

## Rayz Three Wayz Debuts at Arts Center



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*by Ron Fitzwater*

A Ray of sunshine will grace the gallery at the Ashe County Arts Center during the July 9, Gallery Crawl in West Jefferson.

Rayz Three Wayz will debut at the center with an artist reception beginning at 5 p.m. and is a first time family affair for the Ray family of Ashe County.

The three Rays are father Robert and daughters, elementary school art teacher Alyssa and art student Joni who have joined forces and crossed lines of generation, medium and concept to bring together a unique collection of pieces.

"We are a family of artists who have been working together for years. We have been given an opportunity to do a show together where everybody can work with each other's pieces. It takes a lot of dialogue and a lot of cooperation in choosing pieces and developing the presentation to a degree that we haven't had in the past. We have always talked about each other's work but this is special. It's coming together and making art together," said Alyssa.

The exhibit will be a combination of mediums and styles that are not necessarily intended to go together in the classical sense, but will speak to individuals as a reflection of each artist.

In some instances there will be overlap such as Alyssa and Joni's choice to work with more interactive pieces. There will be some in the show and Joni is hoping that visitors will be open to getting hands on with her art.

As the afternoon sun began casting shadows in the gallery the trio was still working to trim down the number of creations to be displayed and the progress was not easy.

"We are still at it," Robert said. "And I just had one of my pieces sent home."

"We are trying to get a feel for the room as we bring things in. But I think we trust each other as artists enough to know that we needed to get together several times over the past year to sort of develop things and stay on top of where things were," Alyssa said.

Additional members of the family will be joining the trio during the opening night exhibit as brother Roger Ray will be joined by Derrick Richardson to play acoustic rock during the event.



*Originals Only Gallery is always a favorite stop for "Crawlers" Photo by Ron Fitzwater*

## **Inclement Weather Couldn't Dampen Art Lovers' Spirits**

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*by Ron Fitzwater*

Light rain and reports of heavier rains to come kept all but the most dedicated art enthusiasts away from the West Jefferson Gallery Crawl on Friday, July 9 with the exception of a very good crowd for the premiere of Rayz Three Wayz at the Ashe County Arts Center, which saw a steady stream of visitors to the interactive exhibit.

Ashe County Arts Council Executive Director Jane Lonon said that all in all she felt the day was a success, even if overall numbers were down.

"The Gallery Crawls are designed to promote West Jefferson's Arts District and the many fine galleries and shops we have featuring handmade, original works of art and craft. Each Crawl has it's own unique flavor - whether it's through

a special event or opening, or because of an artist demonstration activity, or because of the time of year and the weather," Lonon said.

"Last Friday's Crawl brought out a "quality" group of art lovers to the streets of West Jefferson. Sometimes it isn't always about "numbers" but about the appreciation for art and the long-term connections our viewers make with the galleries and the artists. Gallery Crawls don't themselves always produce sales, but they do guarantee that the crawlers will return to their favorite galleries at later points during the year. Those long-term relationships that are made during a happy event like the Gallery Crawl is a terrific investment.

"Gallery owners seemed pleased with the evening, and we look forward to the second Friday of August when the next Gallery Crawl brings residents and visitors to downtown West Jefferson," Lonon said.

"On an Arts Council note: The Rayz Three Ways art opening was one of the best ever. The cutting edge nature of this exhibit and the public response to the multi-faceted work of Robert, Alyssa, and Joni Ray was outstanding. The exhibit remains in The Gallery through August 7."



Ron, Roger, Chris, Jim, Joni, Alyssa, John, Nancy, Salina, Art, Cathy, Robert, Chris









ST. MATTHEW'S GARDEN  
1988-1990  
COURTESY OF THE ARTIST



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