



The Arts Incubator, for instance, offered a day of arts exploration for one 4-H group over the winter, featuring artists working in paint, stained glass, fiber and assembled sculpture. Sue Szary, director of the Incubator, says the event, which included a hands-on “paint-your-own pottery” session and a side trip to enjoy “edible art” at the Sugar Bakery, was one example of how her group wants to involve youth in visual arts. Others participated over the last year in Pittsboro’s Mural Project, a community-wide effort using art to encourage preservation of the Haw River. Dedicated in June, the work just off the traffic circle in Pittsboro was inspired by middle school students, and many youngsters contributed directly by painting a plant or animal into the mural.

Nearly everyone expects professional artists to keep coming, and that bodes well for a large group of young people whose interests fall outside of baseball and basketball, which have long dominated the county’s recreational options. Youth instruction also could create a self-perpetuating cycle that further strengthens the local arts scene. Before reflecting on the new opportunities, Leslie laments the drain of young artists. Talented ones have passed through her classroom before, she says, but they’ve all had to leave to find an artistic community to advance their art and market their work. Before too long, they may find all they need in Chatham — and remain to enrich life for everyone. ■

SNAPSHOTS

life in chatham

3sun rising

Addy Dorsett thought she had a magician on the ropes. Chosen from a sea of children sitting right up front, she had already picked a card, signed her name on its face and slid it back into the deck. Now, as Addy and an audience of a couple hundred waited for the trick to turn, it seemed like things weren’t going exactly as planned.

Illusionist Gary Blankenship even gave young Addy some special bear gloves, guaranteed to hone in like radar on her own card, but they weren’t working. She picked card after card with her big, furry hands. And, *nothing*. Uneasy murmurs swelled around the room until a revelation shot into Gary’s head. He reached in his jacket and pulled out his wallet. Unzipped a pocket. And removed the King of Hearts. Addy’s card.

The entire room burst with applause — not only in appreciation for the illusion, but also out of an odd sense of relief that nothing was wrong after all.

Gary Blankenship has brought wonder and joy to groups throughout the region, but this particular show had its poignant moments, too. This edition was part of “third sundays @ rocky river,” a free series sponsored by Rocky River Baptist Church. The goal is to provide an evening of family-oriented entertainment with a spiritual message. Other performances this year included Workin’ On Commission, a Christian rock band based in Sanford; comedienne Renea Henderson; and the Rocky River Ramblers bluegrass group.

Using magic to make important points about life and faith, Gary paused to speak movingly about his mother. She made him go to church when he was a little boy, Gary said, and her death more than a decade ago forced him to reassess his own life. As a result, he rededicated his life to Christ and now mixes in presentations like these with



the more traditional magic shows that keep audiences guessing.

And guess, they did.

Kelley Moody, another in the long procession of audience volunteers, was perplexed as she kept cutting a length of rope. Gary folded it in half, holding the two ends together and Kelley cut right in the middle, only to have one strand end up longer than the other. In full view of everyone, he placed the two pieces side by side, and had Kelley cut the longer piece, just to even them all out. *Surprise!* The one she cut was shorter than the other. Then, suddenly, the rope was in one piece again.

Children lobbed theories about how Gary made the impossible keep happening. Apparently, nobody even got close, but it didn’t matter. This evening kept everyone entertained and managed to teach a few life lessons along the way. And, from that perspective, it was one magical success.

Above, Gary Blankenship has Brenda Bare select a card for one illusion.