



Sandhills Heritage Keepers

One generation shall praise Thy works to another.

Psalm 145:4

The Sandhills Family Heritage Association (SFHA) preserves the histories, stories and legacies of individuals who practice and keep alive African American family and community traditions to pass on to future generations. The Sandhills Heritage Keepers are women and men with decades of service and experience who give of themselves and their talents to improve the quality of life in their communities. They are the unsung heroes who have not been recognized or acknowledged for their contributions to the North Carolina Sandhills Region. The purpose of the Sandhills Heritage Keepers Program is to research, document and preserve their contributions to inspire, educate and give hope to current and future generations.



Mavis Brower Fleming

Mavis Brower-Fleming, affectionately known in her community as "Aunt Mae", is an energetic 92 year old. She is a member of the Spout Springs Presbyterian Church, where she is one of the oldest and most faithful members. Aunt Mae makes so many handmade quilts that she has been known to wear out a thimble or two. Her quilts are so authentic and beautiful that they are sought by friends and family. She has lived through Hoover Times, of the 1930s, segregation, integration, the Civil Rights Movement, and all the other changes that have occurred since. She continues to be an inspiration for her family and the community through sharing her recollections of history and stories of growing up in the Sandhills of North Carolina. Click here to see Aunt Mae's video. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?zfCIE3o>



Muriel Hodges Allen

Ms. Allen has been a musician for nearly six (6) decades. Much of her talent has been in support of her home church, Bethel AME Zion on Vass Road in Spring Lake, NC. Ms. Allen sings and plays the piano. She provides soulful performances of old Christian hymns. Though Bethel is her home church, she has performed in many types of churches. Some of those denominations include Catholic, Baptist, Church of Christ, Presbyterian, and non-denominational churches. She has used her gift of music to comfort and unify people in many other venues throughout North Carolina. Additionally, she has a warm personality that is welcoming, beyond her musical talents, and consistent with rural African American heritage. Click here to see Ms. Allen's video.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7xc0EoDqHqw>

Sandhills Sankofa Players



Evelyn Anita Frett—Director



Shirley Smith



Mattie Williams



Alexander Lucas



Doris Lucas



Michael Chase



Kailee McLean

The Sandhills Sankofa Players make African American history come alive through re-enactments based on historical documents and stories passed down through generations. In 2016 they received the SFHA Heritage Keeper Award.

The group is available to the public for educational performances and heritage tours. They have performed at church conferences, Black History celebrations, women's conferences, National Travel Media tour, family reunion tours, heritage tour groups, university student groups, and senior citizens tours.

Contact information: 910-497-0628 910-309-2198

Keepers of the Family Farm and Garden Heritage

Deric Harper—Farmer



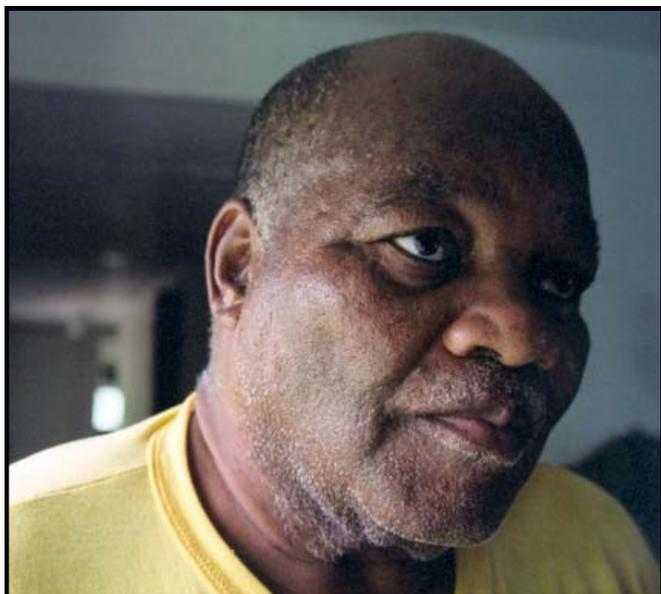
Deric Harper was born and raised on his family's farm, and can vividly remember his childhood chores of feeding the chickens, watering the hogs and cows, priming tobacco, driving the tractor and gathering and preparing produce to sell at the market on Saturdays. For more than 100 years and spanning five generations, this family farm is the flow that links the past, present and future. Harpo Farms operates year round based on the hard work of Deric and several family members. It's a family affair established by his dad's and granddad's wealth of knowledge of equipment and farming techniques. When asked, what the most satisfying part of being a farmer is, hands down Deric said, "Watching a seed go through the process, getting a good harvest and providing fresh produce others can consume and enjoy".

Wade Cole—Farmer



Meet *Wade Cole of Wade Cole Farm* in Four Oaks, NC. Wade farms 100 acres and operates a pasture-raised pork production farm. His hogs are Animal Welfare Approved of the NC Natural Hog Growers Association. Wade's hogs eat feed that consists of corn, soybeans, molasses, minerals, and gleanings of grass, wheat, millet, and cornfields. He also grows wheat, soybeans, canola beans, millet, rye, and a wide variety of vegetables. He has sold pasture-raised pork, cabbage, collards, turnips, mustard greens, squash, new potatoes, and barbecue plates and sandwiches at the *Sandhills Farmers Market*.

Robert (Shag) Jones—Gardener (deceased)



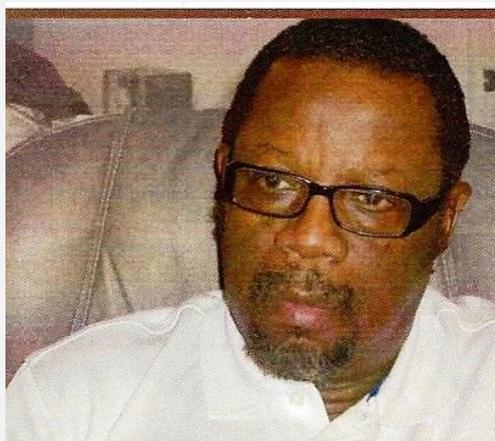
Many home gardeners like Robert "Shag" Jones have kept up the practice of gleaning. Throughout every growing season, gardeners harvest vegetables to share with those in need. Gleaning is the traditional Biblical practice of gathering crops that would otherwise be left in the fields to rot. In the Sandhills, many who continue gleaning do so as an embodiment of their Christian faith. Shag was a storyteller, beekeeper and a major contributor to SFHA Oral History Project and Home Remedies Book Project. He was also a bird watcher and built Martin birdhouses from gourds that he grew in his own garden. Shag had a passion for gardening and purposely planted more food than he could use for himself and shared with others.

SFHA Heritage Keeper Award Recipients



Dr. Denise Murchison Payton, Musician

Dr. Payton is the Director of Choral Activities at Fayetteville State University. She formerly directed choirs in the Richmond and Cumberland County School systems. In April, 2013, under her direction, the Fayetteville State Concert Choir performed at Carnegie Hall. She is founder of The Heritage Restoration Choir, an ecumenical group of singers from Fayetteville and Cumberland County area, who specialize in the Negro Spiritual. Mrs. Payton is also the Minister of Music and worship leader at Bethel AME Zion Church, and a native of Spring Lake.



Reverend Leon Dockery, Pastor and Poet

Reverend Dockery is a poet and mathematician. He currently teaches at Southeastern Community College in Whiteville, and pastors at Little Iron Hill Baptist Church in Tabor City. He is the author of **Poetrhyme**, a series on traditional family values and educational aspirations. He challenges the reader to look beyond the familiar where thoughts and imagination allow consideration of life and those things beyond what can be seen. Reverend Dockery's rural family background is evident, and the basis of inspiring themes in his poetry. He is a native of Harnett County.



Ms. Kim Wade, Playwright

Ms. Wade is Founder and CEO on Innervations Theater Productions. She is a community activist, documentarian author and playwright. The Jim Town "Doin Business" is a Black History documentary and is her most noted project. According to Ms. Wade's research and documentation, in 1923 West Southern Pines aka Jim Town became an incorporated African American town with a Mayor, Town Council—and later a police force, jail, school, hospital, bank, credit union, doctor, dentist, stores and recreation facilities. At one time, there were over 200 African-American owned businesses operating in West Southern Pines.

Sandhills Storytellers



Evelyn Anita Frett, Storyteller

Evelyn Anita Frett currently serves as the Director of the Sandhills Sankofa Players, who are volunteers performing historical skits that highlight the history and experiences of local African Americans. Evelyn uses her natural talents and skills learned from studying liberal arts, human services, early childhood development and geriatrics care to entertain while telling poignant stories consistent with the struggles and triumphs of rural life. Her family roots in Cameron and Harnett County serve as a tremendous resource as well.



Val Jones, Edutainer

Val Jones is a master storyteller who teaches and empowers through the spoken word, hip hop, satire, role-playing and humor. This military brat delivers powerful messages of black pride and self-awareness that educate while entertaining.

Emceeding and broadcasting for over 33 years, Val Jones has shared the stage with legendary performers - past and present. Always giving an inspiring and memorable performance that's a tad "out the box," Val knows how to connect to her audience at a core level. Veteran professional broadcaster Val Jones literally works magic every time she picks up a mic. Specializing in audio production, voice-overs, creative marketing and making you think, her voice can be heard on commercials, parodies and more playing on various radio and television stations. Check out Val's website.

<http://iamvaljones.com/index.html>

Keepers of Family Traditions



Merrill Leona Perkins
(deceased)

Much of what Ms. Perkins practices today as a heritage keeper was learned from her mother, Marie Brower Wilkerson who was a home-maker. Gardening, wine-making, sewing and canning are a few of these. She has begun an extensive collection of James Madison and Annie Beatrice Brower Family History which includes photographs organized by generations, obituaries, newspaper clippings, write-ups of significant events about family members and events. This collection is entitled "It's Time to Remember Our Heritage". Some of the vegetables she grows are cucumbers, tomatoes, green beans, and peas. Vacuum jar canning and freezing are used to preserve her foods. A variety of beautiful flowers and plants adorn the interior and landscape of her home.



Josephine McRae Robisch

Josephine McRae Robisch grew up on a farm in Harnett County where she remembers having plenty of food and lots of laughter in the family home. She inherited her mother's love of cooking and sense of humor. Ms. Robisch has a passion for cooking traditional soul food served with southern hospitality and a good story that makes one laugh. She is a regular supporter and volunteer at the Sandhills Farmers Market. Each year she looks forward with great joy in showcasing her culinary skills at the annual SFHA Heritage Food Tasting. In 2005, Josephine and her granddaughter Ashley participated in the SFHA Gardening and Gleaning Project for youth and adults working together to help preserve the African American Garden Heritage. She has been a member of SFHA since 2001 and serves on the Hospitality and Food Committee.

Family Historians



Ammie McRae Jenkins

Ms. Jenkins is Founder of Sandhills Family Heritage Association, a nonprofit organization that provides programs and services to preserve rural African American cultural heritage. Jenkins' book, *Preserving Our Family Heritage*, is a documentation of her family history that dates back to 1768. Her goal is to help others preserve the stories and legacies of people, places and experiences that have impacted their lives and communities. She also conducts heritage tours, community workshops and presentations that highlight African American contributions to the state of North Carolina. Ms. Jenkins goal is to inspire, educate and transform lives of current and future generations.



Deanna McRae King

In 1972, one of my 5th grade class projects was to create a family tree. I was raised by my paternal grandparents, Thomas and Cora McRae, and, therefore, enjoyed a slight advantage over my classmates. On April 16, 2000 I received an unexpected response to one of my research postings on the Internet website, *Genealogy.com*. The message was from Ammie McRae Jenkins, and read: "FINALLY, I THINK I HAVE FOUND UNCLE DUNCAN AND AUNT ALICE! They are both on my family tree and they were born in Harnett county. I have information on their parents and all of their sisters and brothers and would love to hear from you ASAP!" I responded immediately via email and the rest is history in the making! Ammie has unlocked the many doors to our McRae family past, and through the sharing of research information the pieces of an extraordinary puzzle depict unique experiences in African-American history.



Sharon Daniels

Looking back at my genealogy journey, it's been a blast! My interest in genealogy was sparked after meeting family historian Ammie McRae-Jenkins. I consider her my mentor. Her interviews conducted with our family members born during the early 1900s offer insight into our family history that can't be discovered through census records.

Over the years, my research has gone from examining census records to utilizing DNA as a genealogical tool. I particularly enjoy the challenge of using DNA evidence along with traditional research methods to break through genealogy brick walls. Genetic genealogy is an exciting way to discover cousins and figure out how you fit together. I highly recommend it to anyone interested in researching their roots.

Besides having a passion for genealogy, as a professional photographer, I enjoy traveling worldwide and enjoying meeting new people, and learning about their culture.