa: Woodcarving Photo: Jersey Shore Folklife Archive

The Jersey Shore Folklife Center provides professional oversight for folk art programs and exhibits at Tuckerton Seaport and manages the artist roster and demonstrator schedule, the Folk and Traditional Artist in Residence Program, the Jersey Traditions and Voices of the Barnegat Bay outreach programs and changing artist exhibits in J.C. Parker's Decoy Shop. J.C. Parker's Decoy Shop and Hurley Conklin's Decoy Shop offer ongoing opportunities to meet decoy carvers and to learn firsthand the art of carving wooden decoys.

Traditions are passed down to the next generation through the Youth Boatbuilding Club and Youth Carving Club. Popular classes include surfboard shaping, decoy carving, boatbuilding, and basketmaking. Learn to weave a berry basket or paint a flattie decoy. Take a ride on a garvey with a commercial clammer and learn the history of clamming in the Bay. Visitors to Perrine's Boatworks can meet our master boatbuilder and see sneakboxes and garveys, traditional New Jersey small craft, being built. Family boatbuilding and sneakbox building and restoration classes are available. Through daily demonstrations, educational programs, classes and exhibits, the Jersey Shore Folklife Center celebrates the profoundly creative spirit of the region, its traditional arts, and its occupational and recreational folklife.

Railbird Skiff Racing in front of the Tucker's Island Lighthouse Photo: Jersey Shore Folklife Archive

Folklife Program for New Jersey / Middlesex County Cultural and Heritage Commission

Folklife Program, the first of its kind in the state, is intended to broaden the appreciation and availability of folk arts, folklore and folklife within the seven-county region of central New Jersey. The project preserves folk traditions as expressed by the people of New Jersey and presents regional folk artists, recognized by their community for excellence.

Jewish Tefillin, Boxes Hold Verses from the Torah
Folklife Program for NJ / Middlesex Publication

Puerto Rican
Bomba y Plena
Magda Baez Performing
Folklife Program for NJ / Middlesex Archive

Each year, the Commission plans a new season, but also brings back wonderful tradition bearers. Among the annual programs are: *Palaspas* or weaving of the palms, from the Philippines during the Lenten season: *Mick Moloney in Concert*, a National Heritage Designee, whose Irish music is enjoyed around St. Patrick's Day; and *Pysanki* workshop on Ukrainian egg decorating. *The Storytellers Cottage* celebrates cultural traditions through storytelling. The series presents culturally specific narratives that have been passed from generation to generation, that provide a sense of values, community, place, work, or play.

Judaic Needlework
on a Talit Bag
Folklife Program
for NJ / Middlesex
Publication

The public is invited to participate in the folk arts through cross-cultural exchange and educational programming.

We provide educational guides to the culture presented, with background information, maps, vocabulary and a discussion of the art form. All folklife programs are offered free of charge and open to the public.

Indian Mehendi (Hand Decorating)
Demonstration by Rashmi Jhaveri
Folklife Program for NJ / Middlesex Archive

Perkins Center for the Arts Folklife Center

The Folklife Center at Perkins Center for the Arts, a community-based nonprofit with facilities in Moorestown and Collingswood, has been identifying and documenting cultural traditions in Burlington, Camden and Gloucester Counties for the past several years. Recent activities include working with African, Afro-Caribbean and African Americans in Willingboro, with artisans in Pemberton, with ethnic communities and artists in Roebling, and with glassblowers in Clayton. In addition, we've spent time exploring the multi-faceted traditions of the Delaware River and its tributary creeks, the historic farming communities, and the many occupational cultures that give our region its special character.

Helas Stud Barn
Created by Earl Akins
Photo: Perkins Folklife Archive

Khmer Dancer
Performing at Samaki Dhararam
Buddhist Temple, Camden
Photo: Perkins Folklife Archive

The Center's mission is to identify and document cultural practitioners, community scholars and folk artists; explore the interplay of natural and cultural ecologies; and develop educational programs, exhibitions and performances to promote and expand the visibility of our shared cultural resources. The Folklife Center serves as a hub for cultural information, keeping the public up to date on the most recent discoveries and activities. We partner with many individuals and organizations that support cultural sustainability, including the New Jersey State Council on the Arts and cultural professionals throughout the State.

Junkyard Robot
Made by William Clark
Photo: Perkins Folklife Archive

The Folklife Center offers a blog featuring information about cultural communities, discussion of current activities, and news of upcoming programs and events. We invite you to join us in our ongoing discovery, engagement and conversation about the diverse and unique ethnic and cultural groups of our region.

"Floatin' Cabin"
Hancock Harbor Marina, Greenwich
Photo: Perkins Folklife Archive

Folklife Centers in New Jersey

Bulgarian Silverwork: raised and chased vessel
Made by Valentin Yotkov
Photo: Down Jersey Folklife Archive

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New Jersey State Council on the Arts

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Folklife Center

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Sharp-Shinned Hawk
Made by John M. Lamanteer, Jr.
Photo: Down Jersey Folklife Archive

Barnegat Bay Decoys
On display in Parker's Decoy Shop
Photo: Jersey Shore Folklife Archive

new jersey 350
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