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WKU
to

launch folklife network, magazine in 2020

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Did you know the popular song “Happy Birthday to You” was created in 1893 by two sisters in Louisville? Patty and Mildred Hill composed the song, originally titled “Good Morning to All,” for students in Patty’s class at what is now known as The Little Loomhouse.

The song, the sisters and the site are all part of state folklore that the Kentucky Folklife program at Western Kentucky University seeks to present and preserve with the help of a new project in 2020.

A Kentucky folklife “network” and a digital magazine were the topics of discussion during a gathering Wednesday hosted by the program at the African American Museum in Bowling Green.

With the help of a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, the network may include a directory of organizations, projects and individuals, a listserv and a yearly statewide meeting.

The online magazine will feature work such as articles, photo essays or short films by Bluegrass state folklorists, community scholars, cultural workers and folks-arts related organizations.

“Part of the goal of the network is to bring folklorists and community scholars and cultural workers from around the state into conversation with one and other to share about the different projects and work that we’re all doing,” Project Director Nicole Musgraves said.

“It was just a great idea,” said Brent Bjorkman, director of the Kentucky Folklife Program at WKU. “(Kentucky has) 120 counties and we’re based, like any place, in one place, so how can we leverage all the great work?”

To generate ideas and opinions for the project, Musgraves and Bjorkman traveled to different areas throughout the commonwealth. Bowling Green was the penultimate stop and the last is Thursday in Paducah.

“We’re going to get this diverse regional input on what people want and then that’ll be synthesized, brought together into a report, so they can inform how we move forward,” Bjorkman said.

Before the meeting began, Wathetta Buford, program director for the African American Museum, said she looked forward to connecting with more people who share her passion.



“I only know those community scholars here in Bowling Green that actually work here. There are others from other areas close to here that I don’t know, I’m interested in meeting them to see what their ideas are (and) learning new things,” she said.

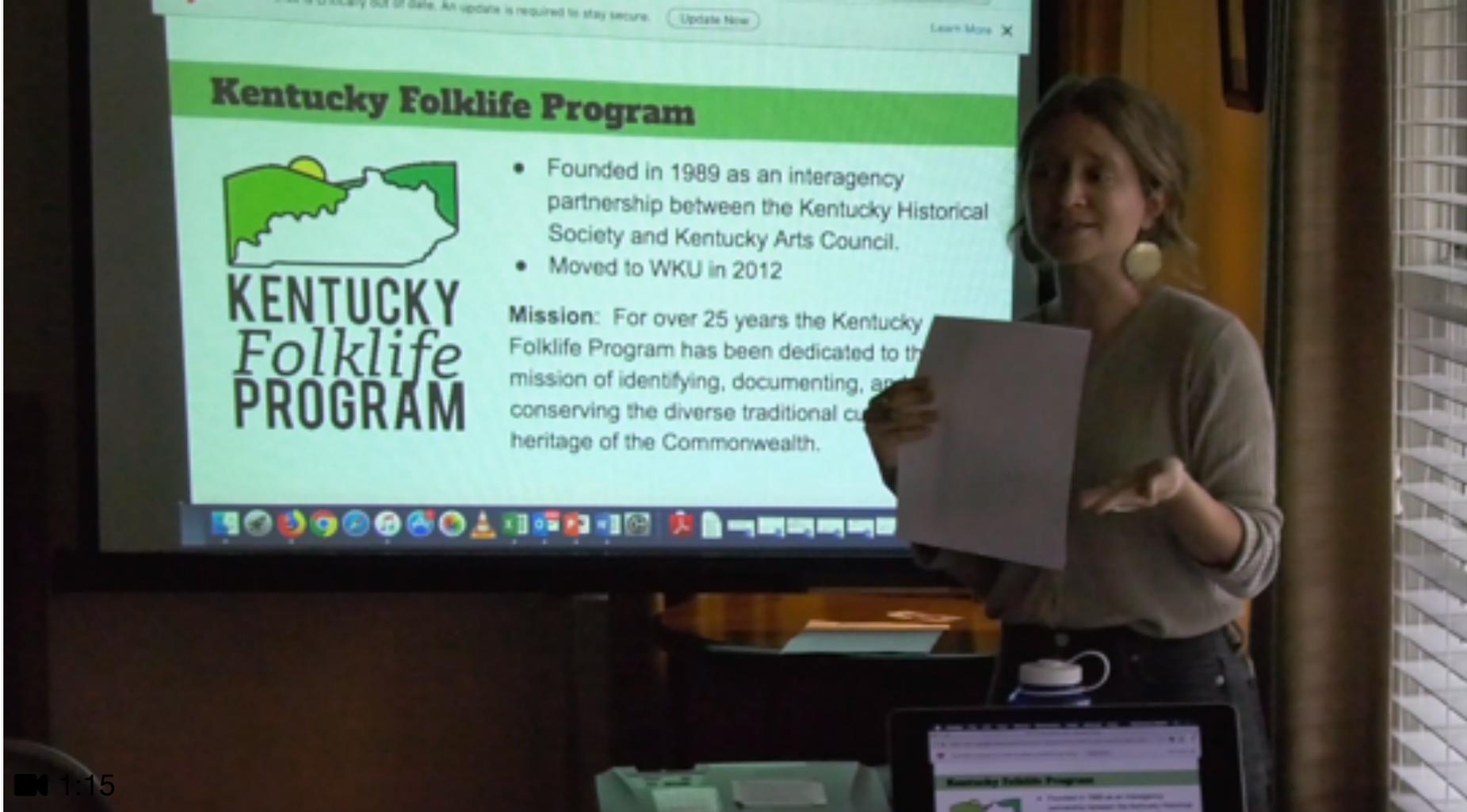
Musgraves says that’s exactly what the initiative aims to do.

“We’ve invited community scholars and folklorists and cultural workers from those areas,” Musgraves said. “We’ve invited them to share about their work and I think that that’s already started to generate what we’re hoping for out of this, (which) is people getting ideas from one and other or asking each other for advice on something they might be struggling with in their own work.”

Michael Morrow, director of the West Kentucky African American Heritage Museum in Russellville, spoke at Wednesday's event and said he’s excited about the network and magazine.

“I think it’s very important, I think it gets the knowledge of what’s going on out to the people,” he said. “Especially about African-American history. It doesn’t get publicized as much, and I think this is going to help it.”

MORE INFORMATION



VIDEO: WKU to launch Kentucky folklife network and digital magazine in 2020

Emily Zantow

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