

Walden's Ridge Civic League Report to the Town of Walden August 10, 2021

Thank you for the opportunity to report on activity at the Walden's Ridge Civic League.

Our third quarterly general meeting was July 15th. We introduced the Board of Directors to everyone and heard from members of the audience who asked questions and offered new ideas for programming. The Civic League Board members were still elated from the success of our big Birthday Bash celebrating the construction of the Civic League Auditorium 100 years ago. We happily reported that about 300 people came to the party held June 26th. We had music, good food, birthday cake, ice cream, balloons, vendors, an antique car, a history display, and lots and lots of things for the kids to do. Good comments poured in from those who came, and everyone was very happy. The following week, the still enthusiastic board members decorated a truck and joined the Independence Day parade through Signal Mountain. You can see pictures of the activities on our website www.waldensridgecivicleague.org.

The Saturday before the Birthday Bash, **Mountain Opry** performances began again. It was very exciting. People began arriving at 3:00 for the 6:00 show. Cars and musicians carrying instruments were everywhere. The ladies in the concession stand were overwhelmed with demand for hot dogs, popcorn and coffee. The auditorium was filled, and musicians were playing in the pickin' rooms. The response from the public was wonderful. Quite obviously the pent-up demand for Bluegrass music is terrific, and the Walden's Ridge Civic League is happy the auditorium rings with music again.

We were hosts of two week-long STEM day-camps directed by **Ashley Narramore** and **Jennifer Cisto**. The camps were well attended, and the children had a wonderful time experimenting with many things – including water. It was great fun to see the fire truck from WRES and the fire-fighters interacting with the kids who were learning while they played.

There are many people to thank for helping bring life back to the Civic League. First are the officers, **Rita Smith Irvin**, treasurer; **Carolyn Longphre**, vice-president; and **Bo Chamberlain**, secretary. The first two have been on duty since that fateful day in August, 2020, when Ken Holloway turned over the keys to the 100 year old building. Board members **Mark Dwyer**, **Andy Brockman**, **Hilda Horton**, and **Roxie Thornton** have given many hours of service and have accomplished more than any of us dreamed possible. **Larry Mick** serves as our liaison with Wayside Presbyterian. **Tom Mills** has cleared brush and stumps.

David Dolan brought **Paul Taylor** and his Bobcat to smooth the parking lot and move some big boulders to arrange as furniture. **Bill Horton** installed an outside electric receptacle. **Boy Scout Troop 116** directed traffic at the Birthday Bash. **Kristina Sanders** baked over 200 cupcakes. An anonymous friend created a horseshoe pit. **Joe Robbins** cleaned the grounds with his Weed eater. **Signal Mt. Lions Club** members set up chairs. **Jeannie Siegel** decorated the cake table and **Elizabeth Longphre** served cake and inflated balloons. **Wayne Clemons** handled the sound system. **Charles Adams** loaned his antique Studebaker. **Lolly Durant** organized the vendors. **Peggy Douglas** and **Richard Dwyer** donated the talents of their musicians without asking for payment.

For our long-term vision, **Rodger Castleberry** is scanning and archiving thousands of pages of minutes from 1926 forward. Now that **Marielle Ford** has returned our theatre curtains, we are looking for an expert to refurbish and rehang them so we can present a play written especially for the Civic League. We have asked the communications department at Chattanooga State to help us select replacement sound equipment, and we hope a student will serve as sound technician. **Steve Daugherty** and **Judy Baker** of the Cleveland Storytellers Guild are currently working on a story-telling performance.

As for the return of music to our stage, on Fridays, **Old-Time Music Night** begins at 7:00 PM. On the fourth Saturdays of the month, the **Mountain Opry** presents Bluegrass at 6:00 PM. **South-Eastern Bluegrass Association** members pick and jam third Sundays at 2:00. At Christmastime, **As Isaac** will perform Christian selections, and in January, we look forward to hearing a quintet of the **Chattanooga Symphony Orchestra**. We would also like to build on the success of our June party to hold an annual Music Festival.

In October the Walden's Ridge Civic League will cooperate with McCoy Farm & Gardens at BOOgie & Brews. We will offer an exotic Fortune Teller's tent as a special highlight for the fall festival. In December, we will host **A Very Opry Christmas** at the Civic League on Saturday, December 11. Plans are for music inside and out with Mountain Cove Bluegrass Band as the headliner. Santa will be there, and everyone can join in decorating the buildings for Christmas and enjoying a bonfire with hotdogs and the works before we light the Christmas tree. The weekend will be completed with a Christian music concert Monday and Tuesday nights.

As you can see, our enthusiasm for programming is running away with us. The dear old building itself is old, however, and she is showing her age. Our furnace is too old to be repaired and we must replace it. Our sign has been taken down, and we must replace it. The siding is deteriorating badly, and we must

replace it. Unfortunately, our funds are limited. We have been concentrating on raising **friends** rather than **funds**, because we know that without activity and popular programming, the Walden's Ridge Civic League will not regain its place in our town. By selling Boston butts, by holding a Birthday Bash, and by collecting dues from members, we have made some headway on fund-raising. Future events will bring in some much-needed cash, and we are trying as hard as we can. However, our utility and insurance bills absolutely must be paid, or there will be no programs and no facilities to rent for income.

Of course, everyone says, "Apply for grants." Well, we are taking that course of action, and we are very confident we will be awarded grants as time goes by. We are pursuing a listing on the National Register of Historic Places and are told that our application looks good. Achieving that status will help with grant applications. The Walden's Ridge Civic League is already on the Tennessee Music Heritage Trail, and we are attracting local attention. The question is, can we keep operating until we get over the hump and begin to bring in enough money? Therefore, the Board of Directors has asked me to ask the Town of Walden if the Town can help us in any way financially. I am sure you can see that before long The Walden's Ridge Civic League will be an even greater asset to the citizens, who really do want music to return to our hall. Their very presence indicates that this is true. Do you think that the Town might be able to help us get our furnace fixed so we can continue? We would appreciate it very much.

Remember that facilities at the Walden's Ridge Civic League are available for use by everyone, and we welcome inquiries about rentals.