

Indiana Heritage Fellowship awards recognize traditional artists who make outstanding contributions to their artistic tradition and to their community. This fellowship honors an individual's lifetime achievement as an artist whose work is rooted in community life in Indiana.

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Traditional Arts Indiana Presents The 2019 Indiana Heritage Fellowships



Harold Klosterkemper, fiddler
Greensburg, Indiana



Debra Bolaños, dancer & teacher
East Chicago, Indiana

Awards Ceremony: April 27, 2019
Mathers Museum of World Cultures
Indiana University, Bloomington



Debra Bolaños

Ballet Folklórico Dancer & Instructor, East Chicago, Indiana

Four nights a week, in East Chicago, Indiana, Galaxy Travel Agency transforms into Xel-Ha Escuela De Danza. Eager students come to learn Ballet Folklórico (traditional Mexican folk dances) from Debra Bolaños who has run the school for over twenty-five years. Born and raised in East



Chicago, Debra has been practicing Ballet Folklórico since she was eight years old, encouraged by her mother, a community activist and advocate of Mexican culture. After seeing the Ballet Folklórico de Amalia Hernández in Chicago, Debra was inspired to dance professionally and by the age of eighteen, was dancing with this world-renowned group in Mexico City.

After two years she returned to East Chicago and began to teach Ballet Folklórico herself. “To make a really good dancer you have to feel it in your heart.” Debra explained pointing to her chest, “you can be good but it’s the body that tells you the story... the most important thing is in here and I think that’s true with anything that you do.” Studying with Debra, students learn dances from all over Mexico, like Danza Azteca

(indigenous dance), as well as Mexican culture, pride in their community, and discipline. Debra says, “I teach commitment and responsibility... that is what I was taught in Mexico City.”

Not only is she invested in mentoring her students, but she is also active in a number of community organizations, notably Sociedad Cultura Cívica y La Reforma, of which she is the founder and president. Community is central to Debra’s work both in the dance studio and out.



Harold Klosterkemper

Fiddler, Greensburg, Indiana

Old-time fiddler Harold Klosterkemper has been a familiar sight at fiddle contests and gatherings in Indiana and around the United States for over thirty years. Harold’s distinctive swing-inflected style earned him accolades at fiddle contests around the country, including top



prizes at the Ohio State Fiddle Championship, the Bluegrass National Championship, the National Old Time Fiddlers’ Contest and Festival, and the Indiana State Fair fiddle contest.

The 95-year-old recalls a lifelong relationship with music that began when his father brought home a mandolin and a guitar after selling a load of hogs. Harold taught himself to play by picking out the notes to tunes he heard at local dances and over the radio on the Grand Ole Opry. He brought

his mandolin along when he served in France during World War II. When word came that the war was over, “everyone was going wild because we was gonna get to go home.” Harold’s mandolin was broken in the celebration—so Harold picked up the guitar. The fiddle came later, when Harold was in his forties. Harold modestly recalls, “I saw some fiddlers that was pretty good fiddlers and I thought ‘that sounds awful good to me if I could do that.’”

For several decades, Harold Klosterkemper and his wife Helen have helped to coordinate the fiddle contest at the Power of the Past Festival in Greensburg, Indiana. As a mentor and fiddle teacher, Harold has inspired other Indiana musicians and helped to ensure the vitality of Indiana’s old-time music and dance traditions.

