

Lifestyles

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Dog Park

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the dogs, bringing homework or books to read. Maia Ball does this sometimes when she brings her boyfriend's dog, seven-month-old boxer-pitbull mix Baloo to the dog park because she thinks conversations can get awkward.

"The conversations seem forced and strictly about dogs," Ball said. "So there is only so long before topics run out and there are awkward silences. I don't really go there for me, though. I go for Baloo to have fun."

Ball said she and her boyfriend, Ben Cox, senior literature student, usually go to the disc golf course in Richmond Hill and bring Baloo along.

"He is supposed to be on a leash, but we generally don't have him on one," Ball said. "It's a different idea, not centered around dogs at all, but it is convenient to have him run around while we're getting exercise as well."

The dog park can be rather limiting, but there are other activities around the Asheville area dogs can enjoy with their owners as long as they comply with leash laws.



Dogs run about, getting the much-needed exercise they might not get when their owners are busy.

Audiences engaged by storytellers, not television

By Jennifer Saylor

Blackbeard came to town and Barbie lost her head as professional storytellers converged in Brevard for the North Carolina Storytelling Guild's ninth annual Fall Storytelling Festival.

"People need a break from their computers, their Game Boys, their iPods and iPhones to sit back and allow their own imaginations to take over," said festival storyteller Terry Rollins. "Storytelling allows the listener to create the images and to have an active, not a passive, role."

Rollins told a tale of Blackbeard, the 18th century pirate who lived in the same coastal town as Rollins, Bath, N.C.

Listeners of all ages gathered in the amphitheater of the Transylvania County Library for a festival of storytelling workshops, a young people's storytelling showcase, an afternoon session of kids' tales and an evening storytelling concert for older children and adults.

This year's featured performer was Grammy-winning storyteller and singer Bill Harley of Seckonk, Mass., who is also an occasional contributor to National Public Radio's "All Things Considered."

The festival was not Harley's first visit to Western North Carolina. The storyteller has friends in the Asheville area and sent his son to camp in Brevard. Harley performed stories and songs about surviving school, getting into trouble and trying to get along.

Harley said there's a trick to daring to call yourself a "family performer," someone who can not only get a gang of 5-year-olds



Mead Krowka tells his story, "The Monkey and the Crocodile," during the youth session.

singing along but can also keep 12-year-olds amused and parents entertained.

"Material that works on a number of different levels is important," he said. "Some repetition and music for the younger ones, goofy stuff and sibling rivalry for the older kids, and a sense of irony and exasperation for the adults all should be wrapped up in a performance for families. I intend on entertaining everyone, not just the younger kids."



Above and right, Hannah Kowka tells her story, "Hilda the Heifer."

As well as entertaining families

with stories about public humiliation, food and bossy older sisters, the festival preserved mountain heritage, featuring six tellers with Appalachian heritage of song and story.

Dianne Hackworth, former president of the North Carolina Storytelling Guild, said she thinks storytelling is in the genes of the Appalachian people.

"So many of the Appalachian folks' ancestors came from England, Scotland, Ireland and

Germany, where storytelling has always been a pastime," she said. "This tradition continued here, with stories being passed down from generation to generation."

Appalachian people kept storytelling alive longer because in the past they stayed relatively free from the TV and radio entertainment that distracted less isolated regions, according to Hackworth.

"I find southerners to be very open and friendly and to enjoy a good yarn or joke," said Charlotte Hamlin, a Greensboro actor, singer and humorist who appeared at the festival. "Those are essential ingredients for good story-



PHOTOS BY PENNIE LEAS - PHOTOGRAPHY EDITOR

tellers."

In a world of Netflix and high-speed Internet, the festival's performers still see a role for stories and the people who tell them. Hackworth said her role is helping listeners discover what's really important in life.

"In this modern world of technological wonders, people hunger for the intimacy storytelling provides," she said.

Rollins said he believes the role of the storyteller is more important than ever.

"As North Carolina evolves and changes in the 21st century, it is important for me as a storyteller to preserve as much of the history and heritage of my state as I can," he said. "By doing so I hope to remind native citizens to take pride in N.C. and to help new residents learn a little about the richness of the land to which they have moved."

A good storyteller just needs to put himself in someone else's shoes, Harley said.

"That's numero uno," he said. "Funny counts, too."

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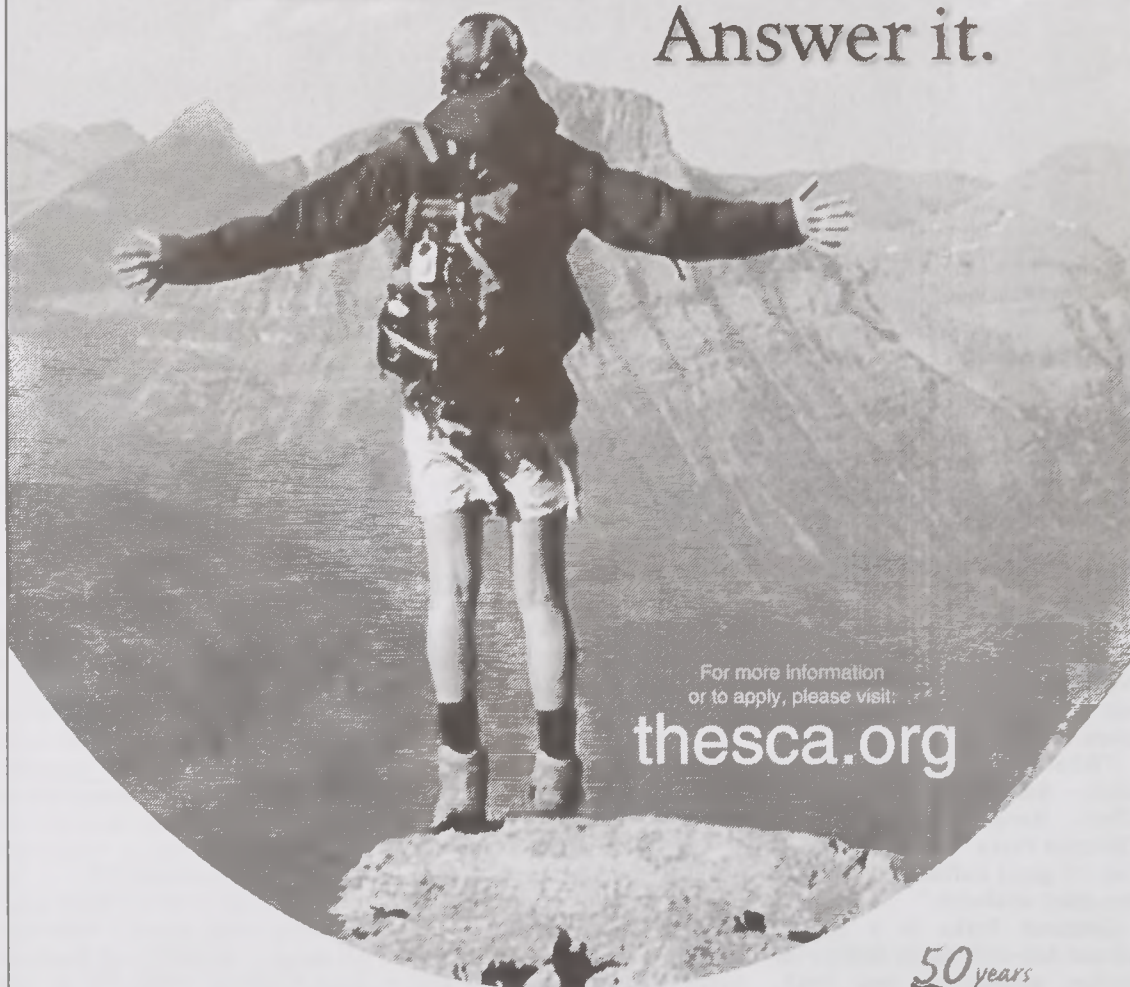
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