



## **2017 DPA Communicator of Achievement**

### **Kim Rogers Burdick**

#### ***She's the "Hub of History"***

Fondly known as "Mrs. History," Kim Burdick, MA, MPA, was featured in the March 2012 issue of *Signature Brandywine* magazine: "She's the Hub of History." Fittingly, Kim is resident curator at the historic Hale-Byrnes House (built circa 1750 and on the National Register of Historic Places) situated on the banks of the White Clay Creek, in Stanton. She hosts frequent meetings, open to the public, there focused on Delaware history and the American Revolution. During the Revolutionary War, the Hale-Byrnes House was "Staff Headquarters" for General George Washington in September 1777. There, Washington, the Marquis de Lafayette, and other Continental Army officers held a war council under the large tree – still

standing – to the right of the house. Shortly thereafter, the soldiers under their command marched north to Chadds Ford, Pa., where they fought the British at the Battle of the Brandywine.

Having long served as a Delaware Advisor on the board of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Kim was inspired to work with colleagues in 1993 to found Preservation Delaware, an organization dedicated to preserving the state's architectural heritage and historic settings through education and public policy initiatives. As a result, a number of historic homes and sites in Delaware have been saved and/or preserved. In 2016, as Advisor Emerita of the National Trust and past chairman of the Delaware Humanities Council, Kim was honored by Delaware's State Historic Preservation Office for projects and programs she spearheaded that brought together preservationists, archaeologists, contractors, and local volunteers to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the National Historic Preservation Laws.

Kim not only is an award-winning public historian, but also a folklorist, writer, and frequent lecturer. She says her career in writing and research began as a 10th-grader, writing two scripts for STETA-TV based on Jared Van Wagenen's "Golden Age of Homespun." Years later, she was chief researcher for "Whispers of Angels: Delaware on the Underground Railroad," a documentary film produced by Sharon Kelly Baker of Teleduction, and also for the Delaware Humanities Forum-funded "Delaware Ghosts," an award-winning play written and produced by Delaware Theatre Company based on ghost stories Kim collected.

#### ***Kim's legacy in Delaware historical matters looms large***

When she first moved to Delaware, Kim became involved in Friends of the Library and the American Association of University Women, and later she worked with the Delaware Humanities Forum, and joined Delaware Press Association. She became a frequent guest on the radio talk show, "Delaware State of the Arts," and the local cable television program, "Focus Delaware."

In 1991, Kim earned a master's degree in Public Policy at the University of Delaware. She interviewed lobbyists at the state capital for her thesis, asking them about their most effective techniques. Hired as House-Senate Liaison in Dover, she wrote speeches and articles and served as Public Policy Analyst for the State of Delaware's International Trade and Natural Resources Committees. She proposed the State create a "Cultural Heritage Greenway" along the banks of the Delaware River, and she successfully created the State Folklorist position. That, plus her work developing a Mid-Atlantic Regional Trading Block from Delaware north to Quebec, and her service as Delaware Advisor to the National Trust for Historic Preservation, led to her being named a 1994 Council of State Governments Toll Fellow.

The Delaware Humanities Council encouraged Kim to lobby for Delaware's inclusion in the emerging national folklife program. She initiated the Delaware Folklife Project, documenting farmers, fishermen, wood carvers, basket makers, a net maker, and more. German, Italian, and African American foodways

and multi-ethnic social and cultural norms were captured on tape and on film. She organized state and regional festivals and participated in the Smithsonian's Festival of American Folklife.

She also wrote articles for the University of Delaware's *Research* magazine and contributed to the book, *The Delaware Estuary: Rediscovering a Forgotten Resource*. The Department of Education asked her to offer teachers' in-service courses, and she was hired as a consultant for the Delaware segment of Ted Turner's documentary series, "Portrait of America."

In 2009, Kim organized the Delaware Chapter of the American Revolution Round Table. Speakers have included author Thomas Fleming; John Nagy, consultant for the television program "Turn"; and Edward Lengel, editor of the George Washington Papers. When speaker Todd Andrlik launched the online *Journal of the American Revolution*, Kim became part of JAR's stable of writers and consultants. Andrlik wrote the foreword to Kim's award-winning book, *Revolutionary Delaware: Independence in the First State*, published in 2016 by The History Press. The book received first place for nonfiction history in the 2017 Delaware Press Association Communication Contest. Several of her articles on the American Revolution can be found online: <https://allthingsliberty.com/author/kim-burdick/>.

### ***Service to Community, State, and Nation***

For years Kim has been co-chair of Delaware's "Let Freedom Ring" 4th of July Bell-Ringing Ceremonies and a Delaware judge for the annual competition sponsored by National History Day, a program that inspires more than half a million students the world over to do historical research in areas of interest to them. Kim also takes action when history needs a hand. When she realized Delaware was not represented at Gettysburg, she became project director for the Delaware Civil War Memorial that was placed on the Gettysburg Battlefield in 2000.

Over the course of ten years, Kim served as national chairman of the W3R-USA association to develop the Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route, a 685-mile-long trail from Newport, Rhode Island, to Yorktown, Virginia, to commemorate the march of the allied American and French soldiers of the American Revolution. A bill designating W3R a National Historic Trail was passed in the House and the Senate and signed into law by the President of the United States on March 30, 2009.

For her efforts to honor the alliance between France and the fledgling United States, Kim was honored by the French government. In a public ceremony in Yorktown, Virginia, during a celebration of the 225th anniversary of the Treaty of Paris, which signified the official end of the American Revolution, Kim was inducted, by the French Ambassador to the US, into the Ordre des Palmes Académiques (Order of Academic Palms), given for major contributions to French national education, and one of the world's oldest civil awards.

Kim is a graduate of the Cooperstown Graduate Programs and of the College of Urban Affairs at the University of Delaware. She has taught both history and psychology at Del-Tech's Wilmington Campus since 2004.

A Delaware Press Association board member of longstanding, Kim first became active in DPA in 1998. She served as editor of the award-winning quarterly publication from 2000 – 2004. She remained on the newsletter committee for several years and has served on a number of other committees, including the Power of Story Symposium committee. When Delaware hosted NFPW's 2003 National Communications Conference, Kim was director of the sponsorship committee and secured thousands of dollars to help underwrite the cost. She continues to enter and judge both the DPA/NFPW state and national communications contests.