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ALABAMA COMMUNITY SCHOLARS INSTITUTE OFFERS OPPORTUNITY TO STUDY AREA FOLKLIFE

Florence, AL, Feb. 17, 2006 — The Alabama Community Scholars Institute (ACSI) is a training program for people who want to research, document and present various aspects of Alabama's traditional culture—the music, food, crafts, stories, celebrations and work traditions of their own communities. The next Institute will be held at the University of North Alabama in Florence, July 9-21. Sponsored by the Alabama Folklife Association (AFA) with funding from the National Endowment for the Arts and proceeds from Alabama's "Support the Arts" car tag, the Institute is offered free of charge to selected applicants.

ACSI is valuable to people involved with local museums, arts councils and festivals. School teachers who plan to do oral history projects with their students, college students interested in the field of folklore, and individuals who are already documenting local traditions will find ACSI particularly rewarding. Community Scholars are a diverse group of Alabamians from different communities across the state. They range in age from 18 to their mid-eighties.

Throughout the intensive 10-day program participants learn all aspects of doing fieldwork: recognizing traditions, conducting field surveys, interviewing and recording, photographing and videotaping tradition bearers and logging and transcribing interviews. They learn about grant seeking and various ways in which to exhibit their work. They learn how folk traditions can be part of cultural tourism plans which may be of economic benefit to their communities and they visit area sites that are steeped in such traditions.

Because of the Institute's emphasis on cultural tourism, Nancy Gonce, who is heading up the Muscle Shoals National Heritage Area Study, hopes that a number of residents from Colbert, Lauderdale, Limestone, Morgan, Franklin and Lawrence Counties will apply for the Institute. She says, "This project will address the music, food, stories, celebrations and other unique aspects of the six county area of Northwest Alabama that will be included in the Muscle Shoals National Heritage Area. We are excited that the Alabama Folklife Association has chosen Florence for the site of ACSI and that they will be doing fieldwork while they are here which will help us plan for the heritage area."

For full details on the Institute, readers may go to www.alabamafolklife.org, call Joyce Cauthen, director of AFA, 205-822-0505 or call Nancy Gonce, 256-766-9791

