

Tryon Daily Bulletin

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Only 50 cents



Here's a list of upcoming meetings and events for area nonprofit community and governmental organizations:

TODAY

Polk County Mobile Recycling Unit, Tuesdays, Ozone Drive and Hwy. 176, Saluda.

Hospice of the Carolina Foothills, "We Care" is a weekly informal social group open to women coping with loss. The group meets at 9 a.m. at TJ's Café in Tryon and is open to newcomers. For more information, contact Shannon Slater at 894-7000 or 800-617-7132 or sslater@hocf.org.

The Meeting Place Senior Center, Tuesday activities include ceramics, 9:30 a.m.; art class, 10 a.m., Bingo or movie, 12:30 p.m. 828-894-0001.

Polk County Historical Association Museum, open Tuesdays, 10 a.m. - 1 p.m., 60 Walker St., Columbus, lower level. Free.

Saluda Center, Bridge, Tuesdays, 10 a.m., chair exercise, 2:30 p.m. 828-749-9245. For more activities, e-mail saludacenter@hotmail.com or visit www.saluda.com.

Landrum Library, Book Discussion Group, fourth Tuesday every month, 10:30 a.m. at the library. 864-457-2218.

Polk County Library,

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An instrumental obsession

by Samantha Hurst

Ben Seymour suffers from "instrument acquisition syndrome."

Hundred-year-old restored guitars hang from his walls. Patterns and stacks of wood lying in wait to create dulcimers and mandolins cover his workshop.

"I don't have a living room, we just have instruments everywhere — they are falling out in the floor," he said.

Seymour's drawn to every detail — the precise shape and curve of the wood, the tension of strings, the historic materials used to craft each piece.

"It's basically just an attraction to music," Seymour said.

Seymour sat down for his first piano lesson when he was 6 years old. He danced his fingers across the piano for 13 years, but said later in his teen years it was hard picking up

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Ben Seymour plays a tune on one of the many dulcimers he's constructed in his backyard workshop. (photo by Samantha Hurst)

Columbus seeks \$10k in pledges from community to save Fab 4th fireworks

by Leah Justice

The Town of Columbus is running out of time to decide whether the Fabulous 4th of July celebration will include fireworks this year.

The town has until Jan. 31 to cancel its contract with Zambelli Fireworks if necessary.

Columbus officials were hoping to raise approximately \$10,000 from the community

to keep the fireworks show, since funding for the Fabulous 4th celebration was not included in this year's tight budget.

The town has an existing contract with Zambelli Fireworks, and Zambelli notified the town last year that it could cancel the

"[Fireworks are] a big part of the Fourth of July. I say let's go for it."

— Councilwoman Ernie Kan

2011 contract if it did so by the end of this month.

Columbus Town Council heard at its Jan.

20 meeting from councilwoman Ernie Kan, who said the Fabulous 4th committee has confidence it

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• Seymour

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the dulcimer." He refers to the "dulcimers" sold at these events as DSOs or dulcimer-shaped objects; better used as wall art.

While he doesn't think accessibility of music is ever a bad thing, he said the dulcimer's reputation leads many to ignore the complex sounds one can produce with the instrument.

"There is so much more you can do with a dulcimer," Seymour said. "Playing across the notes, you're playing lead lines – you can hang with the big boys, so to speak."

The Green Creek musician and luthier (someone who creates and repairs stringed instruments) began playing with the big boys decades ago – he started constructing dulcimers and guitars in 1982.

He's created Paraguayan harps, travel guitars, mandolins, custom ukuleles and Irish bouzoukis, which are, as Seymour calls them, "mandolins on ste-

roids."

He's hewn cherry dulcimers and a dulcimer with a Pasimas-quaddy inlay.

His skill in constructing increasingly rare instruments quickly grasped the attention of fellow musicians around the world and allows him to champion not only dulcimers but a variety of nearly forgotten instruments.

Seymour found his forte in the production of historical pieces – many dating back centuries.

"Instead of just building a bunch of basic instruments, everything I produce has been customized to fit a specific musician's order," he said.

As one of possibly only three people in the world who actively produce dulcimer antecedents, Seymour has spent countless

hours researching the history behind these musical relics.

Dulcimer antecedents are from a family of eastern European fretted zithers. (Zithers are instruments strung from one end to the other, with tension pulling from both ends.)

"There is so much more you can do with a dulcimer. Playing across the notes, you're playing lead lines – you can hang with the big boys, so to speak."

– Ben Seymour

There are quite tricky roadblocks along the way of constructing such ancient instruments. For many rare pieces, there are minimal bits of information regarding how they were made.

"I do a lot of research," he said.

Seymour is particularly well-known for building Scheitholts, a German instrument played during Revolutionary War days.

He's in fact traveling in March to get his hands on several Scheitholts for the first time at the

Mercer Museum in Pennsylvania. He's studied photographs of the instruments and detailed descriptions from the museum curator but wants more interaction with these rare instruments – his passion.

One of his more unexpected requests was to construct a Langeleik – a Norwegian zither that has not been regularly built since the 1700s.

The language issue alone presented enough barriers to Seymour collecting information on the instrument. The fact that maybe only a handful of people in Norway even know much about the instrument was another.

Then there's the added fact that the Langeleik isn't an easy piece to carve.

"It's this elaborate thing that was just boogerish to do," he said.

The more boogerish the better, though, said Seymour, who relishes in the chance to tackle even the most difficult instrument project.

To learn more of Seymour's work, visit www.kudzupatch.net.

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