LEXINGTON – Calloway and surrounding counties will soon enjoy opportunities for expanded cultural and educational programs thanks to a exclusive new partnership between Murray State University (MSU) and the Kentucky Humanities Council, Inc.

The Kentucky Humanities Council, located in Lexington, is Kentucky’s affiliate with the National Endowment for the Humanities. The Council also works in close partnership with Kentucky’s arts and cultural agencies, but it is not a state agency. MSU is currently represented on the Board of Directors by retired MSU Professor Ken Wolf, who succeeds Sandra Jordan and Duane Bolin.

MSU’s Office of Regional Stewardship and Outreach will represent the Humanities Council’s Kentucky Chautauqua and other resources available to community organizations and schools with information and help with obtaining these resources.

The Office of Regional Stewardship and Outreach, an initiative of MSU President Dr. Randy Dunn and developed by KY’s Council on Postsecondary Education, strives to assess the needs of west KY and play an active role in regional economic development through supporting cultural and professional programs, and the arts.

Specifically the program supports university efforts to promote regional or statewide economic development, livable communities, social inclusion, improved P-12 schools, creative governance, and civic participation through public engagement activities initiated by university faculty and staff.

Kentucky Chautauqua® is the popular series of one person dramatic characterizations of Kentuckians who have shaped our history and whose influence continues to be felt. This “delivered to the door” traveling program has now brought to life more than 50 fascinating figures from Kentucky’s past. “Since 1992, Chautauqua dramatists have told their stories to nearly 500,000 people in every Kentucky,” said Council executive director Dr. Virginia G. Carter, “but we need and are grateful for MSU’s help in making sure that west Kentucky is enjoying the benefits, not just of Chautauqua, but of all of our programs.”

Joining this year’s cast of 23 Chautauqua dramas are Lucy Bakewell Audubon, wife of
Birds of America artist John James Audubon; Rosemary Clooney, Kentucky’s beloved jazz singer and actress; Johnny Green, Civil War Orphan Brigade soldier; U.S. Supreme Court Justice John Marshall Harlan; and Billy Herndon, friend and law partner of Abraham Lincoln for 18 years. Each performance lasts about 45 minutes and is intended for audiences of 40 or more.

The Kentucky Humanities Council also offers a state wide Speakers Bureau, which features a host of scholars and Kentucky writers on topics of interest to the public. The 2009-10 season, beginning now, includes Murray writer Constance Alexander.

MSU’s existing partnerships with the Kentucky Humanities Council include a variety of collaborations on campus, including the Wrather West Kentucky Museum’s successful installation earlier this year of the Smithsonian Institution’s exhibit, “Between Fences,” an exploration of the art, architecture, and multiple implications of human-built boundaries. The Council is Kentucky’s liaison with the Smithsonian Institution.