

Making Connections with Music

The Park Authority's summer concerts are a commitment to community - an effort to counter the "people" separation that comes with growth. With a population of a million-plus, Fairfax County qualifies as a big city. "But through the magic of music in intimate park settings, we try to orchestrate a small town atmosphere where neighbors can connect," explained Souzan Frankeberger, who manages the musical interludes that have grown to more than 200 concerts at 14 park sites.

The community theme is reinforced by the playbill of performers. From jazz, bluegrass, blues, big band, country and rock to salsa, klezmer, mariachi, Sri Lankan and flamenco, Chinese opera, Celtic, Andean and South African township music, the performers reflect the multi-cultural mix that is Fairfax County today.

"The concerts really bring people together," said Andrew Acosta whose New Old Time String Band is playing this season on August 25 at Mason District Park. The community-building goal is particularly appreciated by Acosta and his cohorts, banjo player Pat McCauley, bass player Bill Taylor and fiddler Speedy Tolliver.

Taylor hails from Arlington. Acosta and McCauley are Fall Church natives who grew up on local ball fields and playgrounds. "We spent Senior Skip Day - and plenty of other skipped days! - in the parks," Acosta acknowledged with a wide grin. (His CD, with an original tune about Brown's Hardware Store, is the only music sold at that community landmark, which dates back to 1870, on the corner of Routes 29 and 7 in Falls Church.)

But it is Tolliver who has the deepest roots in this community. "I've been here since 1939 when I moved to a farm on Polks Head Road - Fairfax County had a lot of farms in those days," he recalled. He's a Northern Virginia legend, with the annual



Speedy Toliver

Speedy Tolliver Fiddle Contest in Lubber Run Park named in his honor. And at 88, with

eyes twinkling, left foot tapping and fingers flying over the bridge, he still sends his bow flashing back and forth across the strings of his fiddle with flair and spirit. "I'm going down hill and picking up speed," Tolliver confided. "But it's better to wear out than to rust out, so I keep on playing."

With a rich repertoire of traditional American roots music, the New Old Time String Band is a regular in outdoor venues across the region, from Lake Accotink to Gunston Hall to Waterford to Bluemont. "I love playing in the parks," Tolliver said. "But I enjoy playing music period. It's good therapy. It cheers me up, and it makes me feel good."

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You can get a healthy and repeated dose of that same feel-good feeling at the musical presentations across Fairfax County this summer. The concerts are free, thanks to the generous support of local businesses, corporations and non-profit arts groups. Beginning in 1989 with Arts in the Parks, the popular children's performance program underwritten by McDonald's Family Restaurants, the concerts have expanded to include 11 separate series. The complete listing of the eclectic offerings begins on page 93. You can also call the 24-hour concert hotline, 703-324-SHOW (7469). ☺