

## **Recipient of the 2009 Governor's Awards for the Arts**

### **Creative Community Award - Ridgway Chainsaw Carver's Rendezvous**

Since 1999, in late February, over 200 chainsaw carvers and at least 25,000 people gather to participate in the Ridgway Chainsaw Carvers Rendezvous, the world's largest non-competitive chainsaw carving event. Located in the town of Ridgway, the county seat with a population of 4,591, in Elk County, Pennsylvania, this weeklong social event attracts 200 carvers from over 40 states and dozens of foreign countries and showcases carvers working primarily in wood but also in a dramatic finale, in ice.

Twin brothers, Rick and Randy Boni, hosted the first Rendezvous and have championed the unusual blend of performance, craft and art. Rick and his wife Liz have grown the event and championed this unique art form. "The chainsaw," says Liz Boni, "will do for art what the electric guitar did for music."

Each carver carves throughout the week and is required to produce one auction piece that goes to the highest bidder. The auction helps defray the costs of running the event. Philadelphia Inquirer writer, Howard Shapiro wrote, " They came, they sawed, they conquered...there they are turning 4 ft. tall chunks of pine into everything from Bavarian beer drinkers to enormous spread-winged eagles and horses, raccoons, foxes and enough bears to devour all the honey in the north-central Pennsylvania Wilds...Chainsaw wood carvers are athletes in chaps and ear protectors..."

The Ridgway Chainsaw Carvers Rendezvous has helped to provide a fresh source of tourism dollars for many businesses in and around Ridgway. Traditionally winter months after the Christmas holiday are slow for most small town merchants and businesses. The Rendezvous provides economic stimulus during this slow time. The carvers and visitors pack Ridgway's few motels and book rooms for miles around Ridgway. Also, it allows the community to "show off" its Victorian history, quaint downtown, and natural beauty, providing return visitors during other seasons of the year.