

## ***Cullasaja Women's Outreach* is Building a Legacy of Love**

It is so easy to let the beauty of the Blue Ridge Mountains take one far, far away from the sharp edges of the world. Lush green forests softening ever-winding roads, wild rhododendron cushioning gorgeous granite rock formations, majestic white clouds pillowing against the intense blue of the Carolina sky...together, the surroundings create a wonderland that many use as a respite from "reality"—a place to escape, slowdown and revitalize. Yet within this serenity, to the ladies of the *Cullasaja Women's Outreach*, these Carolina mountains echo an invigorating call—a call to reach out, take action and change the landscape.

Founded in 2006, by several forward-thinking ladies of the *Cullasaja Club of Highlands*, this women's organization has raised more than **\$270,000** in humanitarian support for local not-for-profits, ranging from the Community Care Clinic of Highlands-Cashiers to the Highlands Literary Council...from the Highlands Emergency Fund to the Highlands Community Child Development Center.

*Cullasaja Women's Outreach* (CWO) takes advantage of its membership's shared desire to understand the local needs of the Highlands-Cashiers community. Armed with this knowledge, the ladies reach out through volunteerism and philanthropy to make a difference.

"The call for humanitarian services had never been greater," noted 2010 CWO President Lana Jordan. "Lending a helping hand in time of financial need, supporting free-medical clinics, and providing heating through the harsh winter are just some of the ways the CWO funds have touched the lives of our neighbors in need."

The CWO partners with *The Community Foundation of Western North Carolina* through a dedicated, donor-advised fund, which allows the CWO Grants Committee to direct all of its funding within the Highlands and Cashiers area. Although it is a grassroots organization, the CWO has established a sound discipline and review process for its giving strategy. 2010 Grants Co-chairs Brenda Manning and Karen Leabo encourage local nonprofits to submit grants requests as soon as possible.

This year, the CWO is gearing-up for its fourth annual major fundraiser—*Rockin' at the Top of the Rock*—to get everyone in the spirit of giving, especially in this slow economy. Fundraising co-chairs Nancy Harrison and Nancy Bell have lined up host homes for a fabulous progressive dining experience to be held on Sunday, August 15, within the gates of the Cullasaja Club.

"Coming to the mountains to give back and enrich lives may be a bit atypical for a resort-driven community. But the need is great," reminds Cris Hayes, a CWO past president and founder. "We have only just begun to scratch the surface, and are determined to build a legacy of love for the people of these beautiful mountains."