

Follow the yellow brick road to benefit museum

By Teresa Dunham
The Winchester Star

Winchester — Ruby slippers will be a new fashion statement at Winchester Country Club on Friday.

Starting at 7:30 p.m., the seventh annual Shenandoah Valley Discovery Museum Gala and Auction will transport generous patrons to the Land of Oz.

"It's going to be really fun this year because The Wizard of Oz is the theme," said Lydia Roberts, event co-chairman.

For \$90 per ticket, participants may eat hors d'oeuvres with Dorothy or the Cowardly Lion.

The hors d'oeuvres list includes temptations such as Caribbean spiced shrimp, carved pork loin, marinated coconut chicken tenders, vegetable dishes, chocolate croissants with blackberry butter, and chocolate fondue. An open bar will also be available.

While enjoying the treats and whimsical atmosphere, guests will participate in a silent auction featuring painted furniture creations from local artists such as Shelly Nerangis, Betty Wolfe, Laura Lyn Wilkins, Eugene Smith, and Kathy Dansie.



Kristi Epstein tries on a cape for the Shenandoah Valley Discovery Museum gala with a Wizard of Oz theme.
(Rick Foster)

"Generally they do stick with the theme. Other times, it's just a nice decorative painted piece of furniture," said Niki Wilson, director of marketing and development for the museum.

Then everyone can gear up for a live auction including exotic getaways to Jamaica, Vermont, and Colorado.

Departing a bit from The Wizard of Oz theme, Wilson said the 1980s-style band Junk Food will perform.

All proceeds will be used by the annual fund for children's programs at the Discovery Museum.

Now in its 11th year, the Discovery Museum offers interactive experiences focused on the sciences, mathematics, humanities, the arts, natural history, paleontology, and simple machines.



Gala co-chairman Kristi Epstein (left) and committee member Libby Ingham adjust the Cowardly Lion costume in preparation for the Shenandoah Discovery Museum fundraising event on Friday.
(Rick Foster)

The museum at 54 S. Loudoun St. often provides free admission to groups such as the Winchester Day Nursery, the Boys and Girls Club, and Fremont Street Nursery.

The museum broke ground for a large building project — its new facilities in Jim Barnett Park — in the spring, and this year's gala theme is intended to reflect that.

"We're sort of building toward our project. Following the yellow brick road is about going on that journey," said event co-chairman Kristi Epstein. "It's going to be a lengthy process."

Last year's gala brought in \$70,000, Wilson said, and the museum is hoping to match that amount this year.

Thus far, it has \$15,000 in sponsorships with Valley Health as the lead sponsor.

Though the event is being held at Winchester Country Club, Wilson said those attending the gala are not required to be members there.

Participants should wear black tie or a Wizard of Oz-themed costume. Call the Shenandoah Valley Discovery Museum at 722-2020 to request an invitation.