

I have officially fallen in love. But I must confess, it was not at first-sight.

Dairy Festival Day began at 6:45 (a most un-godly hour) when my husband and I headed to the Arts Center to load up a table and chairs. We drove up Washington, found our reserved spot and proceeded to 'pop our tent' and set up our grand display of past successes and enticing calendar-of-events for the rest of the year. I was certain we would be wiped clean by 12:30 or 1:00.

But what do I know?

I lined up a very generous and interesting group of volunteers to man the booth for one hour each and their marvelous company helped the day melt away. And, as it melted, I made several observations:

1. It's good to have a tent and comfortable chairs.
2. Pilot Club members are very hard-working and dedicated folks.
3. People like freebies.
4. Generally speaking, people attending the Dairy Festival aren't the slightest bit interested in The Plaza Arts Center.
5. The only tickets I sold all day were to my dad, who was going to the talent show anyway. (Isn't he *the best???*).
6. Funnel cake is even better when you have someone to share it with *and* a place to sit and eat it. (I recommend fresh lemonade to wash it down).
7. Good thing 'ends at 5:00' is only a 'concept'.

I had enough time to take a relaxing 10-minute bath, which left me refreshed and ready for Round 2: 'Eatonton's Got Talent'. I shared with you recently my dismal failure last year and my hopes for a better turnout this year and, fortunately, the stars aligned and it all went well, even though there is certainly room for improvement.

Our emcee for the evening did an expert job of getting the crowd enthused and helping to bring out the best in the performers. It wasn't perfect for all the contestants but they all did an excellent job and, in the end, an actress took 3rd place, an 11-yr old singer took 2nd place and 1st place went to a girl group of 4 cousins, who could have a big future ahead of them. One of the judges was so impressed with the level of talent she offered to write a check so everyone could win! No doubt there will be arguments over the judges' decisions, but I can attest that they were pure and sincere. Honestly, I was glad I didn't have to do that job; it was tough.

The full spectrum of Dairy Festival Day was small town America at its' best: people cheering the runners at the finish line of the 10k race, the enthusiastic crowds lining the street for the parade, the thousands walking and shopping the full array of vendors; no one needing it but all of us taking in an inordinate number of calories from food that would surely make a cardiac specialist cringe. The Old School Museum reported a steady stream of visitors all day and we capped it all off with good attendance for the talent contest. It was a good day. I may not ever set up a booth around the courthouse again but I can assure you I will be right in the middle of things next year with my heart fully in it. I've fallen in love with Eatonton and it humbles me to understand the importance of what The Plaza Arts Center means to the future of our town.

Don't forget that the Wards Chapel project will be showing 'The Color Purple' outdoors on the plaza on Saturday the 13th and that A1A will return on June 20 for the best street party anywhere. We'll have a tent set up to sell frozen margaritas this year and the Mothers Against Crime will be cooking cheeseburgers and hot dogs for sale. Sounds like paradise to me.

Tickets are on sale for both events as well as our very exciting concert from John Berry on June 26, thanks to Dock Radio.

See you at The Plaza.