

## How Our Town Recycled An Old Building Into A Work Of Art

Black Mountain is justifiably proud of its newly renovated City Hall on Midland Street. The building on Montreat Road that housed City Hall from the early 1990's until this year is now defunct. But a previous City Hall still stands, and this community can also be justifiably proud of the Black Mountain Center for the Arts, which inhabits the original City Hall at 225 W. State Street, at the west end of town.

Beginning in the 1920's this handsome, multi-story brick building housed the offices for the Town of Black Mountain, along with the public library, the Red Cross, the first public telephone, the jail, and the firemen's sleeping quarters. When the building was vacated, some believed the old City Hall had run its course of usefulness and was past its prime, destined for demolition. But others believed it could be restored into a thriving arts center, and could bring renewed vigor into the life of downtown Black Mountain. Through concentrated vision, hard work, and persistent fund raising efforts, the initial board members of the newly formed Black Mountain Center for the Arts saw their labors pay off when the doors were opened to the resourcefully renovated building in 2000.



Nine years later visitors come through the Center's doors every day wanting to learn about Black Mountain, about the legendary Black Mountain College, and about the arts for which this area is so well known. They come to view the current show in the Upper Gallery, to register for ongoing classes, to ask about possibilities for artists in this locale, and to exchange ideas for all of the above.

Towns the size of Black Mountain, especially towns that are not county seats, seldom have arts centers that focus on more than one area of the arts. Towns the size of Black Mountain seldom have the availability and quality of local talent that is found here as the artists in our area range from children to retirees. What those early BMCA board members knew is that the arts encompass more than one dimension, and that a wide array of talents are well represented in our local and part-time population. There's a rich music scene here that is historic; the same can be said of the visual arts and fine handmade craft such as pottery, of the written word, and of the performing areas of the arts.

BMCA was developed with the idea that focusing on one area of the arts would be insufficient – that the stage is large enough to invite people to participate in as many areas as they will. Thus, the mission of the Center was born – “to bring arts to the people, and people to the arts.” When those early board members planned for the Center, they counted on the generosity of the people who love both the arts and the town to support and sustain it year after year. By establishing the Center as a non-profit institution, the founders purposefully chose for it to be a place where people at every level could participate and contribute. They held a nationwide search for a director who could administer a multi-faceted arts organization, and found that person in Gale Jackson, who has served as Executive Director since 1999.

The Black Mountain Center for the Arts continues to derive its support from the philanthropy of the very people who want to see it thrive. As new people move to the area they also enjoy becoming a part of the arts scene in our Valley by volunteering time, by attending events and classes, and by becoming financial donors to the Center, just as those who have lived here a longer time continue to do.

BMCA will initiate its annual fund raising campaign at the end of July. You may receive a letter requesting your support, signed by a current board member. Please give as generously as you are able this year; every donation is appreciated. If you do not receive a request letter, it may be because we haven't met you yet and don't have an address for you. Please feel free to stop by or call the Center at 828/669-0930 to make your donation and get to know the staff and volunteers who keep the arts alive in Black Mountain.