

2018 Vandalia Gathering Contest Winners Announced

CHARLESTON, W.Va. – West Virginia’s champion old-time fiddle, bluegrass banjo and mandolin players, traditional pound cake and favorite family bar cookie bakers competed for top honors on Saturday, May 26, during the West Virginia Division of Culture and History’s 42nd annual Vandalia Gathering. On Sunday, May 27, old-time banjo, lap dulcimer, flatpick guitar musicians and liars vied for awards.

Liars (all ages)

Biggest Liar (1st place and *Goldenseal* magazine’s Golden Shovel award) Kennie Bass, Dunbar

Bigger Liar (2nd place) David Yaussey, Charleston

Big Liar (3rd place) Nancy Belle Anderson, Charleston

Youth (age 15 and under, and *Goldenseal* magazine’s Golden Shovel award) Zane Wilkinson, Ovapa

Favorite Family Bar Cookies (all ages)

1st place – Lisa Asti, Charles Town

Youth (age 15 and under) Kendall Atkins, Scott Depot

Pound Cake (all ages)

1st place – Holly Baker, Charleston

2nd place – Karen Cobbs, Charleston

3rd place – Lynna Middleton, Charleston

Bil Lepp receives 2018 Vandalia Award - West Virginia’s foremost liar is 38th award winner

CHARLESTON, W.Va. - Bil Lepp, five-time winner of the West Virginia Liars Contest and a nationally known storyteller, received the Vandalia Award from West Virginia Division of Culture and History Commissioner Randall Reid-Smith at the Saturday evening Vandalia Award Concert.

“Bil Lepp is a West Virginia treasure,” said Commissioner Reid-Smith. “Since 1990 when he first appeared in the West Virginia Liars Contest, he has shared stories about West Virginia that give his audiences and his readers a glimpse into the humor, hospitality and good nature of West Virginians.”

Lepp has been internationally recognized for his storytelling talents. He has been presented with the National Storytelling Network Circle of Excellence Award and has appeared at the National Storytelling Festival and the Smithsonian Folklife Festival.

In addition to his personal appearance, Lepp is the author of six books and 16 audio collections. His first children’s book, *The King of Little Things*, won the PEN Steven Kroll Award for Picture Book Writing, a Kirkus Starred review and favorable reviews from The Wall Street Journal, Publishers Weekly, The School Library Journal and other publications. It also won the Zena Sutherland Award, the Parents Choice Gold Award and was chosen to be West Virginia’s book at the National Book Festival in 2014.

A West Virginia native, Lepp continues to support the West Virginia Liars Contest, appearing as a storyteller and judge, and has recently appeared as a guest emcee for Mountain Stage.

The Vandalia Award proclamation presented to Lepp reads:

WHEREAS Bil Lepp can spin a yarn about any subject; and

WHEREAS he began his career as a liar in 1990 when he appeared at the West Virginia Liars Contest which he has won five times; and

WHEREAS, no matter how skewed, his lives and stories offer his audiences and readers a glimpse into the truth about life and West Virginia’s beauty and history; and

WHEREAS he is internationally recognized, having been presented with the National Storytelling Network Circle of Excellence Award and having presented his stories annually at the West Virginia Liars Contest, National Storytelling Festival and at the Smithsonian Folklife Festival; and

WHEREAS his books include award winning children’s publications and he encourages children to write at his school appearances; and

WHEREAS he continues to encourage the creativity of writing and performance every year as an emcee and judge at the West Virginia Liars Contest at the Vandalia Gathering; and

WHEREAS those stories and lies shed light on the humor, hospitality and good nature of West Virginians;

THEREFORE I, by the authority vested in me to foster the preservation of West Virginia's traditional culture, due present to Bil Lepp the Vandalia Award for the year 2018

The annual Vandalia Gathering is a free celebration of the traditional arts, music, dance, stories, crafts and foods of West Virginia. The Culture Center and State Capitol Complex grounds host this expanding family-style gathering each year on Memorial Day weekend. The unique blending of ethnic and cultural heritage combines an atmosphere as comfortable as a family reunion with the excitement of a state fair. The statewide folk festival, named for the proposed 14th colony, pays tribute to the state's ethnic heritage through a variety of exhibitions and programs.