

# Barn Alliance hosts annual art gala to raise funds

**Sandy Stevenson/  
Appalachian Barn Alliance**  
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**WEAVERVILLE** - The goal at the end of the path that the Appalachian Barn Alliance started on Oct. 26, 2017, just grew closer.

The beginning of the path was created when Elaine Ray Thomas, her husband David and the family's historic flue-cured barn they owned was donated to the ABA organization. In October 2017, a crew of ABA volunteers dismantled the barn while their researcher Taylor Barnhill meticulously labeled each log for reconstruction at a later date.

The ABA held a ceremony earlier in the day of the reconstruction.

Thomas reflected on her dad, Hughie Ray, and his wishes for the barn.

"I knew without a doubt that Dad would want it to be preserved, and to be used as an educational tool for people to know what we are all about around here, and where we came from," Thomas said. "That's what this barn is to me - a testament of where I came from."

Enter the Hoffman Family and the R.L. Hoffman Foundation to take the ABA further down this path.

An announcement was made at a fundraising event that they now owned a donated barn, but needed a location at



**Elaine Ray Thomas, her husband David and family stand in front of the historic flue-cured barn the family owned and donated to the Appalachian Barn Alliance in October 2017.** COURTESY OF APPALACHIAN BARN ALLIANCE

which to reconstruct this barn.

"We should talk," Jeanne Hoffman said. And, in the ensuing years, the foundation raised enough money with donations and grants to be able to purchase and then eventually deed to the town of Mars Hill the Smith Farm on the east side of Bailey Mountain.

Seven acres of the lower Smith Farm had three barns and a small house and

the ABA approached the town to ask if they could be allowed to oversee the barns and to reconstruct the donated barn at that site.

That is what the Appalachian Barn Alliance has been doing over the past years—working with the town of Mars Hill to repair the existing barns on the Smith Farm as well as installing informative signage at each of those three barns.

During those years, Larry and Gene-

vieve Burda donated a barn on their property to the ABA. The Floyd Wallin livestock barn will also be rebuilt on the Smith Farm site.

More importantly, the ABA has been raising money through grants and fundraising events to hire a crew to reconstruct the two donated barns. The town was awarded a large grant to clear and grade the area around the barns and when a spot for the two donated barns is cleared and leveled, that is another step toward the goal.

On May 27-28, the ABA hosted its third Annual Pastoral Palette Art Gala to raise money to reconstruct the Ray Family flue-cured barn. The May 27 evening ticketed event included food, drink, music and 12 artists who offered their paintings for sale. The cost of all the tickets sold and the money from sponsorships plus half of the sale of the paintings was donated to the ABA's cause.

Slowly but surely the end of the path will be reached. And, the town of Mars Hill will have transformed the lower Smith Farm on the Bailey Mountain Preserve into what Elaine Ray Thomas envisioned to honor her dad - "an educational tool for people to know what we are all about around here, and where we came from."

To learn more about the Smith farm, visit <https://appalachianbarns.org/smith-farm-heritage-farmstead>.