Karen Collins (third from left) with her Brahms sextet group and coach Elise Kuder, Apple Hill resident musician (left).

Spotlight: Karen Collins, Summer Workshop student

There's a place for you at Apple Hill, whether you are headed to college for a music degree or enjoying music in your retirement--or, like Karen, both at the same time! Meet Karen Collins, a violist who has been attending Apple Hill since 2015.

Where do you live and what do you do when you're not at Apple Hill?
I live in Tampa, FL. I worked in IT until 2016 when I retired. Now I swim and walk and bake and practice viola a lot. This coming fall I will be going back to college for a music degree.

How did you hear about Apple Hill, and what motivated you to come to a summer music camp and be a student again as an adult?
I saw Apple Hill listed in a summer-programs supplement in a strings magazine. I'd been to a couple adults-only summer programs and liked them ok, but Apple Hill's philosophy of grouping by ability rather than age really appealed to me. It seemed like serious fun, and it was. When I came to Apple Hill for the first time, I was struck by the way everyone approached the music and their instrument with the same level of interest and passion, no matter how old or young they were.
What is like to be a student at Apple Hill as an adult?
That's an interesting question. At Apple Hill, I never thought of myself as an "adult student", but rather "a student with X years of experience" (X being a fairly low number in my case). The faculty teaches to an ability level, not an age group.

As for daily life: the basic premise is you're there to learn and to play chamber music, and that's your focus. Everyone is expected to attend their coaching sessions, play in the final concert(s), and help with some really minimal camp chores. Other than that, it's pretty laid-back. There are non-musical activities and short off-campus outings that you can participate in, or not. You can spend all your free time practicing if you want. You can enjoy being out in the country. You will get to meet and hang out with and learn from some really great musicians of all ages, and you'll hear and play some pretty cool music.

What are some of your favorite moments/memories from AH?
Yikes, how much room do you want to give this? I could go on for days, but here are three:

- seeing a hummingbird for the first time, and being amazed at how loud it was
- seeing/hearing two people play a Vivaldi cello concerto on a single cello--not in a concert, but just for fun, on the back deck of the Hoffman, killing time waiting for lunch
- rehearsing and playing Brahms' G major sextet, one of my favorite pieces of music