

Arkansas Renaissance Fair

Description

The Ozarks of Arkansas may not be the first setting that comes to mind when thinking of Spring Renaissance festivals. But at the University of Arkansas Community College in Batesville (UACCB) each April, a unique Renaissance celebration occurs with a unique focus: helping Arkansas high school students learn and appreciate Renaissance history and culture.

Batesville (population 9,000) is nestled in northeast Arkansas, about a two hour drive from Little Rock and about 150 miles west of Memphis, TN. It's the oldest existing city in Arkansas and combines a rich history, including Choctaw and Osage heritage, with the beauty of the Ozark Mountains. Later in April, Batesville hosts the annual Arkansas Scottish Festival at Lyon College; but early April is all about the Renaissance at UACCB.

The 2010 UACCB "Renaissance Days" will begin this April 9th and 10th. You'll find the usual turkey legs, sword fighting and period costumes there; but, if you arrive during the daytime activities on Friday, you'll encounter a passel of high school students engaging the Renaissance period. All of the activities on April 9th are designed with high school student education in mind.

The theme of Renaissance Days is “Knowing Thy Place: Society During the Renaissance.” That theme is emphasized in the student costume contest on Friday, April 9th. Students have to create a costume along with a 100 to 175-word paragraph including the name, date of birth, skills and hobbies, and other aspects of their fictional persona. The school having the most levels of society represented by costume and biography wins the contest. College students from the UACCB English seminar class on the Renaissance provide support throughout this and other events during the day.

High school students participate in a variety of other Renaissance-era learning activities on Friday. These include an educational scavenger hunt, tug o’war contest, “Battle of Scholars” quiz bowl, and a banner and costume contest. Students also present self-written skits, storytelling, and sonnets. Guidelines for the written work are designed to meet Arkansas state English education standards, while the other contests meet various requirements for social studies, physical education, and visual arts.

Past Renaissance Days at UACCB have incorporated a variety of related period activities and events. Storytellers have emphasized the Norse saga and Bardic storytelling, while students have learned tassel-making, Viking wire weaving, and the science behind basic cheese making. Students also have the chance to participate or view other activities typical of Renaissance faires, like a May Pole and archery. In addition, there are opportunities for students to ride horses’ and yes, even chicken herding.

The coordinator for the event is Marla Bennett, an English instructor at the college who also directs the UACCB Choral Singers. The UACCB Renaissance Chamber Singers perform for the students and the public throughout the event, along with various local and professional acts. On Friday evening, at 6:30, there’s a free “Renaissance Evening Showcase” that highlights all the performers to the public. This year, these acts will include the Ladies of the Salty Kiss Comedy Pirate Troupe, Lady Melandra of the Woods, Lord Joe Jewel, and Lady Amina.

Renaissance Days continues on Saturday, April 10th, with many of the same activities open for the public until about 2 pm. This is the sixth year for the UACCB Renaissance Days, and past celebrations have included a banquet that has raised as much as \$10,000 for student scholarships while showcasing Renaissance-themed talent.

The Renaissance Days at the University of Arkansas Community College-Batesville were created to “Enrich the Batesville community and creatively educate the students and teachers of this region about the Renaissance era.” From all accounts, this event is doing just that as well as providing high school students in northeast Arkansas with a greater appreciation of the Renaissance era.

If you go:

6th annual Renaissance Days at the University of Arkansas Community College at Batesville

April 9th (9:30 a.m.-2:15 p.m.) and April 10th (10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.)

Batesville, Arkansas is about a two-hour drive northeast of Little Rock and about 125 miles west of Memphis, TN.

This event is free and open to the public.

CATEGORY

1. LIFE LOVERS

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