

Native artists, quilting advocate to receive 2026 Folk Heritage Award

Award recipients from Lancaster, Oconee and Orangeburg counties

COLUMBIA, S.C. – This year, the Jean Laney Harris Folk Heritage Awards will be presented by the General Assembly to honor Native artists working in beadwork and Catawba pottery and basketry and an advocate for traditional quilting.

The two practicing artists and one advocate are being honored for talents that help keep traditional South Carolina artforms alive and as ambassadors of traditions throughout the state. They embody folklife's multigenerational nature and the way it fuses artistic and utilitarian ideals.

Logo for the Folk Heritage Award

The 2026 recipients are:

Beckee Garris: Artist, Catawba Pottery and Basketry (Lancaster)
 Tammy Leach: Artist, Beadwork (Neeses)
 Laurel Horton: Advocate, Quilting (Seneca)
 The Folk Heritage Awards are managed by the South Carolina Arts Commission and the University of South Carolina Lancaster.

The Jean Laney Harris Folk Heritage Award is named for the late State Rep. Jean Laney Harris of Cheraw, respected as an outspoken advocate and ardent supporter



of the arts and cultural resources of the state. In the fall, nominations are sought from citizens across the state to recognize exemplary artistic achievement/advocacy. An independent advisory panel appointed by the lieutenant governor and president of the South Carolina Senate select the recipients, who must be living and practicing in the state. Up

to four artists or organizations and one advocate may receive awards each year.

“Folk Heritage Awards recipients embody South Carolina’s rich artistic traditions and our broad diversity as a people,” said South Carolina Arts Commission Executive Director David Platts. “Their crafts connect our modern society to, and honor, South Carolina’s cultural past. Awardees use artistic talent and advocacy work to weave together people and communities across the Palmetto State today and they enrich the lives of all South Carolinians. We thank Beckee, Tammy, and Laurel for their dedication to keeping alive the traditions that have become an inheritance for all of us.”

Recipients of the Jean Laney Harris Folk Heritage Awards and South Carolina Governor’s Awards for the Arts are honored during a streaming presentation of the South Carolina Arts Awards, available on the SCAC YouTube Channel Sunday, May 17 at 7 p.m. EDT.

The SCAC and USC Lancaster will begin accepting nominations for the 2027 Jean Laney Harris Folk Heritage Awards on Tuesday, Sept. 8, 2026 accessible through SouthCarolinaArts.com.

About the 2026 Jean Laney Harris Folk Heritage Award recipients
 Headshot of Beckee Garris
 Beckee Garris, by Mandy Catoe
 Headshot of Tammy Leach
 Tammy Leach
 Headshot of Laurel Horton
 Laurel Horton

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A master of traditional Catawba crafts, Beckee Garris (Artist, Catawba Pottery and Basketry) is a celebrated potter, storyteller, and longleaf pine needle basket maker. Her artistry is deeply rooted in her lineage as the descendant of Catawba chiefs, and her work serves as a vital link to ancestral traditions. Beyond her physical crafts, she contributes to the preservation of the “living arts” through her work on the Catawba Language Committee. For Garris, every basket and story is a way of honoring the past to light the path forward.

Tammy Leach (Artist, Beadwork) is the cultural preservationist for the Wassamasaw Tribe of Varnertown Indians. An expert in traditional Native beadwork and a dedicated educator, she shares tribal history and arts through workshops and exhibits at major South Carolina institutions. Leach fosters a deeper appreciation for Lowcountry Native heritage, ensuring the Wassamasaw Tribe’s vibrant legacy remains a living practice.

Laurel McKay Horton (Advocacy, Quilting) is an acclaimed folklorist and quilt researcher whose work bridges the gap between material culture and family history. With degrees from the University of Kentucky and UNC-Chapel Hill, she has pioneered the study of quilts as “material behavior.” A longtime leader and editor for the American Quilt Study Group, Horton was inducted into the Quilters Hall of Fame in 2025. An active quilter since 1975, she has dedicated her career to documenting textile traditions and fostering community through South Carolina’s quilting guilds.

Read more about the recipients.

About the South Carolina Arts Commission
 The mission of the South Carolina Arts Commission is to expand access to the arts and foster the cultivation of creativity in South Carolina. We envision a South Carolina where the arts are valued

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variety of creative experiences. *folklife and traditional arts. Headquartered in Columbia, S.C., the SCAC is funded by the state of South Carolina, by the federal government through the National Endowment for the Arts, and other sources. Visit SouthCarolinaArts.com or call 803.734.8696, and follow @SCArtsComm on Facebook, Instagram, and X for #Arts4SC and #SCArtists content.* H Q H À W

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