

In the last several weeks, I have participated in several community arts events that have been revelatory to me about our town. I have concluded that Highlands is a myriad of folks who make up the town.

First, I participated in the Mountain Tip Rotary Art Show the last week in June at Founders Park. Sallie and I sold my pottery and had the opportunity to talk with various people at the show. I noticed a pattern in who attended the show. First, about a third were tourists from across the country. They were in Highlands on vacation, taking in the beautiful scenery and mountain air and visiting special places. The next group was our transitional, aka seasonal residents. I, of course, knew many of our seasonal friends. Then, there were the full-time residents I know and see on many occasions. Finally, there was the “bumper crop of visitors,” children and friends in Highlands visiting seasonal or full-time residents.

The other factor that made the art show successful was the Rotary volunteers, who made sure every exhibiting artist was supported and that visitors had a pleasant experience. Those volunteers did the hard labor so that the Rotary Club could donate thousands of dollars to nonprofits in the community.

The other event I attended on Saturday was the Bascom’s Founders Day Breakfast and the reopening of the Will Henry Stevens Bridge. The Bascom is a wonderful community visual arts center, and I was honored to participate in the reopening of the bridge. At the breakfast, the Bascom board members gave several updates on the money raised to support their programming. I was truly impressed with what the people living in Highlands and Cashiers have contributed to this arts education organization. It is quite remarkable.

On Friday night, Sallie and I hosted a dinner at our house to celebrate the beginning of the 43rd Highlands-Cashiers Chamber Music Festival season. One of the musicians who would perform on Saturday night gave some brief remarks, Scott Yoo. Scott is an acclaimed violinist and conductor of the Mexico City Philharmonic Orchestra and also the co-producer and star of the popular PBS series "Now Hear This." Scott said he was amazed at how a community of just a few thousand people was able to support such a robust and extensive chamber music concert series. All the local residents around the table were delighted and proud to support this arts event after a major leader in classical music made such an observation. We sat in the audience on Saturday evening, memorized by the strings and piano performances. As I sat there, I thought this was a truly transformative aesthetic experience taking place right here in the mountains.

We should all be proud of our Highlands and Cashiers community for its valuing of the arts and commitment to life-enhancing experiences in the arts, sciences, and social support endeavors. These commitments make the plateau a place where people not only want to

visit but, more importantly, want to live and invest their hearts and treasures in the fabric of the community.