Summer Events

Working... on the Rocks

Home Design

farm food movement

NRV Staycation

also

Classic Car Artist Profile Local Dining Guide

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Pasture Talk

Lisa Moody of Wild Country Studios in Pearisburg and the developer of www.blueridgehighlands.org stopped by my office a few weeks ago, camera in hand, and snapped this photo. If you’re planning a staycation this summer, read the article (p. 36) in this issue and also cruise around her website for ideas, events and leads on interesting places.

We are well aware of the popularity of the columns in every issue like Classic Car, Artist Profile, Young Professional and Home Design, as well as the feature stories. In this issue, we are launching a new regular feature titled Sustainable Lifestyles; Made in the NRV will debut in our July/August edition.

There are many wonderful products manufactured in our region — some which are distributed locally and regionally and others that make their way around the globe. Sustainable patterns of living are here to stay something about history repeating itself. If you have an idea for either of these new columns, send it along. If you want to write it, let me know. We often encourage an aspiring writer to do a feature for New River Valley Magazine — it’s a great foray into writing with an experienced editor willing to guide and assist.

It’s the season of street fairs and festivals, and the New River Valley is packed with them. What is more fun and inexpensive entertainment than a fair? For the town kids, it’s full of teaching moments in the livestock and agricultural exhibits. For the country folks, well, it’s a great place to wander, people-watch, check out who really did grow the largest potato and indulge in all manner of foods. For everyone, it’s just a blast of lights, noise, contests, rides and good, old-fashioned fun.

Sleep on your porch. Drive a country road. Wipe off the grill. Support local business and the farmer’s markets. It’s a wonderful time of year in our own lovely region of mountains, valleys, rivers and small towns.

Joanne Anderson
Art JAM is not edible art, but it's just as much fun. It is a group of six women artists who meet to encourage each other artistically, trade books, eat and laugh. "A group of friends which shares creative ideas and passions, props you up when necessary, laughs at your jokes, and feeds you well is priceless," says Martha Dillard (painter), one of the group, which began as a casual, monthly, lunch gathering. To be able to identify these lunch dates in their busy calendars, they needed a name and chose JAM because their first names all began with one of those letters. The name was the extent of their organization - no agendas, no worries.

"I always come away from our time together with a lot of creative energy ... wanting to try to improve my work so that I can live up to the artistic quality of the others," Ali Wiebolt (jeweler) explains. "I love the library to choose my next pleasant reading. What a great group of friends!"

When Martha Olson (paper collagist) began playing in Judy Schwab's studio (copper and mixed media) and trying new techniques, the 'laid back lunch group began to change. Ann Reardon (textile artist) joined them, and the three decided to have a show together. "You never know in life where a casual acquaintance will lead," says Martha. "JAM's unexpected synergy has propelled each of us to new experiences that we would not have had as individuals."

That first JAM show, "JAM on the Walls," was held at The Gallery in Radford (now closed) in 2007. It was such fun that they began to search for more group shows and also planned their first open studio. According to Ann Reardon: "There is power in numbers and we can fill the walls, sculpture pedestals and jewelry cases in any gallery. While you might
imagine six artists are very independent, we do work together with interdependency. We do not compete with one another, but we are inspired to keep the quality of our work high and interesting."

The 2008 open studio held at Martha Olson’s house showcased Jennifer Lovejoy’s (architect and stone carver) architectural skills, as she designed the Olson house. That launched an annual event of open studio dubbed Art JAM. By 2010 the group had a brand, and their first major show opened at the Piedmont Arts Association in Martinsville, in conjunction with MINDS WIDE OPEN: Virginia Celebrates Women in the Arts, a statewide initiative honoring contributions by women to arts and culture.

“The magnet that draws me to this group,” Jennifer Lovejoy explains, “is the independent conviction of the members to trust their passion, invest their talents in pursuit of what keeps them tuned to themselves, taking chances and allowing new possibilities.” The show that opened in Martinsville then traveled to the Alleghany Highlands Arts and Crafts Center in Clifton Forge and will appear again this year at Perspective Gallery at Virginia Tech in November.

By the third Art JAM open studio at Martha Olson’s in 2010, those laugh filled lunches were spilling over with to do lists, assignments and yes, agendas. The Art JAM train had left the station. They put up a web page (Artjam2.com), created mailing lists, an annual brochure and got their open studio ad on the screen at the Lyric Theater in Blacksburg. The fourth Art JAM will occur on October 16, 2011, at the University Club at Virginia Tech, and the group has been invited to show their work at the Turchin Center in Boone, N.C., in 2012.

It has been a lot of work, but more important, it has pushed and stretched each of the JAM members creatively. "The JAM group’s individual support and collective show opportunities have pushed me to create pieces that would have lay buried in my sketch book, unrealized, forever," says Judy Schwab. "Together, I think we create a greenhouse of support that helps each of us thrive."

Jennifer Lovejoy’s “Tower of Grace.”

Ann Reardon’s “Georgia’s Garden.”

Martha Dillard’s, “January Creek.”