

## 2020 Annual Conference Fiber Report

In 2020, we have experienced the effects of the COVID 19 crisis in many tangible ways with our efforts for Fiber related activities. In May, our 11th annual Kentucky Sheep and Fiber Festival was cancelled due to gathering restrictions with many of our vendors cancelling their travel plans even before the cancellation was confirmed. The fiber community is a resilient one, though, and we have made many opportunities for our producers to connect with consumers in new ways.

We began a grant in March of 2020 to begin work on a localized Fiber Center. The Kentucky Natural Fiber Center is housed within Mustard Seed Hill, a renovated military academy in Millersburg, Kentucky. It was our goal to host workshops and retreats following the Fiber Festival, giving our workshop instructors and students yearlong learning opportunities. Again, due to gathering restrictions associated with COVID-19, this made those plans hard to accomplish- so we moved to online opportunities. In June, we hosted an online fleece contest and sale. We had producers drop their fleeces off at the center, where we had them judged and photographed. Each fleece was then given the spotlight treatment as we spread each one out on a skirting table and hosted a Facebook Live event where the buyers could see each fleece. It's nowhere near the same as being able to touch and inspect each fleece for themselves, but we were able to sell over \$1000 worth of fleeces for our producers. We shipped out fleeces locally and as far as California and Florida. Several customers came back to the producers directly for additional fiber and have made connections with them for the future.

Over the first week of October, we partnered with The Kentucky Wool Festival in Falmouth, which was also cancelled in person this year to create Kentucky Wool Week. We hosted a social media campaign using the hashtags #kentuckywoolweek and #kww2020 to promote Kentucky Wool and fiber. We included fiber producers, artisans, crafters, and consumers in our outreach and asked them to share pictures of their Kentucky fiber.

We are currently working on videos and online materials for our website and expansion of our Fiber classes for SPRS. If 2020 has taught us anything, it has confirmed the need and value of online content and going forward we see only better opportunities to expand our audience.