

1994 Austrian Gold
Philharmonic coin, front & back
photo by Chris Fritchie



Arts That Glitter

By Wendy Crooks

A COMMON GOAL for non-profit organizations across the globe is the hope for large donations. Operating on restricted budgets and wanting to make the greatest impact possible is the norm for such charitable endeavors. Frisco is no different with plenty of well-meaning folks trying to make an impact in our great community.

Sometimes those wishes are granted. Generally, all that glitters is not gold – but sometimes it is. This summer, for Frisco Arts, it came in the form of a small package containing valuable gold anonymously sent to their office. In an envelope that was postmarked June 25th, Frisco Arts received a 1994 Austrian Gold Philharmonic coin and a short letter that left many wondering why such a large donation would be made anonymously. The note stated simply that the donor's heart was touched by a presentation given at last year's Gala hosted by the local arts umbrella organization. The presentation pertained to the Living Vicariously scholarship awarded each year. One of the scholarship recipients performed and then spoke eloquently about what the scholarship meant to her.

According to Sharon Roland, co-director for Frisco Arts, there have been many donations made in the past, but nothing of this intrigue and value. In

fact, past donations have generally been less than \$100 in value. While a formal appraisal has not yet been made, the coin is believed to be both authentic and valuable. "We researched the coin to verify, and we will have it appraised, but we believe it to be worth around \$900, like the donor states in the letter," said Ms. Roland.

FRISCO ARTS

Formerly called Frisco Association for the Arts, Frisco Arts is a community-based organization formed by citizens and business leaders of Frisco who believe the arts play a vital role in the life and well being of their community. Incorporated 10 years ago, the Frisco Arts' goal is to encourage the development and growth of the arts and arts groups in the Frisco community.

Frisco Arts supports more than 21 local arts organizations in Frisco and Collin County including the Frisco Area Children's Theater, Frisco Chorale, Frisco Community Band, Frisco Community Theatre, The Frisco Ballet, Visual Arts Guild of Frisco, Word of Mouth Productions, Collin County Ballet Theatre, Frisco Storytelling Festival, Frisco Grooves Concerts in the Park, Symphony for the Great Steak of Texas, Plano Symphony Orchestra, Cross Timbers Youth Orchestra, Frisco

Education Foundation, Collin College and Frisco Elementary Strings.

THE MYSTERIOUS DONATION

The donated coin is an Austrian Philharmonic Gold coin, which was minted at the Austrian Mint in Vienna, Austria. Having produced quality coins for collectors and investors for more than 800 years, the Austrian Mint has more recently gained recognition for producing the best selling gold coins in the world in both 1992 and 1995.

The Austrian Philharmonic coin is struck in 99.99 percent pure gold or 24-karat. One side of the coin honors the world-famous Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra with musical instruments while the other side touts the grand organ from the Golden Hall in Vienna's concert hall as well as the face value of the coin in Austrian Schillings plus weight, fineness and year of issue.

A FUNDRAISING GALA

Last year's Gala had approximately 150 attendees and this year attendance is expected to increase by more than 100 guests. The seventh annual black tie event will be held at the Westin Stonebriar Resort on October 25, 2008. The theme this year is "The Art of Frisco" and will include valet parking, a champagne reception, seated gourmet dinner with wine, live entertainment and dancing. There will also be both a silent and live auction and all of the proceeds from the Gala and auction will go towards supporting and growing the arts in Frisco.

According to this year's Gala Chair, Justine Sweeney, the compilation of past Galas has raised nearly \$300,000 for the organization. "Historically the Frisco Arts Gala has been a sought-after event for Frisco and Collin County leaders, business owners and arts patrons," says Ms. Sweeney. This year promises to be another great evening of fun and fundraising. Tickets range from \$150 for Frisco Arts members to \$500 for patron couples. Advance reservations are required.

Of course these events don't come together without much work and effort. To host such a spectacular evening it takes more than 30 Frisco Arts dedicated volunteers. These volunteers commit

their time, talents and connections and even make financial contributions all to pull off the black tie evening.

This year's presenting sponsor is Newman Village, a distinctive mixed-use community in northwestern Frisco. Additional sponsors for the Gala include the Westin Stonebriar Resort, City of Frisco, Atmos Energy, Frisco STYLE Magazine, American Bank of Texas, Joffrey Ballet, Land Rover Frisco, Sweeney Media Group, ON Magazine, Inside Collin County Business, Visual Arts Guild of Frisco, Capital One, Frisco Women's League and The Shops at Starwood. The beautiful gold coin will be one of the featured items in the live auction at the Gala. When the item is presented for auction there is bound to be more than a few people watching the crowd and trying to gauge reactions in order to identify the donor. In the letter that came with the coin, the mystery donor states, "See you at the Gala."

FRISCO ARTS SCHOLARSHIPS

The Living Vicariously scholarship program, in collaboration with Frisco Family Services Center is a program designed to make funding available for someone who normally would not be able to participate in the arts. Whether it is taking voice or music lessons or attending summer art camp or a theater performance, many do not have the financial means to enjoy the arts. The Living Vicariously program provides an opportunity for Frisco students and senior citizens to become active in the arts. To date, Frisco Arts has granted funding to the Frisco Education Foundation and Collin College and has provided arts opportunities to at least 12 scholarship recipients.

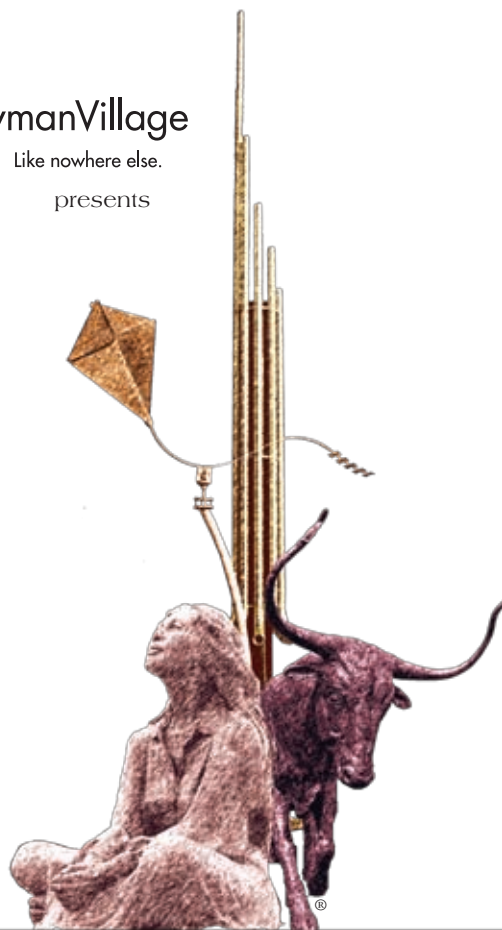
This donated coin might just be the beginning of the glitter for Frisco Arts. The mystery donor stated in his/her letter that if the coin sells for twice its value at the auction, they would donate another coin for next year's auction. According to Ms. Roland, "Eighteen hundred dollars can go a long way in music or theater lessons for someone."

Wendy Crooks is a freelance writer living in Plano. Website references are also listed on page 84.

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