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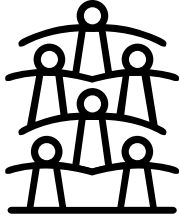
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Nurturing the

By Deann Daley Holcomb

Helping artists exhibit their work, watching the sword wielding production of William Shakespeare's "Macbeth" or listening to the soothing melody of the Frisco Chorale – it was all part of a vision by a group of citizens when they formed the Frisco Association for the Arts (FAA) in 1988.



FRISCO ASSOCIATION FOR THE ARTS

“IT WAS A GROUP OF CITIZENS that all had a common interest to support and see the arts grow in Frisco,” said Linda Pardue, current president of the FAA.

The non-profit organization has journeyed a long way. It currently serves as an umbrella organization providing both financial and non-financial support to local arts groups. Some of the groups recognized by the FAA include the Frisco Chorale, the Frisco Community Band, the Frisco Community Theatre, Word Of Mouth Productions and the Visual Arts Guild of Frisco. Each organization has a representative serving on the Association’s board of directors.



*Photo Contest Honorable Mention: Nightly Sunset Celebration at Mallory Square filled with street performers and onlookers, Key West, Florida.
photo by Jamie Floyd*

arts in Frisco

Pardue said that, from the beginning, the FAA board realized a primary need of the arts groups--funding. So, in October 2002, the Frisco Association for the Arts held its first black tie gala at the Stonebriar Country Club.

“We had around a hundred people attend the first gala,” Pardue said. “The money we raised that night provided funds for the first grants to our member organizations and recognized arts groups as well as provided funding for several scholarships. The attendance at the gala has grown significantly every year. Last year we had 300 people in attendance, due mainly to the increase in corporate sponsors.”

This year’s “Be A Part of It” Black Tie Gala will be at the Frisco Embassy

Suites Conference Center on Saturday, Oct. 22. The diamond title sponsor is Brinkmann Ranch. Funds raised from the Arts Gala and Silent Auction play an important role in allowing the Association the opportunity to supply financial support for Frisco Arts groups and assisting these groups with their ongoing growth.

Thanks to the continuing success of the Association’s annual fund raising gala, the organization has been able to increase the amount of grants to the arts groups as well as branch out and provide scholarships for Frisco students in art, ballet, dance, music and voice. Two new scholarships were added this year. A graduating high school senior majoring in the arts was awarded



a scholarship and a scholarship in art was provided for a student at Collin County Community College.

"We see providing the scholarships as a very important part of what we do," Pardue said.

The FAA acts as a channel for the local cultural infrastructure through economic, community and educational support. For example, the FAA serves as a conduit by publicizing upcoming events such as auditions for the Frisco Chorale, the holiday ballet "The Nutcracker" or the Frisco Community Theatre. The list of announcements, upcoming events and performances by the local arts groups and surrounding communities can be found on the Association's website or through a



monthly Internet newsletter.

The FAA also provides sponsorships for performing arts organizations that

come to Frisco and perform such as the Collin County Ballet Theatre. Based in Plano, the ballet company has several dancers as a part of its dance company as well as dancers from around the area. The ballet company supports the FAA by donating scholarships every year. This year the dance troupe will hold four performances for the Frisco community, an increase from two performances the year before.

The FAA also sponsors the Frisco Storytelling Festival, presented by the Frisco Public Library Foundation. It will hold its second event on Sept. 16-17 at



*Photo Contest
Honorable Mentions:
(top) photo by Todd Williams
(bottom) photo by
Rev. Todd Freeman*

*Photo Contest Honorable Mentions:
(top) Rockport, Massachusetts photo by Amy Davis;
(middle) Summer Bike photo by Cristi Closs;
(bottom) Salzburg, Austria photo by Cindy Semple*

Frisco Commons Park. More than 5,000 people attended last year's inaugural festival.

"We wanted to sponsor the Storytelling Festival because it is an unusual and almost lost art form and we felt it would appeal to people of all ages," Pardue said.

Last year attendees enjoyed nationally renowned storytellers sharing wild tales and folk stories. Some storytellers conveyed Native American legends and the entire event was graced with music and a traditional arts and crafts show.

The storytelling is not exclusive to the professionals; students from Frisco ISD are also a part of the program. "Last year we had Frisco students on the stage and this year more students were chosen to perform," Pardue said.

The continued expansion of the arts in Frisco shows how the Arts Association stands committed to encouraging public interest and participation in the Frisco's cultural resources.

A PART OF FRISCO HISTORY

Located in the center of town is the Frisco Community Theatre (FCT). It opened in 1985 and its first performance was the "Music Man" with a cast of 80 people--quite an undertaking for an upstart theatre.

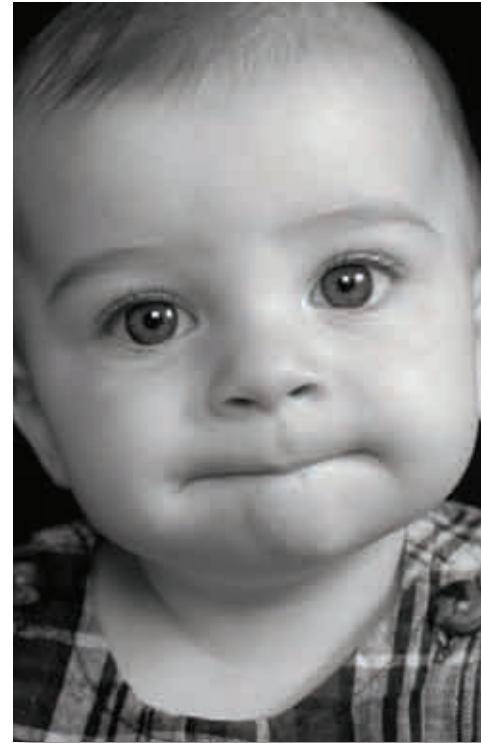
Since then FCT has gained a reputation for producing quality shows from "Macbeth," with wielding sword fights, to this summer's C.S Lewis classic, "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe," that included a cast of 35 children. Up next for this vogue setting, risk-taking theatre troupe will be Arthur Miller's "The Crucible."

"All of the actors are volunteers from Frisco and across the Metroplex," said Jessica McCartney, executive producer of FCT. "We may have productions with four to six people or 40 and that may include children. The secret behind our success is our volunteers--not just on the stage crew, but everyone involved in the production from the people who help make the costumes to our tech volunteers who run sound and lights." McCartney adds, "We can't do it without our volunteers."

FCT is self-supporting, thanks to ticket sales, memberships and donations. McCartney says FCT is grateful to the City of Frisco for allowing them to use a city-owned building to house their company and to show their productions.

This past August FCT held its "Scotties" event, a proud version of its own Academy Awards





*Photo Contest Honorable Mentions:
(left) Bay Bridge at Sunset photo by Chandra Wilmot;
(right) Luke photo by Cari Harkins*

ceremony. "Every three years we honor our actors, directors and set designers and other volunteers for all of the work they have done," McCartney said.

FCT willingly takes a gamble on the unusual. After the fall production of "The Crucible," FCT will tackle the Christmas show entitled "Yes, Virginia There is a Santa Claus."

"It's based on the 1930's radio production where people stand in front of microphones and act along with the live sound effects that we will create in their original form on stage," McCartney said.

Up next for 2006 will be "Crime's of the Heart" by Beth Henley and another Shakespeare classic, "Romeo and Juliet."

"I think in order for us and the arts in Frisco to be successful, we need to raise awareness about what's out there and what arts groups exist," McCartney said.

VISUAL BEAUTY

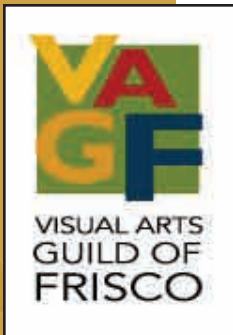
It's the last Friday of the month and the shops in downtown Frisco stay open until 9pm. You'll also find the doors of the Visual Arts Guild of Frisco's (VAGF) downtown gallery open. During these monthly events the Arts Guild features a specific artist or performances by local musicians and/or actors.

The VAGF, a non-profit organization, is located in the McKennon Arts Center in historic downtown Frisco. The VAGF, an organization run entirely by volunteers, has artists exhibiting their work along with special events, classes and workshops for the inspired or uninspired artist-to-be.

"VAGF is an organization where artists can find inspiration, share art experiences, cultivate artists support groups and serve as a home base," said Glendy Valdez, VAGF founder and president. "We provide studio spaces, gallery space and rooms for workshops and demonstrations."

One attraction of the VAGF open to the public every month is the "Gallery Happenings," featuring one artist and a wine and cheese reception. VAGF sponsors hands-on activities such as the July painting project called "Umbrellas for Peace." In addition, the VAGF also coordinates events with performing arts groups such as the Staley Middle School Violin Orchestra Recital and the Frisco Community Theatre.

"Frisco citizens can become involved and enjoy the McKennon Art Center and the VAGF by attending our events, visiting our gallery, participating in hands-on activities and visiting with the artists," Valdez said.





*Photo Contest Honorable Mentions:
(left) Albanian children in a doorway, Kosovo, photo by Thomas Bronaugh
(right) Looking through the clock of the Musee d'Orsay across the river to Sacre
Coeur, Paris, France, photo by Shelley Hodges*

SERENADING VOICES

The Frisco Chorale is Frisco's very own singing ambassador.

Every Monday night the dynamic voices of the Chorale can be heard rehearsing for upcoming performances at the First United Methodist Church of Frisco. After conducting auditions this past August, the Chorale will be putting the finishing touches on its upcoming season according to Kendall Carter, newly appointed conductor and director.

"We're looking at doing two major concerts during the season and it will be an appropriate balance of classics, modern literature and show tunes," Carter said.

Carter recently stepped into his new position after the founder and former director Don Hermonat retired.

Founded in 1994, the Frisco Chorale performs at private events like the Frisco Arts Association Gala and at public venues such as singing the national anthem at the Frisco RoughRiders baseball game.

As the Chorale continues to perform benefit concerts or at festivals and other events, Carter would like to introduce new selections from Brahms to Beethoven.

"Across the spectrum of choral music – from old to new – our Chorale concerts will inspire all who enjoy the arts and specifically the choral art," Carter said. "We will sing large, choral masterpieces in addition to motets, madrigals, anthems and popular favorites."

The Chorale receives funds from donations and semester dues from the performers. Anyone interested in becoming a part of the chorale or volunteering should contact Carter at the First United Methodist Church of Frisco.

As the Chorale's popularity continues to soar, Carter said there's still work to be done to expand the cultural arts exposure for everyone in the community. "It is my hope that the citizens of

Frisco will continue to engage their appreciation for the performing arts as we present a wide variety of

"Frisco citizens can become involved and enjoy the McKennon Art Center and the VAGF by attending our happenings."



*Photo Contest Honorable Mentions:
 (top) Driving on Highway 1, Sonoma County, California photo by Mindy Ciotola;
 (right) Watchful Eyes, a young, female, Cooper's Hawk photo by Annette Plett*

superb choral music,” Carter said. “As the city looks to the future, I hope that a fine civic orchestra will develop and thrive here as well.”

Carter adds, “So many of the finest masterpieces of music were written with the intent of combining the forces of orchestra and chorus. What a delight it would be to one day enjoy Beethoven’s Symphony No. 9 or Carmina Burana as they are performed out of the collaborative efforts of Frisco’s very own premiere music ensembles.”

FAVORITE TUNES

The newest arts organization supported by FAA is the Frisco Community Band (FCB). The FCB formed in 2004 as a non-profit, all volunteer organization that now boasts around 83 members.

Off to a resounding start, the FCB hosted summer concerts and entertained hundreds, many equipped

with picnic baskets and blankets, at Frisco Commons Park. Concertgoers were treated to a variety of music from movie themes to the old-time favorite suites, marches and jazz.

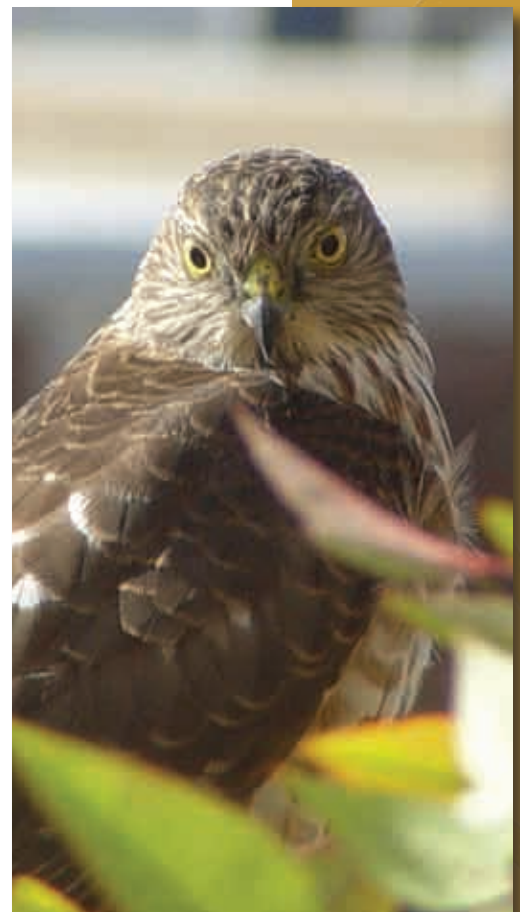
“It was a great success and something we plan to do every year,” said John “J.D.” Smith, FCB president.

“Our first official rehearsal was March 2004 and we’re just trying to grow and gain the reputation in the community as an outstanding community band,” Smith said.

Anyone can become a member of the community band no matter how long is has been since you played your band instrument.

If you’re into jazz, the Frisco Community Jazz band is an extension of the Community Band. Other ensembles include the Brass Ensemble, Saxophone Ensemble, the Clarinet Quartet, the Woodwind Ensemble and the Frisco Horns.

The FCB performs a minimum of four





*Photo Contest Honorable Mentions:
(top) photo by Karen Heitman;
(bottom) photo by Patrick Russell*

times a year and all of the performances are free. All of the engagements, except the summer series, are held at Frisco High School. Additional special appearances by the FCB included performing at the grand opening celebration of Frisco Commons Park and at a special Memorial Day tribute. You might catch the Jazz Band or the smaller wind ensembles at the ballpark or other area sporting events and festivals.

“Whenever we get a chance to play in the community we’re ready because we want everyone to know who we are,” Smith said.

The FCB is supported by the Arts Association in addition to funding from grants, donations and member dues.

A THEATER WITH A NEW VISION

It was 2001 when three women, Becky McCants of Frisco, Carrie Varnell of Plano and Melinda Whitten of McKinney, decided to form a theatre company called “Word Of Mouth Productions, Inc.,” based in Frisco. The three women met through the creative arts ministry at their church. They began performing their repertoire for women’s groups, organizations and churches. They have since branched out to produce full-length plays and musicals. Their goal is to establish a reputation in Frisco of wholesome, family-oriented entertainment.

“Our mission is to provide family-safe, high-quality entertainment to Frisco and the surrounding areas,” McCants said. “We’re not children’s theatre or church theatre; we’re just family safe.” She adds, “I feel strongly and passionately that theatre should be a family experience. Children should be introduced to theatre with adults and I felt like there was a gap in theatre in general for family-oriented productions.”

McCants refers to Word Of Mouth Productions as the vagabond theatre since they don’t have a permanent facility. But with that also comes the freedom to explore performing in different venues.

“Sometimes we’ll do our sketch work from past performances we’ve done at some of the local churches or we’ll have music and a speaker with special interest address women’s topics,” McCants said. “We have one sketch that is a take-off of a talk show and we explore life experiences as a woman.”

Word Of Mouth Production’s first full-length





*Photo Contest Honorable Mentions:
(top left) Cat Scratching in the Sunlight photo by Donna Leach
(top right) Pantheon Oculus, Rome, Italy photo by Dianne Bacon
(bottom right) Frosty Leaves photo by Ann Hicks*



stage show was July 2004 when the company produced “Smoke on the Mountain.” In November they produced “All I Really Need to Know I Did in Kindergarten.” They wrapped up this past June by presenting “You’re a Good Man Charlie Brown.”

This December they will produce a Christmas special, “The Sanders Family Christmas.”

McCants said one of the greatest needs of the organization is volunteers.

GRACEFUL MOVEMENT

Dancers dance because they love dancing and that’s the atmosphere you’ll find at Sheena’s Dance Academy, home of the The Frisco Ballet.

Established in 1999, Sheena Laramore is the artistic/executive director of The Frisco Ballet. More than 45 dancers represent the dance company. Laramore said the company’s goal is to introduce, educate and entertain Frisco and surrounding communities on classical ballet through such productions as the holiday classic, “The Nutcracker.”

“The Frisco Ballet is a demonstration of the benefits of a committed group working together to achieve excellence in the arts,” Laramore added. “Our desire is to see the Frisco Ballet

continue to grow and envelop the community as well as open the doors to aspiring dancers.”

The troupe began rehearsals in late August for the company’s scheduled fall performance of a full-length ballet, to be announced soon.

Dancers perform excerpts from such well-known ballets as “Swan Lake,” “Giselle” and “Firebird.” The group performs at community events like the annual Frisco Holiday Tree Lighting.

THE GRANDE FANALE

As the curtain comes down on an evening performance, there’s no stopping the standing ovation for the new proposed Arts Hall of Collin County, a tri-city cooperative effort of the cities of Frisco, Allen and Plano.

“This is such an exciting project and it is possible because of so many people who are donating their time, money and talents to see it come to fruition,” Pardue said, who is also vice president of the Arts of Collin County Foundation Board.



*Photo Contest Honorable Mentions:
(top) Lake Aibel at sunrise, Souther Alabama
photo by Bob Albrecht;
(bottom) Tombs at Petra, Jordan photo by
Kathleen Derischebourg*



The cities of Frisco, Plano and Allen will be contributing a total of \$57 million in voter-approved bond money. The rest of the \$16 million needed will be raised through private donations. The center is scheduled to open in 2007 and will be located adjacent to State Highway 121 about 1,000 yards east of Custer Road at an intersection where the borders of Frisco, Plano, Allen and McKinney meet.

The largest facility of the 124-acre park will be a 2,100-seat multi-purpose performance hall. It will be similar to the Bass Performance Hall in Fort Worth with two main entrances. The initial phase will also include a 200-seat community room, classrooms and water features, an outdoor gathering space spread over an 8-acre meadow, hike and bike trails and 850 parking spaces.

The arts complex future plans being proposed would include a mid-size 650-seat multi-purpose theatre and more parking spaces.

“As far as we know this is the only major theatre in a rural setting,” said Robbie Robinson, president of the Arts of Collin County. “All of the other major theatres are in an urban environment and that makes it truly unique and very beautiful.”

“You won’t have to travel to the Meyerson in downtown Dallas or the Bass Hall in Fort Worth to see traveling shows and productions. They are going to be right here and the income from those productions will go back into funding future projects and facilities,” Pardue said. “We are fortunate to have many individuals, business leaders, city councils and mayors from the three cities who join with us to support and grow the arts in our area. I believe this will result in a richer life experience for all of us and for future generations.”

DeAnn Daley Holcomb is a freelance writer living in Plano.