

Meet the Teachers

Mississippi Gourd Festival, 2015



NICKY BLAKENEY, Taylorsville, Mississippi
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I have been a crafter most of my life. I love to repurpose things that are no longer used to something that will be used.

I have been a gourder since 2010, when the Mississippi Gourd Society brought the Mississippi Gourd Festival to Smith County. The first class I took was "An Old-Fashioned Santa", taught by Georgie Foster. I have been a gourder since that day. I'm a member of the Mississippi Gourd Society and the American Gourd Society. I am looking forward to teaching others what I have learned. —*Nicky Blakeney*

RENEE KING, Hattiesburg, Mississippi
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I've had a lifelong love of gourds, but it wasn't until 2013, when I found the Mississippi Gourd Society on the internet, that I started to look into carving and painting gourds. Now, I really enjoy seeing the excitement in my students' faces when we learn together the different techniques of working with gourds. Like I said, it's been a lifelong love of gourds. —*Renee King*



CAROL MADDOX, Bossier City, Louisiana
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I began my painting career some 35 years ago, starting with ceramics. I became certified with Duncan, Gare, Mayco, and Hanovia—all paint companies. As all of us addicted to art, I moved on to fabric painting, tole and decorative painting, painting on rocks, spindles, cypress knees, etc., jewelry and gourds. I am certified by Grumbacher to teach fine art and by Bead Landing to teach jewelry.

Gourding has led me to festivals in Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas, and Cherokee, North Carolina, where I learned the wonders of weaving, woodburning, carving, beading, sculpting, closed coiling and, I am sure, more to come.

I have taught gourd classes for many years locally and taught at the 2011, 2012, and 2013 Mississippi Gourd Festival and the 2012 Acadiana Gourd Festival. I entered my first gourd competition at Acadiana and was honored to receive three First Place and the Best of Show awards. I am looking forward to teaching classes at the 2015 Mississippi Gourd Festival in September. —*Carol Maddox*





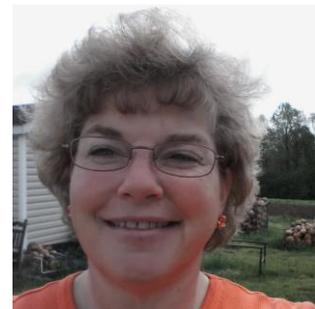
MICHELLE THOMPSON, Raleigh, Mississippi
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I'm excited to share an inking and masking technique in the "Woodland Magic" class I'm teaching at the Mississippi Gourd Festival this year! I learned the technique in a class taught by Judy Zeigler and Jody Retford at the 2015 Gourd Artists Gathering in Cherokee, North Carolina. I love the technique! There are so many possibilities in the design and use of color. It's like magic when I peel away the vinyl mask and reveal the design underneath!

My husband, Mike, and I have been crafting with gourds since 1999. We grow gourds on our farm and use many of those in our crafting. I am show chair for the 2015 Mississippi Gourd Festival, newsletter editor and webmaster for Mississippi Gourd Society, and treasurer for Raleigh Homemakers Club and Smith County Mississippi Homemaker Volunteers. Mike and I are fellow members of the Craftsmen's Guild of Mississippi, and are members of the Mississippi, Alabama, and American gourd societies. —*Michelle Thompson*

KATIE WESTMORELAND, Vinemont, Alabama

I love sharing what I have learned with others, to the point that it sparks their creativity. I enjoy seeing faces light up, as it all 'clicks' and comes together, when seeing the beautiful masterpiece **they** created. You would think after being introduced to gourds in 2008 that I would settle into just one thing, a 'niche', if you will. But, the truth is, I love everything about gourds...from seeds to the gallery and everything in between.



Born and raised in Michigan, a move to Alabama in 1998 revealed growing possibilities beyond my wildest dreams. My husband and I have a big garden, growing about an acre of gourds, which takes us to the Farmer's Market. I vend at shows, own a home cleaning business and am active in our church as a Sunday School teacher and ladies' choir director. We have three grown children and four chickens. I am a member of the Alabama, Mississippi, and American gourd societies. I am also treasurer for the Alabama Gourd Society. —*Katie Westmoreland*