

If there's one complaint I have about Beaufort in springtime – besides the schizo weather and the niggling no-see-ums and the magical, self-replacing bird poop on my windshield – it's that there's simply too much going on.



Between dance recitals and little league games, festivals and fundraisers, parties and Pig Outs, air shows and auctions, who can possibly get to everything? For a recovering socialite like myself, it's a bittersweet time. No longer so frantic about "making the scene," I still feel a bit wistful knowing the scene's being made just fine without me.

I missed the **Habitat for Humanity Birdhouse Auction** this year, due to the seasonal dearth of available babysitters, but fortunately, there was a child-friendly Charles Street Gallery opening the same night, so I was not bereft of society. (As if you could be around here!) I spoke to plenty of folks who did attend the Birdhouse auction – now in its sixth year – and they all had a marvelous time. Lively music by the Muelles (featuring our own multi-talented Laura Von Harten), fantastic food (catered by our own multi-talented Debbi Covington), and lots of beautiful birdhouses. The folks at Habitat deserve huge kudos, since they managed to pull off this year's auction without volunteer co-chairs. Having worked in that capacity last year, I can tell you, it's a heckuva job, Brownie... a real time-and-energy suck. To Brenda, Ryan, Gail & Co.... congratulations. You did it! (As of press time, they didn't yet know how much money they'd raised, but times are lean and money's money. Good on 'em.)

About the aforementioned **Charles Street Gallery**: Consider this a very heartfelt and long overdue public 'thank you' to the Phillips family, owners and proprietors of said establishment. For longer than I can remember, Georgia, Sonny and Tanja have been throwing parties – great parties! – in their backyard, while feting a featured artist upstairs in the gallery... every month, fall through spring. Do you love fine art? Creative cuisine? Live music? Intriguing company? If you answered 'yes' to any of the above, you'll love a Charles Street Gallery opening. And whoever you are, you're invited. You can even bring your kids, and they'll have just as much fun as you do. With a successful framing business and plenty of sought-after artists in their stable, the Phillips' don't have to go to all this trouble. They don't need to go to all this trouble. I am told by those in-the-know that they do it simply because "they enjoy entertaining friends." And it's hard to imagine anyone who doesn't fall into that category for the Phillips family. Last Friday's opening for Sharon Hardy was the final reception of the season. Someone said to me, "Geeze, what'll I do now for a social life? The Charles Street

is

my social life." I felt his pain, and I know many of you do, too. Let's not forget to thank our gracious hosts next time we see them.

(And while I'm thinking about it, **Deanna Bowdish at The Gallery** is nipping at their heels for the title of Hostess with the Mostest. The openings at her Bay Street establishment are warm, welcoming, and full of surprises – and she keeps a stash of paper and crayons on hand for aspiring young artists. The Gallery just celebrated its 5th anniversary with a typically fabulous soiree. Here's to another five!)

While I hovered around the food table at the Charles Street last Friday, a couple of my fellow art-partiers shared the skinny on the upcoming **fundraiser for the Old Commons** neighborhood. We ran an article in our last issue – the

Foundation Band

will be playing blues, R & B and oldies, remember? – but apparently, something was left out of the press release. And it's a doozy. The fundraiser, happening Saturday, May 30th, will feature a

"Queen of the Commons" Pageant

between band sets. As has oft been noted, the Old Commons is missing a "Queen Street" to go with its King, Duke, Prince and Washington streets. This grand injustice will be rectified at the pageant, during which representatives from all the surrounding neighborhood associations will choose a Queen of the Commons. And to make things even more enlightened, they're opening the pageant to anybody who's game. That's right; you don't have to live in the Old Commons neighborhood to be crowned its queen... nor do you have to be female. Pageant hopefuls may come dressed to impress... or not. I am told that a large box of flamboyant costume 'elements' will be on hand and that contestants will be free to embellish themselves as they see fit. This should be big fun, y'all! Festivities are from 6 – 9 pm, with a fish fry dinner at 8 pm. No one's quite sure what time the pageant will begin. Best just to come early and stay. Tickets are only \$10. What a deal, considering it's a coronation!

And this is pretty cool, too. On May 28th, **Riverview Charter School** is holding something called

"Playhouse

Palooza,"

a party

where they'll auction off five custom playhouses created by well-known Beaufort designers and builders, all of whom were asked to incorporate "green" building practices into their work. Funds raised will go toward enhancing technology in the classrooms of the new school. According to the press release I received, it's already too late to purchase tickets to this fabulous-sounding event – it's being held at

Habersham's Southern Living Sugarberry Cottage

and catered by

Saltus

– but the pics they sent me were so cute, and the whole idea so creative, I couldn't resist giving the Riverview folks a mention! I know some of the women behind this charter school, and they have worked like crazy to make their vision a reality. Well done, ladies!

Rereading the paragraphs above, it strikes me, as it often does, that we have an uncanny abundance of talented, driven individuals in this small community – people who devote extra time and energy – going way beyond the demands of everyday life, which is pretty demanding these days – to being part of something not just good, but great. A couple of weeks ago, Jeff, Amelia and I were lucky to be guests of the **Beaufort Symphony Orchestra** at their Spring Concert. I'm ashamed to confess I hadn't heard the orchestra in a couple of years, and boy, are they terrific! You have to practice long and hard to be terrific, and most of these musicians have day jobs. I commend them for their dedication.

The theme was Broadway and Hollywood, and, with regard to the latter, we were treated to music from Star Wars and Pirates of the Caribbean. Conductor Fred Devyatkin was charismatic as ever, and the entire orchestra was on its game. For the Broadway portions of the concert, **v**

ocalists Gregg and Lynda McLain

joined the orchestra. (Lynda is my daughter's Drama teacher at Lady's Island Elementary, and

what fun it was for Amelia to see her teacher all glammed up in sequins!) First, the McLeans took on Cole Porter, surely one of the most challenging composers around, instilling every line with wit, personality and passion. In the second act, they tackled another complex genius – Leonard Bernstein – singing songs from *West Side Story*. Gregg set the tone with a winsome “Maria,” then his wife joined him for the lovely “One Hand, One Heart.” Lynda’s “Somewhere” was transcendent, and the couple ended with a stirring “Balcony Scene,” better known as “Tonight.” Fortunately, the orchestra finished up with a lively jazz medley called “Satchmo.” Otherwise, folks driving past the USCB Performing Arts Center that Sunday afternoon would have been surprised by the sight of several hundred people leaving the building in tears. (Yes, the McLeans were that good channeling Tony and Maria...)

How many small towns have their own symphony orchestras? In fact, how many small towns have half the stuff we do? Instead of kvetching about how I can’t possibly get to everything, I should be counting my lucky stars that there’s so much to get to. Besides, I can already feel the hot, sweet breath of summer on my neck, which means things are about to slow down dramatically around here.

Until a little shindig known as **Water Festival**, that is...