

Andrew “Pooh Bear” Howe

“Deep in the Hundred Acre Woods.....”

That’s often the beginning of the great stories about a community of characters who have adventures and enjoy the simple life. In these *Winnie the Pooh* books by A.A. Milne, a picture is painted of an enchanted forest where wonderful things happen-the kind of place everyone wishes existed. How lucky we are that it actually does exist in Oak Ridge!

Yes, there really is a Hundred Acre Woods in the Secret City and its creation was guided by the vision of one of our local troubadours, Andrew Howe. If you have been to any of the annual events in Oak Ridge or Clinton, you have most likely been entertained by the sounds of Mr. Howe and his group of merry men known by names such as “The Frost Bottom Boys”, “Something Scarlett”, or “A Face to Go with Hope.” Andrew, better known as Andy, has been a supporter of our community and its various benefits with his gift of music by playing for entertainment or worthy causes. Many musicians do this kind of charitable work, but Andy has gone a step further in community support.

After he bought his Oak Ridge home and began to appreciate the woodsy backyard nestled up against the greenway, he started to get some ideas. “I just looked at the lay of the land and it screamed for something special to be built there,” Andy said. That something turned out to be a covered stage that, instead of being obtrusive to the forest, seemed more a part of the woods surrounding it.

“Because the Hundred Acre Wood needs a hero, Pooh Bear.....”

Like Pooh Bear, Andy has a big heart and likes to give to others. Unlike Pooh, he is no bear of little brain. He is a graduate of MIT and a software engineer. But his real love is music and sharing it. He said that what inspired the whole idea was people like Dolly Parton-people who come from a small place and enjoy playing music with family and friends until that kind of energy catches on and becomes something large and great. Andy said, “My ultimate goal would be to have Dolly play at The Hundred Acre Woods.”

Andy did not create the venue on his own. It was made for the community and by the community. Many neighbors and friends came to help with its construction and to make it complete, High Places Church donated thirty-six red, cushy theatre seats making any audience comfortable and adding a surreal touch of elegance to the rustic atmosphere.

“Everyone is happy in the Hundred Acre Wood.....”

Since its completion in the late summer of 2011, the Hundred Acre Woods stage has hosted a few joyful events. The first was on September 11, 2011 with an “Open Jam”. It was a day-long event open to any musician wanting to take the stage and any friend, neighbor, or curious passerby to be social and entertained. Even the deer couldn’t resist the call of the music and stood close by, watching and listening from behind bushes and trees.

On May 5, 2012, the Oak Ridge Music Appreciation Day Festival was held. From noon until nearly midnight, a schedule of various local musicians played to a happy crowd. As the sun went down, twinkling Christmas lights shined on Allen McBride playing his hammer dulcimer, turning the hushed woods into an enchanted place indeed.

The project is still in its evolution, recently adding a barn on the property to serve as a band practice/recording space and Andy has some great ideas to engage the community. He would like to start hosting "Kung Fu Fridays" where a projector and a screen will play classic movies from Jackie Chan, Bruce Lee, and other martial arts masters.

He is working on other endeavors himself such as playing harmonica for Buck Hoffman in a Piedmont Blues duo- a genre of finger picking style of blues popular in the 1950's. They will appear at The Preservation Pub on Market Square, Knoxville on September, 15th. He is also a part of Martin Hennessee's "Rock Opera Show" that will cover hits from "Jesus Christ Superstar", "Little Shop of Horrors," and more. They will be opening for the "Rocky Horror Picture Show" at Relix Variety Theatre on Central Avenue in Knoxville on Halloween and at The Taste of Oak Ridge on September 22nd at 7pm.

If you are interested in learning more about Andy, his musical projects, or The Hundred Acre Woods, he can be reached at ahowe23@gmail.com or at 865-640-5704. Visit www.The100acreWoods.com or like them on Facebook.

Andy's mother claims to be the first baby born in the new city of Oak Ridge making him about as native as one can be. He really enjoys giving back to his home town and says, "I built it [the stage] so the town could use it and have fun!"

"And that all happened in the Hundred Acre Wood....."