

Joseph Nassif, Festival Director Emeritus (2008-2017)
Shirley Cook Hartley, Festival Director 2018
Robert Sypolt, Co-Chair, 2018



Reflections on the Past

2018 West Virginia Chestnut Festival

The 11th annual 2018 WV Chestnut Festival, Sunday, October 7, was greeted with blue skies, and sunshine --- the order of the day.

A larger crowd than ever turned out to **honor and enjoy the heritage and history** of our great American Chestnut tree! Visitors came from miles around to visit the Park-by-the-River exhibits, enjoy the music, attending educated lectures on the Great American Chestnut Tree and simply enjoying the sites and the wonderful aroma of chestnuts being roasted on-an-open-fire in the Park. The evening was capped off with the traditional chestnut banquet and the crowning of the 11th Mr. and Ms. Chestnut, Dr. Don Kines and Sheryl Kines. Those in attendance were entertained by beautiful choral music provided by the Madrigal singers from Preston High School, directed by Deborah Westbrook.

The Kickoff. The Festival kicked off at 10:30 a.m. with a hearty full breakfast in the Szilagyi Center Café, hosted by **Kathleen Wolfe Orescanin** and staff. We were honored by the presence and contributions throughout the entire day, by **Lisa Thomson**, CEO and President of The American Chestnut Foundation, headquartered in Asheville, NC.

The Crowd-in-the-Park. People came from all around to taste and enjoy one of two Chestnut Festivals open to the public in the 16 Appalachian States. George Nassif did outstanding work hosting a variety of Park

Vendors, including, scrumptulous chestnuts roasted on an open fire; chestnut vendors selling crafts, wares and small furniture; jarred chestnuts in honey; selling chestnut sapling trees; and networking with chestnut researchers. Delicious roast beef sandwiches were served at the concession stand. Mary Wotring and her staff at the Welcome Table were well received by the public with their many items to view and purchase.

WV Chapter Meeting. Open to the public, was an informative meeting of the West Virginia Chapter of The American Chestnut Foundation (TACF), Mark Double presiding, Robert Sypolt, vice pres., Sam Muncy Treasurer, and Jeff Kochenderfer, Secretary. A highlight was a discussion of the many planting sites of American hybrid chestnut saplings.

Scientific Session Attendance. This was one of the “most attended and most enjoyed” by an attentive public-at-large. **Mark Double**, WVU Research Associate (now Emeritus), welcomed and introduced the eminent speakers of the day: **Dr. Jeffrey Skousen**, long time WVU Professor, spoke on the important topic of, “Growth of American, Chinese and Hybrid Chestnut Saplings on Reclaimed Surface Mined Land,” and **Amy Metheny**, a WVU Senior Graduate Student spoke on, “The Super donor: Does Chestnut Blight have a Kryptonite? Two Year Update.”

Szilagyi Center for Visual and Performing Arts. Featured were a variety of exhibits, including: World War II museum, B&O Railroad Centenary Bridge Exhibit, 4-H History & Learning Center, and a Community Quilters room, and of course, the River City Café’.

The Gala Dinner Banquet. The banquet opened with the Preston High Madrigals in period dress, singing, “O Chestnut Tree,” which lead into the **11th** annual crowning of our Chestnut Royalty, “Mr. and Ms. Chestnut,” **Dr. Don Kines** and **Sheryl Kines**, assisted by Middle School Students, our Junior Prince, **Nick Forman**, son of Tiffany and Chip Forman of Albright, WV, and our Junior Princess, **Aluana Wilson**, daughter of Stacia and Joe Wilson of Kingwood. They each wrote significant essays on selected chestnut topics. Dr. **William MacDonald**, WVU Professor Emeritus was Keynote speaker at the Banquet and he gave a review of a variety of Chestnut Issues

Reflections will close by recognizing the growing Chestnut Festival as a “must attend” event for people who are interested in raising chestnut trees, and in furthering our great American Chestnut heritage. For critique comments of the Festival, please read the glowing critique from Ken and Patti Darnell, members of the Kentucky Chapter of TACF, who were in attendance.