Oconee Heritage Museum to host Upstate Heritage Quilt Trail exhibits

FOR THE JOURNAL

WALHALLA — The Upstate Heritage Quilt Trail and the Oconee Heritage Museum in Walhalla are collaborating on a series of quilt exhibits. The idea came from the reception and quilt display in honor of the 2011 Oconee Quilter of the Year, Gil Huggins. Leslie White, Curator of the Heritage Museum, said that the public response was overwhelming. She realized that the quilting tradition has deep routes in our Appalachian history and this area has lots of talented and dedicated quilters, many who come from dedicated and talented quilters.

The first quilter to be honored is Verla Warther, a retired middle school math teacher. It wasn't until the death of her mother-in-law in 2002, that Warther inherited many pieced quilt blocks that had been made by her husband Bill's great-grandmother, Mary Elizabeth Muehlhoffer. Not knowing how to clean or even use these blocks, she consulted with a local quilt shop that helped her begin to assemble and hand quilt them into three different quilts, which will be part of the display. From the types of fabric used and the little bit of family history that she and Bill know, they have determined that the quilt pieces were done sometime between 1900 and 1920.

A neighbor, Lucille Kriegel, learned of Warther's dawning interest in quilts and invited her to join the Lake and Mountain Quilt Guild. She's been hooked ever since. She has a particular interest in the history of quilting and has given presentations at schools and the Guild as well as served on the Comfort Quilt Committee and the Guild's Program Committee. Since then, Warther's quilts reflect not only family history, but also some of her travels with Bill to Alaska, New Zealand, the Western United States and celebrating the Christmas holidays.

She's also become an active member of the Quilt Trail's production team, helping to prepare and paint quilt patterns on specially prepared boards to be mounted on both public and private buildings.

Martha File, director of the Upstate Heritage Quilt Trail, said, "Verla's understanding of shapes and colors has been a valuable contribution to the UHQT. She has encouraged us not to shy away from textures and colors. Her quiet manner and attentiveness to detail and her willingness to teach others are very appreciated by all the volunteers working on the production of quilt blocks for the Trail."

For more information on the quilt trail and this ongoing exhibit of quilts made by local quilters, visit www.upstate-heritagequilttrail.org. The quilt display will run through May 28