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A Decade of Doing

by Ruth Klippstein

The Scottsville Council for the Arts celebrates ten years of service to Scottsville and the surrounding communities this year. The group's mission, stated in their constitution, is "to promote a greater understanding and appreciation of all the arts through education, encouragement, and support of arts organizations and local talent; and by providing arts information...." A review of these ten years shows how well SCA's many dedicated volunteers have carried out this mission.

1995

The idea for the group was developed in "small group conversations" starting with a spring 1995, meeting at Mary Hardy Roberts's Family Players Music School. The need to generate funding for the already-existing Family Players and Horseshoe Bend Players was important. Potential was discussed, enthusiasm generated, and five leaders arose to be nominated as the first directors of the to-be-named group. A public meeting at the Scottsville Library, August 29, 1995, was well attended. The Scottsville Council for the Arts was born.

After many drafts and revisions, the group's purpose was shaped in words and a slate for the Board of Directors devised. With the help of Town attorney Lindsay Dorrier, the articles of incorporation were drawn up and these were approved by the State Corporation Commission January 10, 1996.

Members of the original board of directors show the wide range of interests the new organization was drawing from: Bob Spencer, Linda Wachtmeister, Chris Long, Mary Hardy Roberts, Judy Bushkin, Denny King, Evelyn White, Robert Strini, and Shirley Dorrier. Bob Spencer served as the first president and Chris Long as treasurer.

Art activities were already underway. In late 1995 the nascent SCA sponsored an art show and dramatic presentation for Jamesfest and a Christmas concert and arts and crafts show. They raffled an oil painting by member Dori Reiss to help benefit the Victory Hall restoration fund.

1996

In 1996, SCA's Jeannine Regan gave a graphic and creative arts workshop, and the group again sponsored a Christmas concert and art show.

Charles Fry edited the quarterly newsletter in 1996, with the new logo in place. The first issue reported on the Horseshow Bend Players' plans to produce "Enter Pharaoh Nussbaum," the Family Players, and committee activities. The Christmas Art Exhibit, it was reported, showed a variety of work from 19 artists in the second room at Bocce Café (now the soon-to-be-used room at the Brick), and a 15-piece orchestra under the direction of Mary Hardy Roberts and Nick Glennie-Smith entertained. Coffee and dessert were provided by Bocce. The volunteers who organized this event, under Robins Rudacil, thought they would be able to mount four such shows a year. More help was called for in the newsletter.

The first slate of regularly elected officers was presented at an open meeting June 24, 1996. Evelyn White assumed the presidency, and Linda Wachtmeister became vice-president. Jeannine Regan was recording secretary, Mary Hardy Roberts corresponding secretary, and Lucinda Wheeler treasurer. There were seven other members of the board, and they discussed the possible purchase of Cliffside as an arts headquarters for Scottsville. More funds and more commitment were called for in the newsletter.

One major arts activity under the SCA umbrella in 1996 was the Horseshoe Bend Players December production of "The Homecoming." This followed "The Creature Creeps" in late October. Bob Spencer directed the troupe he originated ten years earlier, and a large cast from Scottsville neighborhoods, with the "heartwarming" book by Earl Hamner, created a memorable performance.

Another long-term SCA project began at this time under the direction of Lillian Schafft and the Literary Committee. Still a vital force today, the Children's Literary Program gathers students' stories from Scottsville and Yancey Elementary Schools for display at the Scottsville Library, and the young writers read their works at a June reception.

1997

SCA helped organize activities for Jamesfest in 1997, which culminated in a pageant at the Scottsville Baptist Church directed by Bob Spencer, "An Afternoon with Miss Lottie Moon." This presentation combined observations from Lottie Moon's letters during her time as a missionary in China with tableau vivant for a very enjoyable entertainment. Pat Fry took over newsletter editorship and all committees were busy and successful. SCA felt it could "light a creative torch here in Scottsville and keep it burning."

1998

But as most volunteer organizations learn, it is difficult to keep momentum going. People leave the board; members fail to renew. By the summer of 1998 Jan Glennie-Smith, SCA president, was working hard to encourage Scottsville to support the group and its activities, such as Cricket Jaber's dance studio on Valley Street and sponsorship of Charlottesville's Zen Monkey dance performances in the local elementary schools. The group still hoped for a permanent home—perhaps in the Canal Warehouse?

1999: Rhythm on the River Begins

Scottsville rose to help SCA's mission in 1999 as the restaurants featured art on their walls. Chris Long at Café Bocce maintained a variety of shows, with opening receptions, inspiring Laurie and Peter Lee to create a two-room gallery above River Rat. Patience Sargent painted a "Wind in the Willows"-themed mural in the hall there. Music, dance, and theatre—Horseshoe Bend produced "The Lion in Winter" at Victory Hall—all flourished with SCA's help.

Another signal success was due to Jan Glennie-Smith's vision of people picnicking on the grass, children playing in Bruce Park, and free music filling the summer air. Lisa Kadick and others stepped forward to support her and Jan was able to put her dream into action June 13, 1999, as Nickeltown opened the Rhythm on the River series of free concerts. Lang Mason came up with the name; local individuals and businesses, as well as a grant from the Robert Carter Foundation, helped underwrite costs. The Jones Family and The Porch Players rounded out the first year, with great attendance, and Rhythm on the River functioned as a committee of Scottsville Council for the Arts until November, 2002, when it became an independent nonprofit organization. "It's happening right here in your town," the SCA newsletter reminded Scottsville in 1999; there was a call for more volunteers.

2000: Scottsville Book Published

Andrew Brennan, as president, saw the SCA into the year 2000 with continued success in the school writing program, Horseshoe Bend productions, fundraising for Victory Hall. Laurel Greene took over the president's role in 2001 for what she termed a "maturing, dynamic and financially sound organization." Her focus was to promote organized efforts to increase membership, find new programs for children, raise new money. Local artists Pat Fry, Tom Tartaglino, and Stefanie Newman taught popular Saturday morning art classes for children. "'Just give them a paint brush, and they go,' Pat marveled" in the newsletter. Lang Mason produced "Town on the River" with SCA support, and the group also helped the Scottsville Elementary School Jazz Troupe. There was a "Visual Artists in Action"

day, when people painted townscapes in one day that were displayed at Victory Hall; ten children participated.

Another major activity was undertaken with the leadership of Lillian Schafft and the Literary Committee, Liz Carter, Laurel Greene, Fanny Loudon Graham Paige, Alicia Woodward, Patricia Wyker, and Jacqueline Broughton. In the spring of 2002 they planned a booklet to publish the writings, drawings, and photographs of our local people. Unsure that they'd get sufficient submissions, they were surprised to be swamped by 82 offerings by November, and they targeted publication for May 2003. Terri Long joined the committee to help with graphic design, and instead of a simple booklet a large format paperbound book with embossed cover, unique for a town the size of Scottsville, was produced. This achievement was celebrated at a Tri-County Riding Club reception with readings, a lovely spread of food, and many congratulations. The book, "Riverbanks to Mountaintops; Writings by Rural Virginians," was featured at a Charlottesville Festival of the Book reading in March, 2004, with an audience of 80-100. It continues to be sold around town, and SCA has talked of a possible second edition.

2001

SCA's successes were highlighted with a 2001 grant from the Virginia Commission for the Arts and a "Good Neighbor" grant from State Farm in 2002. In support of these grants, SCA listed classes and exhibitions it sponsored, children's Christmas parties with art and craft workshops, the Horseshoe Bend play, Rhythm on the River, and "Sing Out America" in November, 2001.

2002

Lang Mason produced "On the Air" in November 2002, with 21 original songs based on news in the "Scottsville Sun" from 1954. Small grants were given by SCA to several applicants to further SCA's mission. Newsletters also note concern over diminished SCA member participation in the group's events, and the need to "do a better job of telling the community 'who we are and what we are doing.'" More theatrical productions were called for.

2003 Going Electronic

Nancy Gill took over presidency of Scottsville Council for the Arts in 2003. The group again sponsored events for Jamesfest; organized a benefit dinner for Victory Hall; and showed the Tony Curtis movie "Houdini" as part of the Virginia Film Festival in October. An SCA website was inaugurated under

Chris Hogger. Many other activities were contemplated (re-installation of the batteaux mural facing Canal Basin Square, sponsoring an area FM radio station, showing movies at Victory Hall) and some, such as Tara Ford's "Get a Kick Out of Cole" and performances at Christmastime of part of the ballet "Nutcracker" were presented. Nancy considered this a "transition year" pointing to increased SCA activity.

2004

Terri Long became president in 2004. Long-term board members Lillian Schaff, Bob Spencer, and Chris Hogger continued to serve as committee head, along with newer members Eleanor Winsor, Laura Krom Mellusi, Lang Mason, and Rose Faber. Evelyn White, Nancy Gill, Jacqueline Broughton, and Graham Paige completed their long, productive service to the board. More letters were sent to prospective new SCA members; grants were awarded, including a scholarship to Summer Sides's dance school. The "Riverbanks to Mountaintops" program at the Festival of the Book raised everyone's spirits, and in September Virginia poet laureate George Garrett was asked to read at Magnolia Restaurant. SCA presented a juried art show in Victory Hall in October, with a well-attended opening reception. Eighteen artists showed 46 works in oil, acrylic, and watercolor, as well as photographs, collage, and sculpture. SCA supported Lang Mason's second musical, "Fine Feathered Follies." The grants committee overhauled the application process. More volunteers were called for.

2005: Ten Years Old

2005 commemorated the tenth anniversary of the inception of SCA. The board robustly addressed it various activities under the direct, efficient leadership of president Eleanor Winsor. The group sponsored two major musical presentations at Jamesfest, as well as children's activities; hosted a writers' group; donated to Rhythm on the River; gave grants to students and art exhibit openings, and—significantly—mounted an exceptionally successful photography show in May. The opening night was attended by over 250 people who enjoyed the pictures, the food and wine, and walking back and forth across Valley Street to the two venues on a "first Friday" evening. Linda Hall helped organize the Senior Center as docents on a busy schedule for the on-going show. The effort was intense, but worth it, and the show will be reprised this May.

Eleanor Winsor, SCA president, notes that the "organization's celebration of its tenth anniversary is the increased activity of Scottsville Council for the Arts; renewals are coming in, many people are working with us, and we are

encouraging others to participate” as well. As the spring newsletter goes to press, there is a call for volunteers.

[Many SCA members and supporters have not been named here, due to space. You are appreciated! —RK]