

for art's sake

Marble Valley Regional Center for the Arts

by Sharon Penny

"It's kind of fun to do the impossible"

— Walt Disney

Picture this: A 1,000 seat theatre, an art gallery, and a 2,500 square-foot visitor center showcasing the region's riches (among other facilities) set on 22 acres, just off Highway 50 in El Dorado County. As the Beach Boys said, "Wouldn't it be nice?" A nice dream, perhaps. But this dream has a name: the Marble Valley Regional Center for the Arts.

It's a dream that some dedicated El Dorado County residents have been trying to realize for more than 20 years, and as far as nonprofit organizations go, this one's the little engine that could. Their newsletter says it all: "If we build it, they will come." (Are you listening, Shoeless Joe?)

But where, and what, exactly is Marble Valley? It's a picturesque 2,341-acre parcel located south of Highway 50 between the Bass Lake Road and Cambridge Road exits, owned by Parker Development Company, award-winning developer of Serrano in El Dorado Hills. Although currently undeveloped, when completed, the Marble Valley subdivision will include approximately 400 homes and an arts center - the crowning jewel.

Twenty-two acres of land at the entrance to the Marble Valley parcel was donated by the SH Cowell Foundation to the Marble Valley Regional Center for the Arts organization (MVRCA) in 1990. Parker

Development envisions the planned art center to be an asset and featured attraction to the development, after the anticipated annexation (approved in December) into El Dorado Irrigation District. Without annexation (read: water), everything grinds to a halt. Bearing that in mind, MVRCA is doing everything it possibly can to keep the planned center foremost in the minds of El Dorado County residents, by raising as much awareness as possible.

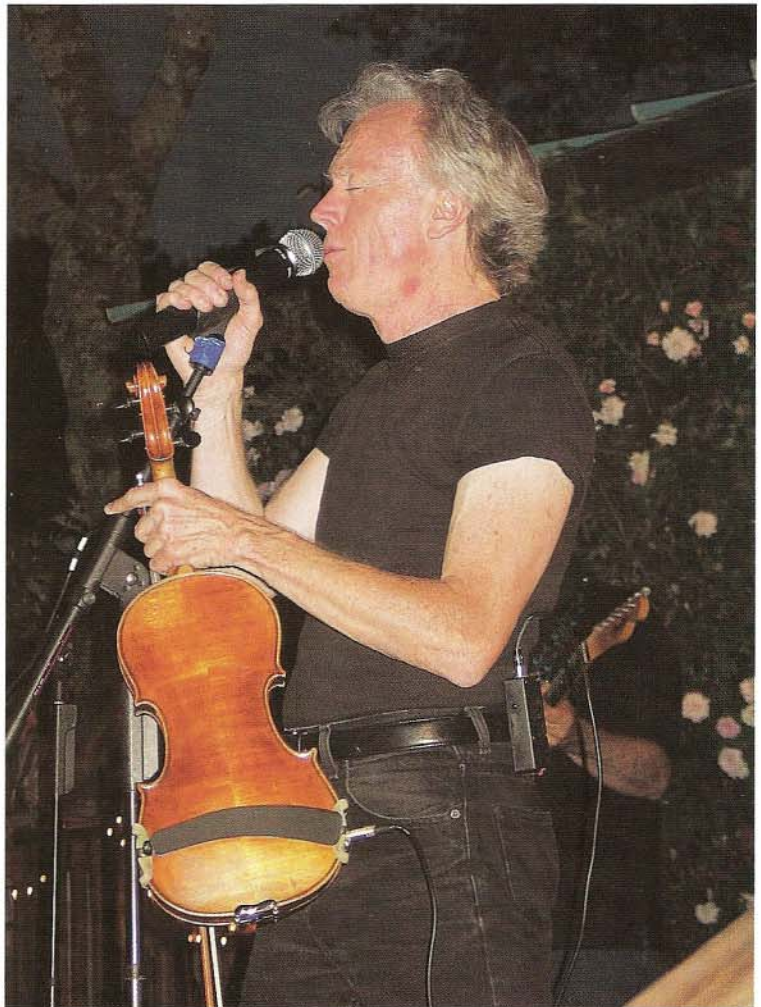
"Our area is so rich in the arts and we deserve a center to showcase it," says Board President Wayne Lowery. "In order to get started, our site needs roads, water and electricity: a major cost prior to any building expense. Now all we need is the money."

artbeat

January 12 – Introspective Solitude. U.S. Art Hall of Fame artist, Steve Hanks, will be featured in this show at Our House Gallery & Framing, 5-8 p.m. in El Dorado Hills. Fantastic art, great conversations, live music and wine. 916-933-4ART.

January 28 – Pianist Lynn Schugren will play contemporary works for piano at the Crocker Art Museum. Enjoy this concert for free with museum admission, 3-4 p.m. www.crockermuseum.org 916-264-5423.

Ongoing – Actor's Workshop of Folsom Acting Classes. Time to brush up on your acting technique or looking to wow an audience? The Actor's Workshop has come to Sutter Street and offer classes and workshops throughout the year. Who knows, you may discover a new talent. www.actinsac.com 916-933-8008.



Magic wands aren't handed out when you're trying to build a regional center for the arts, and the Marble Valley center is no different. Along with the labyrinthine twists and turns of bureaucracy, raising the funds has proven to be an uphill battle.

When their anticipated large pledge failed to materialize some time ago, paid staff were cut back. MVRCA is now 100 percent volunteer staffers, and 200 percent dedication! Normadene Carpenter has been with MVRCA since its inception. She says, "There is so much interest and expectation from our growing population. We are varying our types of events to reach as many groups of people as possible. It is amazing how many people are still unaware of our project."

Despite years of continual donations by individuals, charitable trusts, and donors like the El Dorado Savings Bank, MVRCA still needs millions of dollars, but support is ever growing. A perfect example is the recent partnership with El Dorado Musical Theatre (EDMT), which has added a lively boost to fundraising efforts.

The organization's Annual Butterfly Pops Concert, held at the El Dorado County Fairgrounds this past September, was attended by more than 1,400 people, and is further proof that support for MVRCA continues to grow. The organization is planning more special events for the future. With continued support from the businesses and residents of El Dorado County, here's hoping that this long dream can become an exciting reality!

For news or donation information, visit Marble Valley Regional Center for the Arts online at www.marblevalleycenter.org, or contact Normadene Carpenter at 530-642-2431. ●

