



# EARL SCRUGGS CENTER

MUSIC & STORIES FROM THE AMERICAN SOUTH

## YEAR IN REVIEW 2022

### EARL SCRUGGS CENTER

103 S. Lafayette St. Shelby, NC 28150

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## Our Mission

The Earl Scruggs Center engages with and serves guests from the community and world as a cultural destination, community gathering place, and educational resource. The Center provides opportunities for all to engage with and learn about legendary five-string banjo master Earl Scruggs and the unique and engaging history and cultural traditions of the community and region where he was born and raised. This is accomplished through the presentation of long-term and special exhibits, state-of-the-art technology, diverse programming, educational resources, and community outreach.



# Letter from the Executive Director



**Mary Beth Martin**  
Executive Director

Dear Friends,

During 2022, the Earl Scruggs Center united people from our community and beyond around the music and stories of our region and the legacy of Earl Scruggs.

Through our Bluegrass Ambassadors program and museum field trips, more than 2,000 hometown students learned about Cleveland County's deep, diverse musical roots and how local musicians changed the American musical landscape. Many of these children held instruments for the first time and soaked up information in new ways that allowed them to *see themselves* in the music. That's powerful.

Serving as a dynamic catalyst for economic development and revitalization, our museum and programs attracted visitors from around the country and the world. During the weekend of the inaugural Earl Scruggs Music Festival, visitors came to us from 14 states and from as far away as New Zealand and discovered everything our vibrant community offers.

This document contains a sampling of some of the things the Earl Scruggs Center accomplished in 2022. This year, we connected people through children's music lessons, educational programs, concerts with award-winning artists, a successful music festival, and exciting new exhibits. All of this was possible thanks to our generous friends and members.

Change. Vitality. Together. That's our mantra and it's what it took to make everything included in this report possible. With your support, we will continue to build on this strong foundation and look forward to a successful and productive 2023.

With sincerest thanks,

*Mary Beth Martin*

# Exhibits

We deliver exhibitions that reflect the rich history and musical heritage of our region, from a wide range of perspectives.



## **A Symphony for the Road: An Avett Brothers Retrospective**

Featuring the work of celebrated photographer Daniel Coston, this was the first-ever authorized exhibition to detail the ongoing career of one of the most celebrated musical acts to come from North Carolina. The **City of Shelby** and **Bank OZK Trust & Wealth** provided significant support for this exhibition.



## **Redefining Builders: The African American Communities of Cleveland County**

The ESC's first traveling exhibit made stops at the Eugenia Young Memorial Library, the Cleveland County Chamber, Holly Oak Park, and Shelby High School.

## **Faulkner Banjo Installation**

The exciting addition of Earl Scruggs' personal Jim Faulkner-built Mark V "Ruben" banjo was made possible through the generosity of donors **Aaron and Darlene Carr** from West Monroe, Louisiana.



## **Cleveland County in Focus: The Photography of Ellis Studio**

This exhibit examined life in Cleveland County in the 1950s, as seen through the lens of Forrest Ellis' camera. All of these images belong to the Cleveland County Historical Collection. A number of community organizations provided support including the **City of Shelby, O. Max Gardner Foundation, Dover Foundation, Historic Shelby Foundation, Rotary Club of Shelby, The Banker's House, and The Rogers Theater.**



# Education

Donors and supporters gave us the opportunity to offer transformational educational experiences for school-aged children in our community.

## Bluegrass Ambassadors

This past spring the Henhouse Prowlers brought their Bluegrass Ambassadors program to Cleveland County. Over the course of a week, over 1,000 students learned about the diverse roots of our music and regional musicians who transformed the American musical landscape. This experience was supported by the **Duke Energy Foundation, IBMA Foundation, Hospice Cleveland County Foundation, and Dover Foundation.**

## Summer PALS and Banjo Lessons

In support of Cleveland County Schools' **Partners Aligned for Literacy Success** initiative, we invited the rising 1st and 2nd graders enrolled at the Boys and Girls Club to participate in a summer book club featuring books and music. In addition, we offered free banjo lessons to interested students. Many thanks go to volunteer organizer Rachel Cowan, instructor Justin Harper, **Hospice Cleveland County Foundation** and **Dover Foundation.**

## Musical Explorations

Supported by the **Dover Foundation**, the Musical Explorations programs offered an introduction to music for children through free lessons in various instruments with instructor Justin Harper.

## Museum Field Trips

Students participated in a scavenger hunt through the ESC exhibits and a special program featuring performers such as Darin Aldridge, the Foreign Landers, storyteller Clyde Buckner, and the Charlotte Folk Society. **Cornerstone Dental Associates** and **Laughlin's Furniture** made these opportunities possible.

We also appreciate the support of the **Cleveland County Community Foundation** for educational programs and are grateful for our partnership with **Cleveland County Schools.**





# The Power of Music

Our live music presentations brought people from around the region, state, country, and world to celebrate the legacy of Earl Scruggs and the power of music.

## Center Stage Concert Series

From February through August, the Center Stage Concert Series featured such award-winning artists as Joe Collins, Chatham Rabbits, Hubby Jenkins, the Down Hill Strugglers, Zoe & Cloyd, Wyldwood String Band, and Kristin Scott Benson. These intimate and moving performances in the Great Hall were well-received and brought people from all over the region to the ESC.

Sponsors included **Bank OZK Trust & Wealth, Teddy, Meekins, & Talbert, PLLC, Dicky & Marywinn Amaya, JT & Jo Scruggs,** and **Jim & Carol Rose.**

## Pickin' on the Square

Presented by the **Donald and Carla Beam Family Foundation**, Pickin' on the Square events brought together musicians from around the community to join in the tradition of a bluegrass jam session.

## Earl Scruggs Music Festival

After three years of planning, we launched the inaugural Earl Scruggs Music Festival with partners **Isothermal Community College, WNCW 88.7,** and **Tryon International Equestrian Center.** Three days of the best in bluegrass and Americana music brought more than 3,000 music lovers together to celebrate the enduring legacy of Earl Scruggs.

In addition to live music performances on the Flint Hill and Foggy Mountain Stages, we offered workshops about the life of Mr. Scruggs and other festival experiences.





# Community

This year, we collaborated with community partners to tell important stories and expand our local historical narrative.



## Sunset Cemetery Project

Led by ESC board member Chavis Gash, a committee was formed to explore the history of the African American burial ground at the historic Sunset Cemetery. After more than a year of work, the committee made recommendations for further research and ways to memorialize the stories of those buried there. This important work continues with the support of the City of Shelby.



## Coffee with the Curator

Assistant Director and Curator Zach Dressel presented monthly educational programs featuring local stories and items from the Cleveland County Historical Collection. These programs offered an up close and personal perspective of Cleveland County's history.



## NC Civil Rights Trail Marker

The ESC joined with the City of Shelby, the Uptown Shelby Association, and other community members to provide research and support for an NC Civil Rights Trail Marker in Shelby.

Unveiled in Uptown Shelby on February 19, the marker commemorates the heroic efforts of Cleveland High School students who held sit-ins in Uptown businesses to protest segregation.

# Members & Supporters

The Earl Scruggs Center extends its deepest appreciation to the members, sponsors, donors, and granting organizations who support our work.

## Membership Snapshot for 2022

The Earl Scruggs Center offers tiered memberships with significant benefits. On average, the ESC has 190 members and all members are important to us. Our goal is to reach 200+ members in 2023.

**Flint Hill Society** - \$1,000  
25%

**Innovators' Circle** - \$500  
2%

**Pickin' Circle** - \$250  
10%

**Family/Grandparent** - \$100  
30%

**Individual Plus One** - \$75  
18%

**Individual** - \$50  
15%

## Sponsors, Donors, & Grants

**52** donors made gifts totaling **\$49,000.**  
(as of 11.9.22)

**14** sponsors for programs, exhibits, and events totaling  
**\$46,000.**

**7** organizations have made grants to the ESC for a total of  
**\$85,300.**

**We are so grateful for the strong support from  
Cleveland County and the City of Shelby.**





# Leadership

## ESC Board of Directors

We are fortunate to have a committed board of directors with extensive professional and volunteer experiences who serve as advisors and advocates for the organization.

**Jennie Lambert**, Chair  
**Scot Dixon**, Past Chair, Membership Chair  
**Tom Bernard**  
**Sallie Craig**, Finance Chair  
**Chavis Gash**  
**Roger Harris**, Education Chair  
**Mark Hudson**, Personnel Chair  
**JT Scruggs**  
**Daniel Thomas**  
**June Yarboro**, Special Events Chair

## Staff

Our organization currently employs four full-time and four part-time staff members. We encourage you to meet them!

Executive Director - **Mary Beth Martin**  
Assistant Director - **Zach Dressel**  
Operations Manager - **Jenifer Roberts**  
Operations Coordinator - **Stephanie Barrett**  
Guest Services & Volunteer Coord. - **Julie Stroupe**  
Guest Services Associate - **Sandy Smith**  
Guest Services Associate - **Melody Gamble**  
Guest Services Associate - **Cameron Bramlett**

## Volunteers

Our dedicated group of **more than 30 volunteers** greet visitors, participate in group tours, and assist with special events and tasks. We appreciate everything they do for us!







## Get Involved - Now is the time.

By joining with us a member or by making a charitable gift, your financial investment allows visitors to explore the legacy of Earl Scruggs and the history of the place that gave birth to both this legendary man and his music. With your support, we are able to offer engaging exhibits, special events space, educational programming for youth and adults, and ongoing resources for today, tomorrow, and the future.

Explore ways to join or give by visiting <http://earlscruggscenter.org/get-involved/>. Every contribution makes a difference. Thank you!

For information about how to provide for the future of the ESC through a planned gift, contact Mary Beth Martin at 704.487.6233 or [marybeth@earlscruggscenter.org](mailto:marybeth@earlscruggscenter.org).