Heartwood Soft Opening

By CATE HALL/Intern

Heartwood: Southwest Virginia’s Artisan Gallery recently welcomed 350 people through its doors on opening day.

June 15th was considered to be the soft opening for Heartwood with the grand opening to take place in July. This soft opening is a way for Heartwood to find out what things work well, experiment with the operation of the building, and allow time for changes before the grand opening. Todd Christensen, the Executive Director of the Southwest Virginia Cultural Heritage Commission said, “People have patience with us because they know we aren’t all put together yet.” Since the opening, Christensen said that he has spoken with several people from England about Heartwood. “The Crooked Road is known around the world, and now people will end up coming here as part of their exploration.”

One day after the opening, Heartwood was still quite busy with visitors from the area as well as out of state. Jane Price of Saltville saw Heartwood advertised on the back of an AARP magazine after passing it several times on her way to visit her mother in Abingdon. “I used to wonder ‘what in the world is this building going to be?’ It’s so lovely,” she said. Her mother, Gwen Mullins, said, “We’ll definitely be back.”

Larry Bailey of Lebanon heard about the recent opening and had to come see it for himself. “I love anything that has to do with the area. It is a fantastic place and has gotten off on great footing. I would recommend this place to anyone.” Bailey is really looking forward to the live bands that will be performing at Heartwood and is a huge Doyle Lawson fan.

Kate Galyen, a youngster from Cedar Falls in Iowa came to visit her grandmother and stopped by Heartwood to see the Crooked Road exhibit. Her father teaches music at the University of Northern Iowa, but when asked what brought her to Heartwood, she said, “My car.”

The grand opening of Heartwood will take place at 3:00 p.m. on July 23. Governor McDowell and Mark Warner will be in attendance for the ceremony which will be followed by Roots of American Music. The opening will be preceded by Heartwood Homecoming, a week of events including SWV county artisans’ spotlights, and outdoor programs.