

BURNSVILLE, N.C. — In honor of Western North Carolina's deep history and international impact in glass arts, Burnsville and the Toe River Arts Council are joining area arts organizations, galleries and museums in celebrating the Summer of Glass.

The six-month period, May through October, includes special exhibitions, tours, workshops and demonstrations focused on studio glass art. The Summer of Glass coincides with Biltmore's exhibition of glass sculptures by multimedia artist Dale Chihuly.

"With Chihuly coming to Biltmore, regional arts groups felt like this is an opportunity to tell our story," says Denise Cook, executive director of the Toe River Arts Council. "Glass artists in Western North Carolina have impacted glass arts throughout the world."

The Toe River Arts Council's Burnsville gallery opens its "Glass on Fire" exhibit on Saturday, May 19, and the exhibit will run until June 16. The exhibit includes work by eight glass artists from Yancey and Mitchell counties. All artists are contributors to the future public art gateway project that will bookend Burnsville on U.S. Highway 19 E. The first installation will be completed this summer.

The Arts Council's signature biannual event, the Toe River Studio Tour, takes place June 1-3, and includes 24 glass artists. The tour, now in its 25th year, is larger than ever with 112 artists.

"We have one of the most significant concentrations of artists in the country here in Yancey and Mitchell counties," Cook says. "We encourage folks to use the tour as an opportunity to meet these people, see where they live and work, and purchase artwork directly from them."

The free, self-guided tour allows visitors to map out their own routes. Some returning guests visit the same studios again and again, while others try to make a new discovery each time. In addition to glass artists, the tour includes woodworkers, potters, metalsmiths, photographers, painters, weavers and jewelry makers.

Guidebooks with maps, an artist listing and a photo of each artist's work are available at the Toe River Arts Council galleries in Burnsville and Spruce Pine, participating studios and local businesses. A digital version is available for download at www.ToeRiverArts.org/About-the-Tour.

To learn more about the Summer of Glass, go to www.SummerofGlass.com. To plan your trip to Burnsville, visit www.ExploreBurnsville.com or call (828) 682-7413.

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