



Photo by Dara Bailey

ISSUE TWO • 2017

• HERITAGE DAY •

UNISON, VIRGINIA

# Letter to the Unison Community

*Dear Friends and Neighbors:*

It's a beautiful day here in Unison, and I'm sitting on the back porch to give you an update on the Unison Preservation Society's activities and to invite you to this fall's Unison Heritage Day on November 4.

We had a great day at the store on September 17, with some very fine chamber music and the dedication of the J. Mayo Brown Village Green. Mayo Brown has been a driving force here in Unison for many years, and his vision has helped result in the preservation of the Unison Community Center, the creation of the Unison Preservation Society, and the Village Green. We very much appreciate his energy and hard work. A few weeks before, we bid goodbye to Paul and Avis Hodge, who also contributed a great deal to the community, and were founders of UPS and the driving force behind the National Register designations of the store and the Unison Battlefield. We'll miss them as they return to Alexandria.

This year's Heritage Day is our 15th annual event. It will be held on Saturday, November 4, at the restored Unison Community Center and Village Green. It seems incredible that we have been doing this for fifteen years! In recognition of this fact, we decided that this year's Heritage Day should return to its roots—namely, a neighborhood gathering to celebrate the community and countryside that we live in and have worked so hard to preserve over the last decade and a half.

You'll have a chance to listen to great



*Long-time resident, Mayo Brown, and UPS President, Steve Chase, at the September 17 dedication of the J. Mayo Brown Village Green.*

Bluegrass music, enjoy local barbecue, fresh oysters from the Chesapeake Bay, have a glass of wine or beer and indulge your sweet tooth with homemade deserts. We'll have an art show featuring works by our amazingly talented and diverse group of Unison artists. We'll also have our usual live auction where you can bid on everything from a fly fishing trip on the blue ribbon Mossy Creek in Harrisonburg, Virginia; a gourmet dinner at the Unison Community Center; and a great local band that will play for your next party or picnic. Come and have some fun, and bring your family and friends.

Tickets are \$30 per person with children under 10-years-old free. All proceeds will go to the benefit of the Unison Preservation Society. Among other things, the UPS supports the upkeep of the Unison

Community Center and the Village Green in the heart of the village, and allows us to stay vigilant as development pressures that could affect the community continue to hover nearby. You can purchase tickets in advance at the UPS website [www.unison.org](http://www.unison.org) or at the door on November 4.

Another annual event around this time is the release of the Unison Preservation Society's financial information. You will find on page three of this newsletter the UPS Balance Sheet and Income Statement for the fiscal years 2015 and 2016, along with a summary of our financial situation. I urge you to read the summary and to review our financial statement. UPS obviously faces challenges as we go forward.

To put it bluntly, we need your financial support to make sure that the Unison Community Center can remain just that—a center for the community to gather to discuss serious issues affecting our neighborhood, to hear great music, to take yoga and art classes and simply to have fun, which is what this coming Heritage Day is all about. So, please make a contribution to UPS, which can be mailed to the Unison Preservation Society, PO Box 606, Middleburg, VA 20118 (Attention: Michael O'Donnell). Let's make sure the next fifteen years are as successful as the last!

I hope to see you on November 4.

**Steve Chase**

*President*

*Unison Preservation Society*



# Joan Gardiner: The Essence of Unison

By Tara Connell



Joan Gardiner is not only from Unison. She is of Unison.

So much that she does—and she does a lot—seems to grow out of, portray or take nourishment from Unison. In fact, she quite literally oozes

Unison, especially in the Spring and Fall.

Joan, as many of you likely know, is Unison's noted ceramic tile and pottery artist. "Known throughout the Eastern Seaboard," as a friend put it on the Unison Pottery and Tile.com website. She looks down, laughs and shakes her head a bit when asked about it. "Oh, I don't know about that," she says.

The truth is she is widely known. Joan has done perhaps a hundred or more public and private commissions across the region, including five Loudoun County public libraries and is working on her sixth, for Sterling. She doesn't keep count.

Her work seems to be everywhere around here, and her name is a household word in some circles. "Joan Gardiner did the tiles over the stove" was a talking point on a recent Virginia Garden tour.

And more often than not, the essence of Unison is somewhere in her work. The community's wildlife—the animals outside

her door, flying and swarming overhead or crawling underfoot—is in her work even if the actual theme is something else altogether: a fairy tale, immigration, a poem.

Joan also is the beekeeper who produces, with her author-husband John Gardiner, Unison Honey. That's the oozing Unison part of our story. The evening after our interview she was planning to bottle her honey for sale, eventually, at Unison Heritage Day on November 4. First comes the Clifton fair October 8.

"You have to time it just right," she says about getting the liquid exactly the color and texture that Unison Honey lovers know so well. That begins with the Maple, Autumn Olive and Black Locust pollen her bees are eating in Unison.

And if all that were not enough to keep her busy, Joan also teaches pottery classes, takes an occasional art class, sponsors a girl at Opequon Quaker Camp and will again this year turn over her Saturdays to helping students at Hill School design and build prize-winning kites to enter into the Smithsonian National Kite Festival on the National Mall.

For the last five years, her kids have won first, second and third place in the competition. "These kids are really serious," she says.

Sitting with her in her rough weathered, grey and red, wood-plank studio a couple of doors down from the Unison village



ABOVE: Joan and John Gardiner outside her Unison studio. Maddie the dog is one of her tenants. Photo by Erica Marks.

INSET PHOTO LEFT: Joan at her pottery wheel with Unison resident Fletcher Singh.

intersection, it's clear her roots—both in the village and the broader Loudoun community—are deep and broad.

Her conversation is about the people, the animals, flora, fauna, look and feel of Unison then and now. She seems part of everything around her, grown from the ground. As though she was born here.

Surprisingly, not so. Joan Gardiner was born in California, into a Navy family that moved around a lot. They brought her to this coast in her teens, and she spent her last two high school years in Arlington, Virginia. Then she went to the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA), where she befriended horseback rider Jennifer Rowland.

Rowland, who went on to become a Maryland top jockey, "had a horse I really liked," Joan said. The lure of working around horses and life in the country took hold. Joan, who lived in D.C. at the time, began her search for a new home.

In the Unison area, Joan said, she found it was possible for good riders to be paid to ride other people's great horses. Her work to become one of those riders began. She even went to farrier school and learned to shoe horses, which she did for a few years in Upperville and at Notre Dame school.

But like so many young people drawn to the area's horse world, she couldn't find affordable housing.



Joan Gardiner's "Unison Honey" stand circa 2016's Heritage Day. Her famous glass bear jars are a local favorite. Photos by Dara Bailey



Continued on back page.



# BALANCE SHEET AND INCOME STATEMENT

Fiscal year end 2016 (July 1, 2016 through June 30, 2017) Compared to FY 2015

## BALANCE SHEET

ASSETS	FY 2015	FY 2016
Land and Buildings (less depreciation)	378,534	372,515
Cash (non-interest bearing)	28,863	29,453
Pledges	5,121	5,127
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>412,518</b>	<b>407,095</b>
Net Assets/Fund Balance:	412,218	406,395
LIABILITIES	FY 2015	FY 2016
Security Deposits (store renters)	300	700
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>700</b>

## INCOME STATEMENT

INCOME	FY 2015	FY 2016
Gifts and Contributions	2,668	6,804
Unison Heritage Day Net (Auction revenue plus tickets less expenses)	24,168	22,344
Interest	52	40
Community Gatherings <sup>1</sup>	4,272	1,805
Net Rental Income (Unison Store)	10,547	-1,274
Miscellaneous Income <sup>2</sup>	131	55
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>41,838</b>	<b>29,774</b>
EXPENSES	FY 2015	FY 2016
Awards and Grants	0	1,000
Landscaping and Trees	3,484	1,715
Operations <sup>3</sup>	10,498	6,899
Insurance <sup>4</sup>	4,909	5,644
Community Gatherings <sup>5</sup>	1,580	780
Depreciation	18,112	18,659
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>38,583</b>	<b>34,697</b>
Net Income (Loss)	3,255	-4,923
Cash (After adding back depreciation)	21,367	13,736

The above data are from Form 990 as prepared and submitted to the Internal Revenue Service by Yount, Hyde and Barbour, CPA.

### NOTES:

- Community Gatherings is a line item of revenue from donations in support of community events at the Unison Store Community Center.
- Miscellaneous Income includes other Unison Battlefield booklets.
- Operations includes (from Form 990): Accounting, Advertising and Promotion (including printing), office expenses, information technology, occupancy, supplies, registration fees and other expenses.
- Insurance was previously part of our Operating Expenses but beginning in FY 2014/2015, and in alignment with our charter for the Community Center, it is now a separate line item.
- Community Gatherings is another new category of expense as of 2014 to track costs in regard to community events. This expense is offset by income from these same events, as discussed in footnote #1. UPS does not charge for all community events and thus, expenses may nominally exceed income from same event.

## FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2016

The fiscal year 2016 started off with a significant outlay to re-establish water to the Unison Community Center and to the tenants renting the apartment above. Over the course of several weeks, the well was cleaned, drilled down to a depth of 1,000 feet and refitted with a pump to push water up from that depth. We are grateful to the tenants for their resiliency and our community for stepping up and providing additional support to lessen the impact to our cash reserves.

This work came at great cost—approximately \$20,000—nearly depleting all UPS's cash reserves. Part of the cost for fixing the well was allocated to the apartment rental income. This reduced rental income from \$10,547 in FY 2015 to a negative \$1,274 in FY 2016. Other than this significant item, income and expenses for FY 2016 were fairly consistent with the previous fiscal year. (It should be noted that UPS has investigated options with Loudoun County that may provide relief from the Unison area's well-known water problems—see the UPS spring 2017 newsletter at [unisonva.org](http://unisonva.org) for more on this subject.)

We lost and gained new tenants in the Center's upstairs apartment in this last year. The previous tenants left to provide elder care for a family member while our new tenants come to us as employees from Salamander Resort and have quickly adapted to country living. A big thank you to Carol Beckman and Jim Torrens for finding our new tenants and prepping the apartment for their arrival.

Meanwhile downstairs, the yoga classes by Michele Trufant and art classes by Barbara Sharp provide revenue streams to help in offsetting extra maintenance such as replacing the washer/dryer in the apartment.

Besides repairing the well, the Community Center recently had numerous repairs and has been painted. Additionally, we have had a pledge to commit \$2000 to redo the front porch. This ongoing work would not be possible without the support of the community. While we have made significant progress to stabilize the condition of the Center, we must anticipate that we will face future issues that come with a building that is well over 100 years old. We are only able to do this thanks to your generous support.

We hope you will join us and be a partner in the activities of the Unison Preservation Society.



## Unison Preservation Society Newsletter

Published by

The Unison Preservation Society  
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Middleburg, VA 20118  
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### How to Support the Unison Preservation Society (UPS):

UPS depends upon contributions from people living in our community who want to preserve our historic village and the countryside surrounding it. Since the UPS is a not-for-profit 501 (c) (3) corporation registered in Virginia, all contributions are tax deductible. Contributions should be made to the Unison Preservation Society and sent to the post office box listed above.

### Ideas for Newsletter Articles:

We are particularly interested in gathering material about Unison for future UPS newsletters.

If you have ideas for newsletter stories, please e-mail us at

[unisonpreservsoc@unisonva.org](mailto:unisonpreservsoc@unisonva.org).



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### Newsletter Design:

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Back in 1973, the county had less than 44,000 people, an eighth of its size today. It was very rural. “Many of the houses in Unison didn’t have running water,” Joan said. “The horse was the basic industry” and you had to know someone to find a livable rental. “I was an intruder,” she said.

Then someone told her about a house for sale in Unison, for a \$2000 deposit and \$88 a month for the mortgage.

“That was the house,” she said, nodding toward the white stucco house next door to the studio. With upgrades, she and her husband lived there until about 12 years ago when they moved to another Unison home on Bloomfield Road and took up beekeeping. They now rent out the stucco home.

“If you had asked me then—40 years ago—would I be here now, I would have said no.”

Most people at the time had lived in Unison for generations. Newcomers were, well, outsiders. Unison, it seems, was slow getting used to its newest resident.

“It took time to feel accepted,” Joan said. “It wasn’t until marrying John and the birth of our daughter Nicola in 1978 that the warmth of the town came out in full.”

The Unison she recalls of the early seventies is very different from today’s: it’s a village of box cakes and fishing for bluegills; of no running water and getting it from the neighbors; of horses and the church being central to one’s social life.

Meanwhile, Joan’s art was taking more time. She stopped fox hunting: “I would come to one of those big jumps and I would picture a friend on the other side holding my baby,” she said, smiling wistfully.

And as Joan was changing, so was her art. A short story her husband wrote for the *New Yorker* in which the fictional wife made relief tiles inspired her to switch from pottery full time to tile making. “I really identified with her,” Joan said.

Unison changed too, she said. New people moved in, and some stayed for years. Other houses and the store were constantly changing, she said. “We must have had 18 different neighbors in the log house, and at least as many pastors at the



Joan’s “Unison Honey” stand will be open during Heritage Day, Saturday, November 4. Come by and pick up a few jars for the holiday season. Photo by Dara Bailey

church who lived in the parsonage.”

Today, she said, there are only two or three people who have been in Unison longer than she has.

Far from an outsider, Joan today is what seems to be Unison’s most delighted and certainly most centrally located insider. Also, arguably, its most famous artist. The two worlds blend well.

Her studio, with the “Unison Honey” booth out front, is a landmark in the village but also a perfect observation post. Not much goes unnoticed.

Doors and windows are open to bugs and bees (“Oh, that’s one of mine, I think”) and passersby. She waves as people go by on Unison Road. They wave back, smile, say hello. There are no outsiders or insiders.

Imagine Unison if Joan had not stayed all those years ago. Imagine Joan and her art without Unison. Impossible. ■

### Emails Wanted

Unison Preservation Society would like to keep you in the loop with news updates and events notices by email. If you would like to receive information by email, please let us know your address by, of all things, email to: [unisonpreservsoc@unisonva.org](mailto:unisonpreservsoc@unisonva.org).



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