

# The Arts Come to Life in Prince William County

By Jennifer Rader, Contributing Writer



Arts are alive in Prince William County, and the Prince William County Arts Council—the only comprehensive arts member association in the area—is stepping out in a big way to show it by taking their annual event to a new level.

Arts Alive! has previously been an annual gala for member organizations and their constituencies. But on April 30 from 11 a.m.–4 p.m., at the Sean T. Connaughton Community Plaza, which is located in the center of Prince William County at the County complex between the James J. McCoart Administration Building and the Development Services Building, Arts Alive! will be shared with the public through a full day arts festival.

“Same name, very different event—it’s not just arts with arts,” said Kathy Bentz, Prince William County Arts Council (PWCAC) liaison.

“We want the public to experience arts in Prince William County,” added Sheyna Burt, PWCAC vice-chairperson of marketing. (Let people know) you don’t have to drive north.” In the past, Arts Alive! was a very insular event that took place at the Heritage Hunt Golf Club, and few outside of the member organizations knew about it. But beginning this year, through an exciting organizational rebranding process, the board of PWCAC is pursuing a much more public image by inviting the community to join in their passion.

## Family Focused and Fun

A family-focused, fun event, Arts Alive! will feature performances and interactive activities by PWCAC member organizations. Performances will take place on two stages in the Sean T. Connaughton

Community Plaza. Those who will be featured at Arts Alive! include the Bull Run Cloggers, Castaway Repertory Theater, the Center for the Arts of Greater Manassas/Prince William County, the Manassas Chorale, New Dominion Choraliers, the NOVA Manassas Symphony Orchestra, the Old Bridge Chamber Orchestra, Prince William Chorale, the Prince William Community Band, the Woodbridge Dance Company, the Woodbridge Flute Choir, the Woodbridge Music Club and the Youth Orchestras of Prince William. Cabin Branch Quilters, Manassas Art Guild, Prince William Art Society, Stone House Quilters and Manassas-Warrenton Camera Club will display and sell their works in the Development Services Building. Various food vendors will also be present for the event.

Many of the 30-member organizations of the Prince William County Arts Council will also provide hands-on experiences and demonstrations both indoors and outdoors for kids and adults. The Manassas-Warrenton Camera Club will host a presentation on photography skills. The Center for the Arts of Greater Manassas/Prince William County, Pied Piper Theater will provide a *Sound of Music* sing-along for families to join. Bull Run Cloggers

will invite guests to try clogging—an 18th century, social Appalachian folk dance. The Manassas Art Guild will have kids' art activity stations. And Youth Orchestras of Prince William will bring a unique twist with their "instrument petting zoo," where children can see, touch, hear and try out instruments with orchestra members.

## Excellence in the Arts

The Kathleen Seefeldt Awards for Arts Excellence will be presented between performances. The only local awards program for the arts, the Seefeldt Awards recognize individuals and organizations that have contributed to the strength and success of the local arts. Awards are given for such efforts as newly created art programs and services, exceptional volunteerism and philanthropy within the Prince William arts community and those individuals or groups that have worked to expand the reach of the arts in the community.

These awards are named for Kathleen K. Seefeldt, a champion of the arts who exemplifies the standards for public and community service. As a Lake Ridge resident and former Prince William County Supervisor, Seefeldt has been an avid supporter of the arts in the Prince William community. She has long recognized the arts as a catalyst for the local economy, education and quality of life. As an elected official, she supported the creation of competitive grant funding for local arts organizations and laid the foundation for arts organizations' partnerships with Prince William County Public Schools. Most recently, she continued her work with the arts as co-chair of the Partnership and Development Committee for the Hylton Performing Arts Center.


According to Burt, the one-day festival being held at Connaughton Plaza in Woodbridge is the start of a renewed purpose for the Arts Council since its establishment by the Prince William County Park Authority in 1992. PWCAC serves as an advisory council to the Park Authority, and their mission is "to promote and support the cultural arts in and enrich the quality of life in Prince William County, Manassas and Manassas Park."

The Arts Council does this by hosting free development workshops for the membership biannually on topics such as marketing, fundraising and board development. They provide the membership a centralized scheduling port for use of Prince William County school facilities; act as a combined marketing effort on behalf of the membership through press releases, the website and social media resources; distribute small technical assistance grants; hosts events for membership participation; and represent the arts at local outreach venues.

Both Bentz and Burt emphasized that the rebranding process of Arts Alive! will more intently focus on outreach and membership support—the ultimate goal is to engage the Prince William County community to become more involved in the artistic value and diversity of the county. The Arts Alive! event will reintroduce the Arts Council and put their member organizations in the spotlight in order for residents to experience the uncovered treasures of the Prince William region's arts community.

Two additional public and member benefits of the Prince William County Arts Council's transformation will include a new website, which will have a calendar function, and the rollout of an expanded membership program. The Art Council's new website will bring more information about the Council and its members as well as the ability for Arts Council members to log their individual organization's events. This will create a single source for the public to find, support and attend arts events in Prince William County.

Additionally, the Prince William County Arts Council membership structure has been opened up to all aficionados of the arts. In the past, membership was limited to local nonprofit arts organizations. The recent rollout includes category expansions to individual artists, friends of the arts, for-profit arts organizations and business supporters of the arts. Speaking on behalf of the Arts Council, Bentz said, "We really believe this expanded membership will enhance the Arts Council's ability to promote and support the arts in Prince William."

For more information about Arts Alive! and joining the Prince William County Arts Council, call (703) 792-4244, or email Kathy Bentz at [kcbentz@aol.com](mailto:kcbentz@aol.com). 



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