

# Culture Days to uncover benefits of the arts



## Guest Shot

Vickie McLeod

Unlike Brittani Faulkes, last year's guest editor for the Arts and Culture Edition, I don't have years of experience as a working artist. But I do have a life long love of consuming the arts and dabbling in music and the visual arts as a hobby.

I've found that local arts, culture and heritage groups provide several unseen benefits aside from what we see in a gallery or a performance hall. Let's look for these hidden benefits.

As I grew up, I learned many rules and routines of doing things that allowed me to successfully interact with others. The fork should be on the left. Columbus discovered America in 1492. Financial reports have both assets and liabilities.

But there comes a time when we hit the "routine ceiling." The past won't help us. We are called upon to come up with a fresh new concept at work, decide what career or relationship path to take or how to tweak a new recipe.

One way to break through conventional ideas is to try a little creative thought. Turn things around. Look up instead of down. Reverse the usual process.

And one way to re-discover creative thinking is to participate in the activities of arts, cultural and heritage groups. That's one of those unseen benefits—helping us to think and feel in new ways not

just about the art we are working on—but a range of decisions that we make in everyday life.

More of these benefits emerged when I got involved in one of these local arts groups, the Textile Arts Guild of Richmond.

Guild members have informal social connections beyond their regular meetings and workshops. They share books, go to live theatre together and walk every Sunday at Garry Point.

I also discovered that making something of comfort for someone in need is very gratifying. Over this summer the guild has made over 90 items for local charities such as Lion's Manor, the public health nurse, Richmond Hospital Birthing Centre, Richmond Hospice House, as well as for Japan earthquake relief.

My hunch is that more of you find yourself in my position—leaving a busy full-time career and cast-

ing around for something meaningful to do. Or



maybe you just graduated and are wondering if you can make a living in the arts. Perhaps you've seen the pure joy in your child's eyes when they dance or draw and wonder, "How did I get away from all that?"

Well, this week is a great time to get back to it. Culture Days, the national focus on arts participation will be held this weekend—Sept. 30, Oct. 1 and 2. Richmond will be awash with over 30 interactive creative activities to engage people of all ages.

Like me, you may not see yourself as an "artist," but don't let a label stop you from trying out creativity more often—and discovering for yourself all those exceptional hidden benefits!

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