



Marion Voices in the Schools Community Folk & Cultural Arts Festival



Garfield Elementary School just completed a 90 day, \$27,000 grant (Marion Voices In the Schools Folklife + Cultural Arts Residency) from the Ohio Arts Council celebrating the folklife and cultural arts practices right here in Marion as part of the TeachArtsOhio program. The Ohio Arts Council TeachArtsOhio Grant Supports Creating Connections to Local Artists and Celebrating Traditions and Cultural Arts Practices in Our Community. Through the school year ten artists representing a wide range of folk & cultural arts genres, practices, neighborhoods & communities within Marion County, & cultural & ethnic backgrounds visited the school to work with and teach students about all aspects of art.

This **goals & objectives** of the residency were:

- to give students a chance to **connect to cultural artists** from their own home community & **from their own cultural backgrounds**, so they can feel like their home cultures are **affirmed in the classroom**

- to help students understand & appreciate the power & importance of folklife & cultural arts traditions **across lines of cultural difference**, to build a more understanding community
- to teach students that **the arts are alive & well in Marion County**, in forms & traditions they may not have been aware of or been trained to recognize at art ... thus sparking **pride in place in Marion County**
- training students to **think like artists** through conversations on **arts entrepreneurship**; & getting them to understand that **making a living through the cultural & folk arts really is possible here**
- **building livelihoods** & additional sources of revenue for artists through this (paid!) residency experience ... plus professional development connecting them to additional opportunities to be a paid artist-in-residence at other schools, should they desire it!
- **showing off artist work, & students' experience with artist's work, to the wider Marion County community** through a culminating community showcase event which our Garfield K-5 students will work together to co-curate!

The culminating festival took place on May 17th showcasing students' accomplishments and featured presentations and performances by the artists-in-residence (such as poetry performances, musical performances, and Peruvian dance), live interviews with artists, make-and-take art activities, food trucks, a student art gallery and more. It was a fitting cap to an incredible year of arts education.



“Students met a diverse group of artists from Marion while exploring their creativity during this 90 day residency,” said Chelsea Dipman, Art Teacher at Garfield. “Art is a universal experience for all people and our students loved every artist they got to meet this year and every activity they got to take part in.”

The *Marion Voices* in the Schools Folklife + Cultural Arts Residency program is a unique countywide school residency program developed by *Marion Voices* Folklife + Oral History -- Marion County's countywide folklife & cultural arts for social justice organization, & a 501(c)(3) non-profit founded in 2017 -- to help connect Marion County young people with Marion County cultural artists across diverse cultural traditions: building the rare opportunity for young people to learn from their own home cultural communities, and to expand solidarities by learning across lines of difference! *Marion Voices* serves Marion County by documenting cultural arts, co-curating exhibits, events, & festivals amplifying our under-heard cultural traditions to dream of a more just future, & by cultivating expanded livelihood opportunities for Marion County cultural artists.

“We've been so proud to pilot the *MVITS* program for the first time ever in Spring 2022 in collaboration with Ms. D at Garfield Elementary, through the help of a TeachARTS Ohio grant from the Ohio Arts Council direct to Garfield Elementary, & supported by grants to *Marion Voices* from the Wopat Community Fund at the Marion Community Foundation, Ohio Arts Council, Ohio Humanities, United Way of North-Central Ohio, & Puffin West, to develop & administer the wider program,” said Jess Lamar Reece Holler, Co-Founder & Director Marion Voices Folklife + Oral History. “Next year, we're excited to bring the *MVITS* model to three new Marion County schools: St. Mary School, Pleasant High School, & River Valley Middle School. *MVITS*' transformative goals are to build pride-in-place in Marion County: helping our young people see that our folklife & cultural arts are some of our richest assets here in Marion County!”

Participating artists for the *MVITS* Garfield Elementary Residency included:

- **Nicole Boyd** -- Spoken Word Poetry
- **Michael Scott** -- Musical Arts of Marion
- **Ms. Alberta Cress** -- Sewing Arts Traditions
- **Ms. Cindy McGuire** -- The Art of Hand-Made Teddy Bears
- **Ms. Jessie Thompson** -- African Wear & African-American Beadwork Traditions
- **Mr. Todd Goings** -- Marion Carousel Carving Traditions
- **Mrs. Evelyn Olivos Lisiecki** -- Marion Peruvian & Latinx Festival Traditions
- **Ms. Katie Reese-Hairston** -- Black Hair Arts of Marion County & Marion Black Foodways
- **Mr. Tim Jones** -- Marion Fashion Design
- **Jess Lamar Reece Holler** -- Documentary Arts & Public Folklore

Artists are all *Marion Voices* collaborating artists, & were selected from the [Marion Voices Culture-Keepers Roster](#): an always-expanded digital directory & archive of Marion County folk & cultural artists that grows from our annual countywide folk arts surveys, conducted, as funding permits, each summer or fall.