

2011 WOMEN OF VISION

BONNIE & JAMIE SCHAEFER



Women Helping Women in the Mountains of North Carolina

BY: ABIGAIL SUTTON

For the last four years the Appalachian Women's Fund has hosted a Women of Vision Award Luncheon. Each year the Woman of Vision award is given to a community member that has shown commitment and passion for improving the lives of women in the High Country. This year, for the first time, the Woman of Vision is actually two women. Bonnie and Jamie Schaefer are the visionary duo honored with the 2011 award and both women are equally committed to improving the community in which they live.

In 2005 the couple purchased the Westglow Spa in Blowing Rock. They had always loved the property and when it went up for sale they seized the opportunity to own the historic landmark and add a bit of themselves to it as well. Since the purchase Jamie has renovated and redecorated the manor house, updated and expanded the Life Enrichment Center and added new offices and a conference room. A restaurant has been added as well that the Schaefers named Rowland's in honor of Bonnie's Father. The restaurant is geared to support local farmers and Bonnie personally sources Rowland's produce from farmers all over the area. Her love of fine dining and hands on ownership of Rowland's has earned them recognition as a 5-star dining establishment.

If their Schaefers sound familiar it's because they stay very busy with a list of charitable organizations, activism groups and community development projects. As seasonal residents of the High Country the Schaefers easily extended their philanthropic works to their second home here. Though they spend the winters in sunny Florida Jamie refers to the High Country as the 'home of our heart'. The pair really do 'think globally, act locally' and feel it is of the utmost importance to give back in their own backyard. Though Jamie and Bonnie support many local programs those benefitting women are espe-

cially close to their hearts. As founding members of the Appalachian Women's Fund it is important to them that the organization assists women in with reaching their full potential despite financial circumstances. Jamie and her sister were raised by their single mother so supporting working moms through the fund is a cause very close to home for her.

The pair is also involved with the High Country Women's Fund, the hospitality house and the new synagogue being constructed on King Street in Boone. When Bonnie and Jamie saw a need for a dedicated Jewish community center and place of worship in the area they took it upon themselves to construct the first and only Temple of the High Country. The facility, once complete, will provide a place for Jewish residents to meet and practice as well as a home for ASU's Jewish Student Organization Hillel, a religious school and a facility for weddings, holidays and other important Jewish events. The Temple of the High Country will also provide a venue for the annual Jewish Film Festival, Purim Festival and Martin and Doris Rosen Summer Symposium on "Remembering the Holocaust". The historic groundbreaking for the synagogue will take place on Sunday August 28th with events all weekend leading up to the ceremony.

As lifelong animal lovers Bonnie and Jamie are also active supporters of the Watauga Humane Society, including having Westglow serve as a lead sponsor of the annual Fur Ball benefit event. They are also fundraising through a challenge grant to build new stables and an indoor arena for the Blowing Rock Equestrian Preserve. Bonnie and Jamie have both received awards and recognition for all the work they do in their communities both in Florida and the High Country. But they did not put in all the work for the accolades, "it's very natural to give back" Bonnie says. For the Schaefers a lifestyle of philanthropy is just the natural thing to do.