

Perrys receive humanitarian award for farm and museum

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HUNTINGTON — Mike and Henriella Perry, owners of the Heritage Farm Museum and Village, were presented with the Donald R. Myers Humanitarian Award Sunday night in Virginia.

The award recognizes individuals who through their meri-

torious contributions of leadership and community service have enriched Appalachia.

Recipients are characterized as leading growth and development in Appalachia, enhancing their

local communities and reinforcing Appalachian values.

The Perrys said they are humbled to have been nominated for:

Please see **PERRYS/6A**.

Mike and Henriella Perry, owners of the Heritage Farm Museum and Village, were presented with the Donald R. Myers Humanitarian Award on Sunday night in Virginia.

Mark Webb/The Herald-Dispatch



Perrys

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an award that had been given only twice previously by the Development District Association of Appalachia. The first time was to Bob Evans in 2007 (just a month after his death), and the second was to Alabama lead singer Randy Owen in 2009.

"To say we're elated is an understatement," Mike Perry said. "It validates the farm and what we're trying to do."

The Perrys were nominated by the West Virginia Region II Planning and Development Council.

"Michael and Henriella Perry have devoted their lives to telling, what they believe is the untold story, of the settling of Appalachia," the nomination letter states. "They have spent a lifetime collecting antique equipment, furniture and memorabilia, followed by years of constructing a museum village to exhibit how Appalachian pioneers lived and sustained their families."

"Both Henriella and Mike have been willing (and) helping hands in the community and most especially in their church."

The award was presented to the Perrys Sunday night at a dinner at the Crystal Gateway Marriott in Crystal City, Va.

Sen. Robert C. Byrd, D-W.Va., sent a letter congratulating the Perrys and recognizing their importance to the preservation of Appalachian history.

"The reconstruction and preservation of the life and culture of the early settlers of Appalachia at the Perry's Heritage Farm and Museum enable one to experience how Appalachian pioneers lived, worked and raised families," the letter from Byrd states. "As they have done in all aspects of their lives, the Perrys have performed an invaluable service in preserving this important time in Appalachia's, and our nation's, history."

Gov. Joe Manchin also made a personal phone call to offer his appreciation and congratulations to the Perrys.

"For Mike and Henriella to be honored at that level, it speaks volumes about the type of people we have in West Virginia, and Mike and Henriella are right at the top," Manchin added in a statement. "What they have done with the farm and museum for Huntington, for West Virginia and the entire Appalachian region is remarkable. I am so proud and so excited for them

to receive this distinguished award."

The Perrys said all the kind words are just too much. They said the award is about the museum, which takes a lot of volunteers and specialists to make it the unique spot that it is.

"It's not a museum just collecting relics or that we want to return to the good old days, because they weren't that good," Mike Perry said. "But the people were fantastic. What's to be ashamed of? My ancestors did it all in a self-sufficient manner."

The roots of the farm and museum were planted when the Perrys, married for 51 years, decided to start collecting antiques and then in 1973 decided to sell their brick home on Huntington's South Side and move with their daughters and son into a log farm house in Harveytown, just over the Wayne County line.

About 15 years ago, a cornfield started to become what is now the main street of Heritage Farm. They started bringing in log buildings from other places, by disassembling them, transporting the parts and reassembling them here.

Heritage Farm now has a zoo with animals like pigs, llamas, donkeys, rabbits and turtles. It has a Progress Building with thousands of antiques used through the centuries. It has kitchen displays from different eras, a spinning wheel to show how thread was made, old printing presses and an old fashioned soda shop, complete with sundaes made of wax.

In the Transportation Building, there are models of carriages and early cars, including the Model T. There is a 1920s airplane and several other modes of transportation. Outside sits a Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad caboosie, which used to be the ticket stand outside Fairfield Football Stadium.

In the Industry Building, there are models of mines and a glass factory. There's a country store as well, with food and supplies and complete with an old checkerboard. Often, people had to travel a long way to get to the store, so they'd spend a long time there doing things like play checkers, Henriella said.

The village now has five houses, or inns, where guests can stay overnight. There are several other buildings, including an old church.

These days, Heritage Farm hosts weddings, reunions and other gatherings. It has had thousands of schoolchildren and visitors from out of state pass through.