

March 2020 IH Grantee Spotlight with:  
**CAROLYN J. STEPHENS**  
 Arts in the Cemetery/Historical Arts Chairperson at the  
**COLES COUNTY ARTS COUNCIL**

**PROJECT:** *Arts in the Cemetery* (approved Aug. 2019)

**LOCATION:** Charleston, IL

**ORGANIZATION:**

Founded in 1984, the Coles County Arts Council is dedicated to fostering, promoting and developing the arts and the historical and cultural heritage of Coles County. CCAC is largely volunteer run, hosts its own events, and helps local groups hold workshops, exhibitions and performances to make art and history come alive in the community. This was CCAC's fourth grant from Illinois Humanities.

**PROJECT:**

"Arts in the Cemetery" combines dramatic performance with visual arts lectures and musical performance in an innovative, interactive program designed to bring to life the history, art and craftsmanship found in local graveyards. The result is an unusually immersive experience of some of the ways that the living honor their dead. In 2019, with IH support, CCAC extended the one-day event (Sept. 28<sup>th</sup>) by hosting an amateur photography contest and publishing a self-guided tour booklet to help visitors explore local cemeteries. The project aimed to increase CCAC's community profile, inspire artists, and encourage people to visit and appreciate the art and culture of local graveyards.



Charlotte England, Coles County Arts Council president, and Carolyn J. Stephens (right)

**UPCOMING EVENTS:**

 Learn about upcoming events at [www.colescountyartscouncil.org](http://www.colescountyartscouncil.org)

 Follow CCT on Twitter at [@colescountyart](https://twitter.com/colescountyart)

 Like CCT on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/colescountyartscouncil](https://www.facebook.com/colescountyartscouncil)




Paul and Kevin Baumann, guides and speakers for the "Arts in the Cemetery"

*\*\*The Q&A session was moderated by Mark Hallett, Program Manager, Grants on February XX, 2020.*

## **Q&A SESSION:**

**Question:** *What is the most important thing people should know about your work at CCAC?*

**Carolyn:** *Members of the Coles County Arts Council are a diversified group of county residents who are interested in encouraging and promoting art and artists. The Arts Council helps promote arts in the Central Illinois area. Some areas of the arts promoted are Dramatic Arts, Dance, Literature, Musical Arts, Visual Arts, Historical Heritage Arts, and Memoir.*

**Question:** *Who makes your work possible?*

**Carolyn:** *The Arts Council is funded by dues, donations, grants, gifts, and bequests from individuals. Members volunteer for projects throughout the year. The Arts Council collaborates with other organizations in our area in mutual projects and events. Local area businesses and individuals are also involved in the promotion of projects and events. The Council has worked with the local Farmer's Market, area Art Exhibits, and Theater Groups.*

**Question:** *How do you see the arts/culture/humanities as being essential?*

**Carolyn:** *Artists are our historians. They document the past and present moments of the day to day life of a culture. Without artists the history of and the current life of a culture would be as if it never existed. If one would want to destroy a culture or a civilization, one would only need to destroy its artists. Art Councils and Art Groups exist to help pass on to future generations the art of its time and place in history.*

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**Question:** *Anything else?*

**Carolyn:** *The Illinois Humanities grant helped with the Coles County Arts Council's "Arts in the Cemetery" event of September 28, 2019. In addition to Coles County Arts Council members, the "Arts in the Cemetery Committee" consisted of members from The Coles County Historical Society, Mattoon Historical Society and Depot, The Coles County Genealogical Society, The Academy of Lifelong Learning, and local community members. Many members of our community made this event successful, some of which were the American Legion Post 93/VFW Post 1592 Honor Guard, the Boy Scouts of America Troop 141, The Old City Cemetery, Mound Cemetery, and Roselawn Cemetery Boards, Lincoln Log Cabin Members, Charleston Carnegie Library, City of Charleston, Daughters of American Revolution, WEIU Radio, Adams Funeral Home, as well as local newspapers, teachers, musicians, historians, restaurants and community members. Our presenters and brothers, Kevin and Paul Baumann, were graduates of our local Eastern Illinois University and have studied and worked with tombstone art for many years.*

*As Chairperson of the Arts in the Cemetery Committee I was grateful for the Committee's energy, the expertise, the collaboration, and the common goal of seeing through a successful "Arts in the Cemetery Day."*