A s Floridians we are constantly reminded of the dynamic state in which we live: the orange grove we once passed on the way to work is now a mall; our neighborhood Cuban café is now home to a Thai restaurant; and at our local grocery store, the languages we overhear—once primarily English and Spanish—are increasingly languages and dialects from all over the world, especially Asian, Latin American, and Eastern European countries. The minute you think you have Florida in focus, the image blurs, the landscape shifts.

How do we, as Floridians, find a sense of place in this constantly shifting environment? How do we maintain a sense of belonging in such an increasingly polyglot society? How can the humanities help us to live in harmony while our physical surroundings and our burgeoning population undergo such dramatic transformation?

These are questions that Floridians grappled with in public humanities programs throughout the state in 2005. These programs, sponsored by the Florida Humanities Council (FHC), took place in cities and small towns; in rural areas and retirement enclaves; in libraries, museums, and community centers; at state parks and book fairs across Florida. They created opportunities for Floridians to develop deeper insights and new perspectives on their lives and their communities.

These valuable programs would not be possible without the support of our funders: The National Endowment for the Humanities; the Florida Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs; and the foundations, the corporations, and the many individuals who contributed to our work last year. (See our list of donors in this issue.)

Together we continue to engage Florida’s citizens in humanities-centered activities that help define and promote a sense of community in our state of change.

GRANTS: During 2005, FHC funded grants totaling $368,522 for projects in 51 Florida communities. These projects—created and carried out by community residents and scholars—ranged from exhibits and programs on local history and culture; to reading festivals, study groups, presentations, and discussions; to websites, cultural-tourism maps, brochures, and CDs. A listing of the communities that have benefited from FHC grants reads like a map of Florida. (See detailed list of all grants on next page. For a close-up on one community’s grant project, see the Newsletter’s front page.)

TEACHERS: FHC’s seminars and workshops provided professional development, intellectual stimulation, and classroom resources to more than 650 teachers in 2005. Conducted by distinguished scholars, these programs on Florida history, literature, and cultural heritage enrich the teachers and ultimately benefit the students they teach in their classrooms. FHC’s Florida Center for Teachers offers weeklong and daylong seminars on a variety of Florida topics. FHC’s Landmarks of American History workshops offer weeklong, on-site studies of St. Augustine, America’s first permanent European settlement.

ROAD SCHOLARS: Our distinguished group of 16 scholars brought lively and engaging humanities programs to 200 communities across the state in 2005. More than 16,000 Floridians attended these FHC programs, hosted by local libraries, museums, and civic groups in communities, large and small, from Pensacola to Plantation, from Leesburg to Loxahatchee—and everywhere in between. (See article about Road Scholars on back page of Newsletter.)

FORUM MAGAZINE: FHC’s award-winning magazine, FORUM, reached thousands of readers throughout Florida in 2005. Each issue of this colorful, richly illustrated magazine shines a spotlight on one aspect of Florida’s history, culture, or environment and looks at it from various humanities perspectives. In 2005 FORUM focused on the legacy of the WPA in Florida, on the history of the ancient city of St. Augustine, and on the life and lore of Florida’s rivers. Each FORUM issue, sent to 15,000 people across the state, has an estimated pass-along readership of 60,000.

THE FLORIDA GATHERING: Our popular scholar-led cultural tours explored the Spanish Colonial city of St. Augustine and the historic fishing village of Cedar Key in 2005. Historians, archaeologists, and anthropologists led dozens of participants from all over the state on multifaceted tours of these communities. The participants, Floridians who love learning about their state, gained a deeper understanding of these historic sites. The local organizations in these communities developed cultural-tourism products and programs showcasing their distinctive heritage.
2005 Grant Awards

FHC annually awards grants to nonprofit organizations throughout the state to conduct programs that explore our state’s rich history and heritage. Projects involve scholars and experts from many fields of the humanities: history, literature, ethnography, folklore, and more. They include historic tours, exhibits, panel discussions of literary themes, lectures and cultural tourism projects.

Major Grants

University of West Florida, Pensacola. An exhibit: “Cullard’s Gardens and Artistic Scenes” detailing Pensacola’s women who, from the 1820s, accompanied three public lectures/papers and two workshops on collecting oral histories.$24,180

Lowndes Poverty Foundation, St. Petersburg. This project funds publication and free performance of a play on the life of Dr. John St. Mary Smith McClean.$26,677

North Florida Community College—American African Student Union, Lake City. Two historical presentations and public lectures deal with the topic of violence in Southern race relations in the post-Viet Nam era.$4,650

University of Central Florida, Orlando. This second phase of the Folklore project explores Florida folk artists in their environment and community through two public exhibitions and two programs aimed at creating workshops to provide a $25,480.

Valencia Community College Humanities and Social Sciences, Orlando. The second phase of the Promotions Project, the “Culture of Poverty in Central Florida,” expands the access of a college-level courses program to economically and educationally disadvantaged children of school age.$22,650

South Florida Community College, Avon Park. This project, “C Haiti, Mediterranean and Caribbean Studies,” focuses on two Florida traditions: fisherfolk and the oral traditions of the Caribbean. The project explores the roles of oral traditions, and the documentation of interviews and performances.$20,450

Florida Institute for Saltwater Heritage, Cortez. A photo exhibit, $4,300.

Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council, Fort Myers. This project updates and reprints the original Big Water Heritage Trail brochure, an important cultural heritage tool for the Lake Okeechobee region. The brochure consists of a map, photographs, and narrative text depicting the area’s history and environment.$23,000

DeLand Museum of Art, DeLand. An exhibition by Florida artist Jackson Walker to focus on interpretation and public dialogue. The project sponsors four programs with scholar lectures, interpretive tours, a visitor’s guide, a living history performance, and a web site with gallery.$25,000

Collier County Public Library, Naples. A reading and discussion group, “The Spanish Connection” is focused on Spanish creativity and public literacy in libraries, including immigrant workers, refugees, refugees, and low-literacy children.$17,684

Historical Association of Southern Florida, Miami. An exhibition, “The South Florida Frontiers:” explores life in the region's subtribal environment from the late 18th to early 20th centuries. Accompanying programs examine the lives of the diverse peoples who animated this region. There is a monthly program with foods and experiences with some of pioneers in the American West.$25,000

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