

The New Year traditionally marks new beginnings, and there are certainly lots of exciting things underway at the United Arts Council including an updated website, www.gastonarts.org, with the option for donors to give securely online. This will be beneficial as we head into our 2007 Fund Drive with a kick-off event planned for February 3rd at Westfield Mall from 2-4 pm. We are grateful to Fidelity Bank for their generous sponsorship of this event. We are also thrilled to announce that Sam Stowe^{III} has graciously agreed to head up our campaign to raise \$165,000 this year.

Last year marked significant changes under the leadership of Nan Bridgeman. Over the summer, Gaston Dance Theatre announced the hiring of Keith Darby as Artistic Director. A resident of Belmont, Keith has been affiliated with Gaston Dance for over 20 years. In October Juliette Shelley joined the Council as Director of Community Relations. Gaston School of the Arts continues to add new instructors and programming to match increasing demand. In December, under the direction of Dan Wynkoop, the Gaston Choral Society joined the Charlotte Philharmonic for the sixth annual Holiday Concert. To many Gaston County residents this event signals the start of the holiday season. Indeed, it has become so popular that seating priority is now given to our Annual Fund Drive supporters.

At the end of January the Gaston Concert Association will be providing our 5th graders with the opportunity to experience the Winston Salem Triad Symphony live. It's not often that young people get the chance to be exposed to this caliber of music. Gaston County Art Guild has exhibits popping up all over the county; keep your eyes open at the Schiele Museum for the Guild's annual "Natural View" presentation. Plans for the Pops in the Park are getting underway, so watch the website for more information on this wonderful family event. What better way to spend a summer evening than picnicking with family and friends to the accompaniment of quality symphonic music?

So please support your local United Arts Council by joining us February 3rd at Westfield Mall where our affiliates will showcase their many talents and you will be able to pick up information on all that we have to offer our community.