

# SANDPOINT

WINTER 2009

## MAGAZINE



## JOY OF WINTER

A PHOTO ESSAY

**SCHWEITZER:**  
LAUNCHPAD FOR  
SNOW PROS

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**SANDPOINT**  
Winter  
Guide



Interview with Quest CEO Paul Schaller, Ice Climbing Adventure, Wildlife in Winter, Daily Painters, Sandpoint's Performing Arts, First Ski Descent of Monarch Mountains, Building Small Beautifully, Calendars, Dining, Real Estate ... and more



## Is Sandpoint an 'arts community'... really?

By David Gunter

**J**oin me, gentle reader, for a brief moment of community introspection. As the broader world becomes more aware of Sandpoint and its obvious natural attributes, there has been more attention paid, in fits and starts, to our collective penchant for the arts. All of which begs the difficult question: Is Sandpoint an "arts community?" Really?

Based solely on the number of activities, gallery showings, concerts and events, it would appear so. But does quantity alone warrant that designation?

Let's hold ourselves up to another, admittedly more famous, arts community in the Northwest – Ashland, Ore. There, in the wooded hinterlands between Portland and San Francisco, a smallish city has managed to create a boomtown based primarily on the works of one William Shakespeare. Art – or at least theater – drives the local economy in Ashland. Motels and supermarkets have constructed mock-Tudor exteriors and taken on the names of Shakespearean characters. Nearly every business there has jumped on The Bard's bandwagon.

Compared with Sandpoint, however, Ashland is a one-trick pony. That is to take nothing away from its success, which is phenomenal, or its civic support for the arts, which is admirable. It's just that theater dominates the scene to such an extent that all other art forms are relegated to the role of "something to do to fill time between plays."

Which brings us back home. In Sandpoint, the community has become a personification of the art that happens here. After an extended hiatus, organized community theater is making a comeback as actors, directors and playwrights gather to bring works to the stage (see story, page 92). The Pend Oreille Arts Council continues its long tradition of bringing performing arts to local audiences in the form of drama, dance and music from around the world.

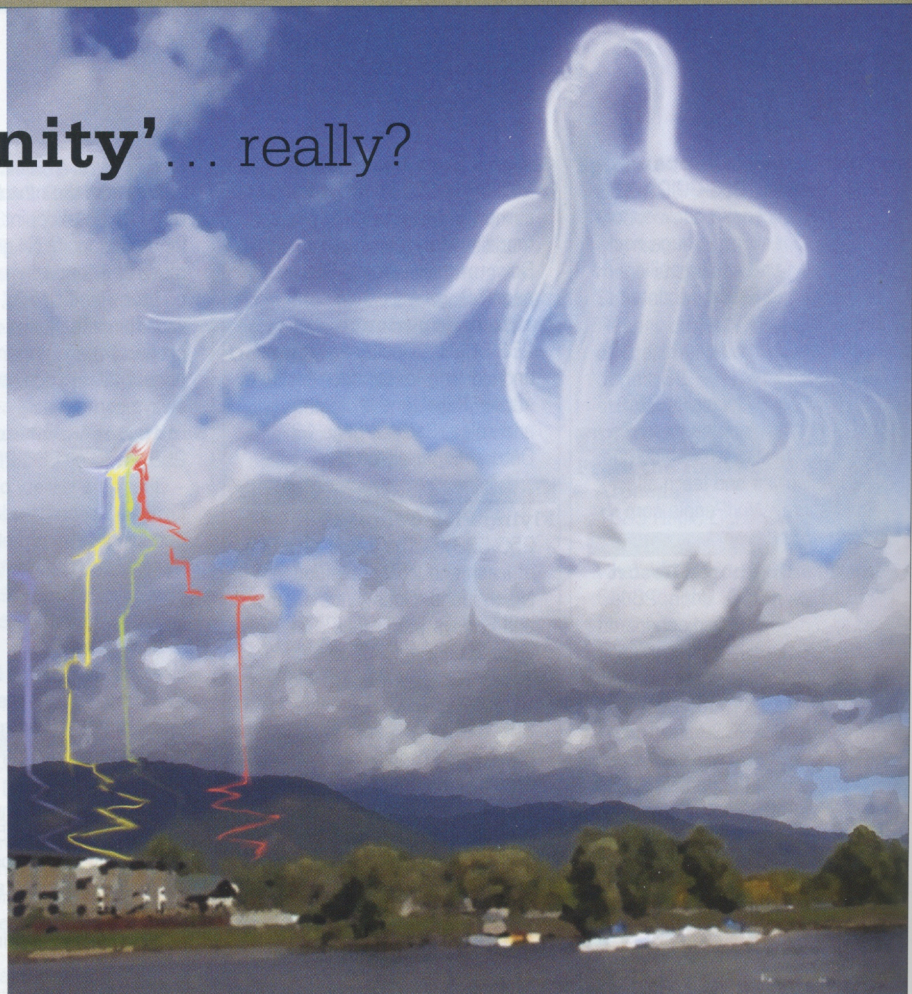


ILLUSTRATION BY DAN SEWARD

In the visual arts, interest has grown to the point that a few, trendy galleries would never suffice when we have such a wealth of artists whose work demands display space. For that reason, the Pend Oreille Arts Council has negotiated the virtual takeover of the downtown core, where a couple dozen businesses double as galleries during summer's ArtWalk showings, in addition to ongoing exhibits year-round at several public spaces.

The Panida Theater – saved from the wrecking ball by local names inscribed on bricks and tiles at its entrance – has become a symbol of a community's commitment to art incarnate. She is our very own Cinderella story. We saved her, we dressed her up for the ball, and we turn out to dance with her at every opportunity all year-round.

The Festival at Sandpoint, too, was hauled back from the brink of financial ruin not so many years ago by a combination of enlightened philanthropy, grassroots donations and old-fashioned hard work. The payoff – in both aesthetic

and monetary terms – has been entirely gratifying. The festival now returns the favor as it spreads its largesse through grants and educational programs.

Art reaches out to support Sandpoint restaurants and wine bars, many of which feature local musicians at least two nights a week. It helps fill rooms at lodging establishments and shore up the sales for gift shops. The *Bonner County Daily Bee's* coverage of the arts helps it grow subscriptions in an era where most daily papers are dying off.

But behind the scenes, beyond the quantifiable benefits, lies the true secret to our success: Art resides here. We only manifest her presence and celebrate her decision to live in our midst.

The talented souls who practice and perfect their artistic skills in and around Sandpoint do so at the whim of an almost tangible spirit that has embraced them and allowed them to stay. In that sense, we are not so much an "arts community" as "Art's community."

May we serve her humbly and well. 