



Jane Ellithorpe

G. Jackson Burney Community Service Award Citation

With the flourish embodied by her unique signature, J-A-B-E, Jane Ann Budd Ellithorpe came into Davidson and into our hearts in the summer of 1975. She, her husband, Chuck, and their daughter, Jennifer, moved here for Chuck to begin his practice of family medicine in Huntersville. Their son, Andy, was born that October. Soon, the family made its home in the former dwelling on Concord Road of Chalmers and Alice Davidson, which the Davidsons called Hurricane Hill, and the Ellithorpes have lived there ever since.

Somehow it is appropriate for Jane to live in a place whose name reminds us of her boundless energy, enthusiasm and passion.

The daughter of an American officer stationed in England in World War II, Gerald Ernest Budd, and a British officer, Frances Eve (Shillitto) Budd, Jane was born in Chelmsford, Essex, England in 1944. She came to America with her parents when she was four years old and they settled in Michigan where her father pursued the family business of copper mining. Jane battled rheumatic fever when she was five, and she was confined to a wheelchair for a year. She started drawing and this occupied her time for much of her young life, because she was supposed to stay in bed and remain quiet. Considering the Jane that we all know, this is hard to imagine, but it did introduce her to art, and she took it up with a talent that astonished her family and friends. An elementary school teacher asked Jane to help teach another child how to draw a fire engine, and Jane discovered that she enjoyed teaching art, as well as making art.

When Jane was eight, the family moved again, this time to Winston-Salem, and Jane officially became a North Carolinian. She made up for time spent in confinement by staying outside every chance she could get, exploring the woods and hills near her home, now with her two younger sisters. They rode horses and hiked in every kind of weather to friends' houses, and life was free and easy. It was during these years that she fell in love with nature, a subject that occupies her art to this day.

Jane witnessed the spirit of volunteerism by watching her mother work as the head of the American Red Cross in Winston-Salem and her father supporting his co-workers at Keeler Brass Company. When polio struck her mother, who had to be confined for a period of time in an iron lung at Baptist Hospital, Jane, at the tender age of 13, became the chief cook for the family. She challenged herself to prepare food that was so delicious that it made people speechless. As anyone can attest who has tasted Jane's wonderful cooking, it is a goal that she did achieve and has repeated throughout her life.

When daughter Jennifer was a small child, she dipped her hands into her mother's paint thinner, turpentine, and that was enough to convert Jane to watercolor. She wanted something that dried fast and was not full of chemicals. You can look around the town hall rotunda and see a small portion of the beautiful results of Jane's watercolors. And there are many people here today who have a JABE on display in their own homes. Whether of flowers, plants, houses, or countryside scenes, Jane has been our visual historian. She even became the town's first curator, overseeing the placement in the rotunda of works by local artists, a volunteer job that lasted for ten years. For the town, she was also a member of the first Appearance Committee. This evolved into the Design Review Board, which began setting the tone for historic preservation that included attention to the important architectural elements of our town, such as the mass and scale of buildings.

Jane's devotion to children, her own and others', has been evident in many of her volunteer activities. She served as co-den mother for her sons and she threw herself into running the concession stand for Davidson Youth Baseball. With Chuck in charge of field maintenance and Jane in charge of every aspect of the concession stand, the Ellithorpes spent more time at McEver Field than at home for many summers. Jane ordered the food, picked it up, prepared it, created new dishes, enlisted parent volunteers, and kept up everyone's spirits in the blistering heat of summer while standing over a vat of boiling oil for the French fries and corn dogs. The money the concession earned supported the entire program for years.

While she was President of the Alexander Middle School PTA, she originated the school's fundraising carnival, and she inspired the students to participate in all of its activities. She was one of the first Park and Rec teachers, even before there was a full-time Park and Rec Director. She established a two-week art camp that she ran for 20 years with her 13-year old helpers. It introduced the themes of Art, Nature and Fun for 6 to 12 year-olds. She especially remembers one summer, in the 104-degree heat, when they studied Native Americans and built a Medicine Hut out of local bamboo. She taught them to weave the bamboo and make it strong enough for structural integrity. People came from all over the region to see that hut.

One of Jane's programs, this one at the Huntersville Oaks Retirement Home, received Project of the Year honors from the Carolinas Medical Center Volunteer Organization. Jane combined her love of art, children and volunteerism into a program in which, one-day a week for an entire school year, a busload of students from Alexander Middle School went to The Oaks after school. The generations worked together on art projects, and in so doing, got to know one another and share their lives. The program lasted for ten years, and during that time middle-schoolers and Oaks' residents made birdhouses, planters, memory books, and boxes and placed them around the grounds. But mostly Jane was happy that they made friends with each other, their age differences melting away.

A local Rotary Club named Jane the Rotarian of the Year for initiating the Christmas Project to deliver food and gifts to deserving families. She divided the club into groups and assigned them shopping duties. Then she gathered members at her house for a party, treating them to some of that wonderful food of hers, and they wrapped packages and organized deliveries, distributing the gifts around North Mecklenburg the next day. She even assigned one

member to be Santa and he visited about 15 to 20 families every Christmas. Other Rotary Clubs throughout the state have modeled this program, with one major exception – they don't have Jane's Christmas goodies at their parties.

Jane asked another Burney Award Winner, the late W.B. Mayhew, to be the Santa for a few local families, known by the Davidson Police and Fire Departments to need help at Christmas. With the special assistance of Officer Scott Misenheimer, Jane and W.B. spent many a Christmas Eve together, delivering treats and food around town. Jane has always felt that if a person goes out into the world and is happy with what she has chosen to do, then it will have a positive effect on people. Through her art and teaching and community participation, Jane has spread the special joy that giving brings, and, in so doing, has enriched our Town, our region, and all of us. Early on, Jane's father advised her "not to take on more than you can do, but if you do take it on, fulfill it." Fulfill it you have, Jane, and that is why you are the 2009 Jack Burney Community Service Award winner. Thank you.