



From the Desk of the Moose of Humor

A serious message from Rebecca Rule

For those of you who haven't heard of me, I'm a writer who travels New Hampshire telling and gathering stories, most often at town halls, libraries, and senior centers. I love New Hampshire and I love the arts, so I'm a great fan of the Arts Alliance. When people ask what's happening in the arts in the North Country, I say, "**Check out the Arts Alliance of Northern New Hampshire!**" This low-overhead (no office, just people), plain-brown-paper organization is the glowing bed of coals on the grill that keeps the arts cooking.

The Arts Alliance works with partners all around the region — and the state — to present more than 150 arts and humanities programs each year, from Plymouth to Pittsburg, Conway to Woodsville, and all points in between. They've got your school, after-school and preschool programs and residencies. Same with old-fashioned house concerts, new-fashioned teacher training, gatherings of non-profit groups to pool resources, and lots of Arts & Health programs for seniors.

You don't have to drive to Boston to see a chamber orchestra concert — come to Colebrook instead. The Arts Alliance brings first-class Taiko drumming, Mexican Mariachi, Irish harp, and African dance directly to you. If you haven't experienced these things — well, you might just enjoy them (especially when they're happening in your neighborhood)! The folks at the Arts Alliance work hard through partnerships and grants to offer these performances, workshops, conferences and gatherings and bring them here, to this place, where we live. But partnerships and grants aren't enough. This grassroots organization needs grassroots support — individual donations from people like you and me make this work possible.

Yup, this is a request for you to step up and donate what you can, and what seems fair, to make sure that the arts thrive not just in Portsmouth or Manchester (or Boston), but right here in the home place.

It's hard to explain what the Arts Alliance does, because they do so much, so consistently, so efficiently, and so quietly. It's the stone dropped in the pool effect: when the frog among the weeds feels the ripple, he has no idea where that ripple came from. If it has to do with the arts in the North Country, that ripple probably started with — or passed through — the Arts Alliance.

The Arts Alliance serves as a network that makes the arts scene hum. One thing leads to another, just as — in my business — one good story leads to another. A poetry workshop at a senior center might lead to an on-going writing group at that center. A drumming workshop might spawn a drumming circle. A local theater group picks up a play written by a New Hampshire artist about life in the North Country — and performs it. That happened with my "Crosscut" project. (More about that in a second.)

Storytellers like me — and musicians, dancers, actors, scholars, traditional artists, historians, writers, painters, potters and poets — find a warm welcome in the North Country, thanks to the Arts Alliance. We are enthusiastically received at arts centers, pre-schools, libraries, historical societies, town halls, assisted living facilities, senior centers, and lots and lots of schools. Our visits — the performances we give, the workshops we teach — are, literally, made possible by the groundwork this organization provides. The hardworking staff creates and develops programming, finds financial support, promotes events, and, generally, makes sure everything goes smoothly. (They even find spare rooms for artists from away to stay in, so we don't have to sleep in our cars. Which is some chilly, come February!)

Here's an example of one project and its ripples. In 2007, the Arts Alliance and its partners made it possible for me to spend a good deal of time in Berlin collecting stories of logging, the mills and life in the Androscoggin Valley. From that initial research came newspaper articles featuring North Country people, a play — the aforementioned "Crosscut" — performed by Theatre North (scheduled to be performed again this spring at the Northern Forest Heritage Park), a play called "Crosscut, Junior" used in schools, a Humanities-to-Go program available to nonprofit organizations throughout the state, and, soon, a book. All these ripples came from that initial stone dropped by the Arts Alliance in order to honor the rich logging and papermaking heritage of the region.

The Arts Alliance keeps us informed about all the cultural programs in the region through their website, online ArtsNorth calendar and e-bulletins. And they've got some exciting programs cooking for 2011, including the first-ever White Mountains Cultural Festival, "Eight Days of Weeks." Let's all work together to keep the arts fire blazing in the North Country!

I hope you'll join me today in supporting the Arts Alliance and the work they do for all of us by bringing the arts home and keeping them healthy here. If you want a big bang for your arts buck, this is the place to invest that buck (or \$10 or \$100, or \$1,000 if you can spare it)! I'm ponying up (or should I say moose-ing up?) and I hope you will, too.

An investment in the Arts Alliance is an investment not just in the arts, but in the North Country itself!

Here's to the arts!



Rebecca Rule
New Hampshire Storyteller



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of
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