

The NFO “Preserving Our Heritage” Award

The National Folk Organization’s *Preserving Our Heritage Award* is a result of the foresight of DeWayne Young and Mary Bee Jensen. For the last ten years this award has been presented to honor individuals for their commitment, passion and energy, preserving, researching and/or teaching folk arts.

What does heritage mean?

- Heritage can be practices that are handed down from the past by tradition.
- Heritage can be anything ‘inherited’ or transmitted from ancestors.
- Heritage can be a country’s or area’s history and historical life, culture and folk arts including dance, music and physical sites that are considered to be of interest and value to present generations.
- Heritage can be something such as a way of life or traditional culture that passes or continues from one generation to the next in a familial and/or social group. An example is how we celebrate events within our own families, such as birthdays. Does it follow how our individual families celebrated them, how they are/were modified when blend blended with spouses and partners, etc.

We have come to realize that we are not lacking good candidates for the Heritage Award, and we look forward to hearing your suggestions for nominees for future awards. To narrow the field, some of our considerations include that it is possible for the awardee(s) to attend the event and ideally, the candidate(s) have some connection with the NFO.

This year’s honorees have shown life-long passion working for our common goals in a variety of ways to promote and preserve folk heritage.

These visionary individuals have disseminated information and culture in a variety of ways. We cannot do justice to their life work tonight. We hope more detailed information will be available in an upcoming *NFO News*.

This year’s awardees:

- Have made bridges between the past and the present
- Have worked to build community in many very positive ways
- Are multi-taskers and were before we knew what the word meant
- They have shared their visions and have brought their visions to fruition
- Have influenced us in a variety of ways including education, research, presentation, creativity, and dedication to their pursuits

- Have used all of their skills, talents, and visions to bring dance, music and people together

Eva Kish

Raised in an ethnic, bi-lingual family set the stage for future events. Attending a university where dance was offered continued to set in motion a life including dance, performance, choreography, research, costuming and transmission of this knowledge to others. A scholarship to study in Hungary at the Hungarian State Ballet Academy and participating as a guest artist in Sándor Timár’s famed Bartók Ensemble lead to teaching this style of dance around the USA, and Canada; a force in promoting the tánczház style of Hungarian folk dance and music. When she moved to the Twin Cities she connected with Ethnic Dance Theatre for whom she has danced, performed, choreographed and today serves on the Board of Directors. In addition, she has been awarded a grant to continue transmitting the tánczház traditions with Minnesota Hungarians through workshops with guests from Hungary and leading Hungarian Family Dances.



Donald La Course

Few of us are able to make an early career path decision, but our next awardee began dancing at four years of age, and upon seeing the Duquesne University Tamburitzans at age seven, decided to make dance his career. He joined Edelweiss St. Paul, a German folk dance troupe, at the age of ten. He combined his love of dance with work in musical theater until he moved to Seattle to join The Koleda Folk Ensemble. When he returned to Minneapolis he co-founded Ethnic Dance Theater (EDT), now in its 37th year. Traveling to research, learn and develop dance techniques in many parts of the world has led this talented individual to the hold the mantles of Artistic Director, Choreographer, Lead Dancer and Costume Designer to his credit. His pursuits with EDT and beyond also include teaching workshops in schools and for groups, choreographing for other ensembles all in addition to his day job as a “hair-bender”.

