

port Art Guild member Faye Boushley spent more than 500 volunteer hours painting quilt murals, including this Habitat for Humanity-themed one, for the new downtown Kingsport Quilt Trail.

# Piece by piece

## With the patterns picked and murals painted, downtown Kingsport Quilt Trail coming together

By JESSICA FISCHER

jfischer@timesnews.net

**L**ast spring, just a week after her grandmother's funeral, Jill Parsons saw a call for entries in the Kingsport Times-News seeking antique quilts from families in Kingsport and Sullivan County.

The quilts were to be inspiration for a public art trail that would bring vibrantly painted 4x4 quilt murals like the ones that grace barns on the regional Quilt Trail to buildings in downtown Kingsport.

Parsons submitted five of her late grandmother's quilts for consideration as a way to honor the memory of a woman who was not only an avid quilter, but also instrumental in getting the Kingsport Farmers Market up and running.

"My sister and I used to go with her and my grandfather to the farmers market Saturday mornings and sell stuff out of the back of the truck, so I was particularly

interested in doing something that was for downtown Kingsport," Parsons said.

Out of more than 50 antique quilts submitted, two of Parsons' late grandmother Pauline Taylor's quilted creations — a geometric orange-and-black Tumbling Blocks pattern and a diamond variation of Grandmother's Flower Garden — were chosen for the project, funded in part by a grant from the Kingsport Community Foundation and coordinated by the Appalachian Resource Conservation and Development Council, whose mission is to improve the rural economy and conserve natural resources.

Appalachian RC&D also oversees the regional Quilt Trail, which boasts 90 murals on barns from Greene to Johnson counties in Northeast Tennessee and is celebrating its 10th anniversary this year.

The Quilt Trail was originally founded as a rural project, but project coordinator Emily

Please see PATTERNS, page





port Art Guild member Faye Boushley spent more than 500 volunteer hours painting quilt murals, including this Habitat for Humanity-themed one, for the new downtown Kingsport Quilt Trail.

# Piece by piece

## With the patterns picked and murals painted, downtown Kingsport Quilt Trail coming together

By JESSICA FISCHER

jfischer@timesnews.net

**L**ast spring, just a week after her grandmother's funeral, Jill Parsons saw a call for entries in the Kingsport Times-News seeking antique quilts from families in Kingsport and Sullivan County.

The quilts were to be inspiration for a public art trail that would bring vibrantly painted 4x4 quilt murals like the ones that grace barns on the regional Quilt Trail to buildings in downtown Kingsport.

Parsons submitted five of her late grandmother's quilts for consideration as a way to honor the memory of a woman who was not only an avid quilter, but also instrumental in getting the Kingsport Farmers Market up and running.

"My sister and I used to go with her and my grandfather to the farmers market Saturday mornings and sell stuff out of the back of the truck, so I was particularly

interested in doing something that was for downtown Kingsport," Parsons said.

Out of more than 50 antique quilts submitted, two of Parsons' late grandmother Pauline Taylor's quilted creations — a geometric orange-and-black Tumbling Blocks pattern and a diamond variation of Grandmother's Flower Garden — were chosen for the project, funded in part by a grant from the Kingsport Community Foundation and coordinated by the Appalachian Resource Conservation and Development Council, whose mission is to improve the rural economy and conserve natural resources.

Appalachian RC&D also oversees the regional Quilt Trail, which boasts 90 murals on barns from Greene to Johnson counties in Northeast Tennessee and is celebrating its 10th anniversary this year.

The Quilt Trail was originally founded as a rural project, but project coordinator Emily

Please see PATTERNS, page





Bidgood said that bringing the concept to downtowns makes sense.

"We won't be able to hold on to our rural character and agricultural economy if we don't focus on strengthening our downtown centers," said Bidgood, who works with Appalachian RC&D through AmeriCorps VISTA. "A strong and active downtown means less pressure on farms to sell, so ultimately we hope these beautiful quilt murals and the stories of the families will bring more people out to enjoy downtown Kingsport and patronize businesses."

Mary Faulkner, an RC&D board member and a quilter herself, was instrumental in bringing the project to Kingsport and has been actively involved since students from the Cora Cox Academy painted the first two quilt murals — now on display at the Kingsport Farmers Market building — last summer.

Since then, professional and amateur volunteers have spent about 1,000 hours painting the remainder of the murals.

Faye Boushley, an antiques dealer and member of the Kingsport Art Guild, put in 500 of those hours herself.

"Quilts were created to keep a family warm, they were used as wedding gifts, new home gifts, coming of age gifts. Always something special, always warmth and love. That's what a quilt means to me — the warmth of a family and love," said Boushley, who collects and repairs old quilts. "When I began painting quilts for the Downtown Quilt Project it gave me the opportunity to give back to my community. I love Kingsport and I've always felt that we were put on this earth to share with each other and to give back in whatever way we can."

Others who painted murals were Cindi Huss, Sandy McAdams, Cheryl Blasini, Marly Copeland, Ruby Chapell, Allee Hopkins, J.R. East and Parsons, who painted her grandmother's two quilt designs with help from her daughter, Olivia Parson, and father, Claude Taylor.

In addition to the two quilt

murals at the Kingsport Farmers Market, five others have been installed at locations in downtown Kingsport — at Netherland Inn, Cindy Saadeh Fine Art Gallery, The Haggle Shop, Pappy's Screen Printing and the DKA Main Art Center. Bidgood hopes to have found homes for all 20 quilt murals by the summer.

Also in the works is a cell phone tour, being created in partnership with the Kingsport Office of Cultural Arts. As with Kingsport's Sculpture Walk, visitors will be able to dial in and hear stories about the quilts narrated by the family members themselves.

"Also, there will be integration with smartphone tools, where people can access through their smartphone maybe what some of the events are at those businesses, or deals or promotions," Bidgood said. "It may be that they scan the QR code and get 10 percent off a purchase. That's something the Cultural Arts office wants to do with all the public art, so hopefully businesses will be getting promotion from online, from our smartphone tools and from one day when we have our brochure when all [the murals are] up."

Among the family members to be profiled on the cell phone tour is J.R. East, whose grandmother Hassie Coffey's purple and green Bowtie pattern is featured on one of the murals, which East painted himself.

"My grandmother had pieced one [quilt] for each of her five children. She had made five of them in the early 1960s, and of the five, the one that my aunt had is the only one left," East said. "I've always thought it was a beautiful quilt. After they chose it, Mary [Faulkner] called me and asked me if I would like to paint on my grandmother's quilt square, so it was a great honor to get to do that. That first day I said it's kind of hard to paint with tears in your eyes. My grandmother passed away in 1999, and I think she would be so proud of this."

Businesses interested in having a quilt mural installed on their facade should call the Appalachian RC&D at (423) 979-2581.

**DAYBOOK**