

VALLEY ART CENTER'S ANNUAL MEETING

September 9th, 2015, 6:30PM
ANNUAL REPORT



News:

The Valley Art Center welcomes you to our 44th Annual Meeting! This is my second report as Executive Director, and it has been an eventful year! I continue to be thankful to be part of such a vital community organization. We are fortunate to enjoy the benefits of engaged trustees, talented staff, committed and skilled instructors, devoted volunteers, and our steadfast students and patrons. Together we are shaping a visual arts environment that is welcoming, challenging, inspiring and prominent in the Chagrin Valley.

We mark a successful year that saw a 10% increase in class and workshop enrollment, and a 30% increase in gifts and grants. We drew artists from throughout the region and even across the globe for our 5 gallery exhibits. Our average opening night gallery attendance was well over 200. This year's gorgeous weather for Art by the Falls in June drew over 15,000 patrons to revel in the work of 120 artists. At the front of the park we included a community art project which resulted in a mural facilitated by artist John Donato and stilt walkers from Parade the Circle entertained the crowd now on display at the local library. And we cross marketed our event with Chagrin Arts for their second Annual Music Crawl Saturday evening. With over 40 years of history, we clearly were able to build on the solid ground laid by staff, board, and VAC community over the years. We continue to cultivate a strong and dedicated staff, including Jeni Yonker as Office Manager and Program Manager, Gallery Manager Liz Fincun, Marketing and Communications Manager Jen Rice, and Office and Gallery Assistant Kate Bruner. Together we are refining our program offerings, increasing visibility in the valley, and caring for our beautiful facility.

This year we once again wrote and received two grants; one from Cuyahoga Arts and Culture and the other from Ohio Arts Council. These two long standing sources of public funding for the arts provide vital support for our operating expenses and we are extremely grateful. We are actively engaged in supporting the ACAC efforts to promote the approval of cigarette tax renewal which provides funding to Cuyahoga Arts & Culture. Cuyahoga Arts & Culture has granted \$276,200 over the past eight years to Valley Art Center. Cuyahoga Arts & Culture's sole funding source is a dedicated cigarette tax levied within Cuyahoga County. Established by voters in 2007, CAC has awarded over 1,200 grants since then, distributing over \$125 million in tax dollars to more than 300 organizations based in the County. Renewal of this funding source will be on the ballot on November 3 for voters to consider. Please take a few minutes to learn more about this important source of public funding and Cuyahoga Arts & Culture by visiting their website: www.cacgrants.org

This year we completed a new 18 month strategic plan with a talented and dedicated group of board members and volunteers from the community facilitated by Bob Cahen, a leader in fundraising for the Cleveland Region. We focused on development and marketing and are moving forward with our action items, including the re-design of our logo, website, catalog, a new sign in the front of our building and the production of a promotional video.

At long last, the database is fully completed and implemented. Our online registration is humming along and we are all dressed up and ready to greet a new program year.

And of course the big news is that Bud Deihl has masterfully completed the first sanctioned mural in the Village of Chagrin Falls. It has been a journey that began three summers ago and through a sometimes controversial and challenging process we have come to a very happy ending. We hope you will join us for our Mural Celebration Sunday, September 27th from 2-4pm. Watch Bud put finishing touches on the mural, and enjoy performances by Chagrin Falls School's Tiger Beats chorus, T Move Studio's Tuni Deignan and dancers, and bagpiper Lynne Lofton. Chat with special guests, including Chagrin Falls Mayor Thomas Brick, VAC staff and board members, the mural jurors, and local neighbors and artists.

Board of Trustees:

We want to formally welcome our new Trustees:

- Amanda Petkiewicz: Visual Editor, General Manager, Chagrin Valley Times
 - Amanda has been the head of our marketing committee and is responsible for the re-design of our logo, program catalog, signage and setting new graphic standards.
- Laurie Dean: BS Nursing, Registered Nurse at Cleveland Clinic
 - Laurie has been a long time VAC student and volunteer, assisting us for years with our Art by the Falls raffle booth and most recently with our fundraising events.
- Linda Blackwell: Sales, Sales Services and Marketing Leader for Hollister Incorporated
 - Linda has been a supporter of our fundraisers and gallery exhibits and will be assisting us with our events in the future.
- Pearce Leary: Attorney, Pearce Leary, Attorney at Law
 - Pearce has been a leader in our community in a variety of roles including the Chagrin Falls Board of Education, and he will be joining us address our legal needs and facility oversight.
- Martin Treppa: KeyCorp. Project Manager
 - Martin and his wife are new to the Chagrin Valley and he brings an array of talents and interests to our board. He will assist us with our development committee and building corporate relationships.
- Victoria Welling: Writer & Principal, WordEdge
 - Victoria has a long history with the art center as a student and volunteer and assisted us with our new strategic plan and marketing plans. She will join Amanda in the oversight of our marketing committee.

We are saying some farewells:

- Kirk Gebler has provided a great service to Valley Art Center as a volunteer and member of the Board of Trustees for over 25 years, serving several years on the executive committee. As the co-chair of Art by the Falls he devoted countless hours to make it the success that it is today. In his employ at Dominion he secured thousands of dollars in donations over the years in the form of their annual sponsorship of the children's tent. He will be missed.
- Lissa Bockrath has been an exhibiting VAC artist, Art by the Falls and Juried Show Juror, gallery committee member, VAC parent, gallery committee member, fundraising volunteer, and most recently chair of our "Hot Chocolate" committee. We will miss her artistic vision, vibrant spirit and generosity. She will be stepping down to prepare her family's relocation to Toronto as her husband, Mark Shapiro, steps into his new position.

Staff:

- We welcome Jeni Yonker as our new Program and Office Manager. Jeni is a long time beloved VAC instructor and exhibiting artist and she is has ably stepped in to the role of refining and strengthening our program and day-to day operations. With a background in both the corporate world and the art world, Jeni has ably stepped into her role with effectiveness and positivity.
- Liz Fincun will shift into the part time role of VAC "Gallery Manager", focusing her work on promoting and strengthening our exhibits and building relationships with artists. We are so grateful for her excellent work in re-designing our website and her collaborative efforts with Amanda Petkiewicz in our re-branding and the creation of our new graphic standards.
- Jen Rice, dedicated VAC office volunteer, student, exhibiting artist and marketing committee member, will begin as our part time "Marketing and Communications Manager" September 9. She will focus on VAC's visibility and reach, implementing our marketing plan currently under construction. Jen has a background in art and education, skills in graphic design and social media, and most importantly a passion for marketing what VAC has to offer.
- Kate Bruner is our Gallery and Office Assistant. She has owned her duties as registrar, gift shop manager and volunteer coordinator and she has helped us to systematize our work in those areas. Kate grew up in the Chagrin Valley and has a background in photography. Notably, Kate worked for famous Pop Artist Peter Max for ten years. Kate has always had a passion for the Valley Art Center and has been involved as a student, volunteer, parent of students, and exhibiting artist.

Gallery:

This year's gallery exhibits included an engaging schedule of themes drawing artists from literally around the world with an average of well over 200 at our opening receptions. We began in the fall with an exhibit entitled "Art Interprets Alzheimer's". This innovative exhibit showcased the works of two of Cleveland's talented Ohio Archives Artists, George Roby and Herbert Ascherman, Jr. Its mission is to promote awareness of the Alzheimer's disease, support research for a cure, and portray its effects on patients, caregivers, and the community. A panel discussion on this topic took place at VAC including Dr. Gary Landreth, Director, Alzheimer Research Laboratory, Nancy Udelson, President and CEO, Alzheimer's Association Cleveland Area Chapter, and George Roby, Exhibiting Ceramic Artist. Seasoned artists Lois Salmon Toole, watercolorist, Patty Fields, jeweler, sculptor and educator, and Gallery owner Ross Lesko of Kenneth Ross Lesko Gallery judged our 43rd Annual Juried Show which enticed over 300 applicants and was stunning in breadth and quality. Michael Prunty won Best in Show. Our fourth and final in the color exhibits, "Its Secondary" was a vibrant ending to the popular series. It once again included an evening of "Yoga in the Gallery" led by our sponsor Chagrin Yoga. Our spring exhibit entitled "Go Figure" included a broad and varied interpretation of the human form and was juried by "painter of people" Judy Takacs. We wrapped up with our much loved "Student Faculty Exhibit" which in many ways is our most important exhibition of the year as it is such a stunning showcase of the talent of our staff and students-they are truly remarkable!

Our "Valley Art Center Gift Shop" (formerly the Bell Street Shop) saw a 50% increase in sales over the past year and new patrons visit the shop every week. It has been appointed with new shelves, a bountiful selection of inventory, and the work of new artists. Through a selection process similar to one used for gallery exhibits, local and regional artists and current Valley Art Center Members can submit work four times a year in conjunction with our gallery shows.

Partnerships

Our partnerships with local business and non-profit organizations have increased and expanded. Last fall we will hosted a Chagrin Documentary Film Festival screening entitled "The Curse and the Symphony" and Nathan Felix, the featured musician, joined us for comments and questions. We held several offsite classes at Lowe's Greenhouse and were part of their fall evening of the arts. Last spring we were one of the recipients of Chagrin Schools OSBA Business Honor Roll for our partnership with them. We held off site classes at Chagrin Schools over the summer and once again several special education students enjoyed our classes, supported by the school. For the second year students from Chagrin Falls Park Community Center are enrolling in classes, one of our artists taught sculpture at their summer camp, and a high school student did her paid internship with us through their Summer Youth Employment Program. We again facilitated a Chagrin Spring Art Walk, collaborating with seven other businesses involved in the arts to push patrons to visit our shop and gallery. We joined Chagrin Arts in their Second Annual Music Crawl during Art by the Falls in June. We regularly partner with Hamlet Village, offering classes on and offsite to residents and displaying our instructors and student's work in their Atrium. We are exploring relationships with the home school community, South Franklin Circle, and new local galleries.

Education

We continue to offer classes for students ages 3-93 from beginners to masters under the guidance of committed and talented instructors. We attribute some of the 10% enrollment increase to instructors promoting classes through their own channels and that our schedules are now going home in student backpacks in both Chagrin and Kenston schools. The staff continued to strategically promote classes and workshops in the newsletter, website, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Pinterest. We offered a PMC workshop last fall featuring an internationally known instructor that drew students from 3 different states. Most recently we housed a fiber workshop promoted by our neighbor, Alpaca Fiber Studio and Friends, featuring the work of a nationally known felting artist. Workshops continue to offer the biggest return. We look to bolstering our programs in the coming year with the guidance and feedback of our education and program committee under Deb Perry's leadership that will include a constituent survey and focus groups.

Fundraising:

In August of 2013 we staged an Upcycled Art and Art Supply Sale." We filled our gallery with art and supplies that ranged from funky to functional and made nearly \$2,000. The concept may be repeated every few years.

October's "Clams for Clay" clambake fundraiser yielded \$5,000, raising funds for the refurbishing of our pottery studio and a scholarship for students in need. Our third Annual Clambake is planned for Saturday, October. 17th 5-8pm at VAC.

This year promises to be another success with the addition of craft beer tasting proved by a local brewery. Please plan to attend, support our program and enjoy a delicious meal with a tour of our facility, a beer pull, a raffle and more!

Hot Chocolate was our annual fundraiser held Valentine's Day, February 14th. Over 120 guests enjoyed a delicious dinner of zesty tapas and chocolate tastings prepared by Trifles Café. They sampled wine selected and served from Chuck's Beverage and live music performed by the Unitas Duo and Lempner Jazz Trio. Attendees could select from bottled champagne, a wine pull, a silent auction and raffle. Raffle items include romantic getaways, and the auction was for Lissa Brockrath's donation of a fiery painted landscape entitled "Scarlet Descent". The event offered the option to attend the Chagrin Studio Orchestra's Valentine's Day concert at Chagrin Valley Little Theatre. The concert included pianist Jiayan Sun performing the romantic Franz Liszt's 2nd Piano Concerto with Maestro Steve Eva and the orchestra and the world premiere of The Curse, The Cross and the Lion, composed by Nathan Felix with a video background, the subject of an award-winning film at the recent Chagrin Documentary Film Festival. Following the concert, participants returned to Township Hall for decadent chocolate dessert and after dinner drinks, joined by Sun and Felix post-concert. The event netted close to \$9,000. Save the date for our next "Hot Chocolate" fundraiser, February 6th at Township Hall.

Art by the Falls

Art by the Falls marked its 32nd year in June. Gorgeous weather drew a crowd of 15,000 and 120 artists exhibited their wares. They continued to offer praise for a professional and high caliber festival made possible by the Art by the Falls team. Congratulations to the entire Art by the Falls committee with special recognition to the skill and experience of co-chairs executive board member Kirk Gebler and long-time volunteer Ally Dean. We partnered for the second time with Chagrin Arts for their annual "Music Crawl" collaboratively planned to coincide with Art by the Falls. Once again, stilt walkers from Parade the Circle joined us to open the festival. New this year was a community art project at our VAC tent at the front of the park. Painter John Donato invited event visitors to participate in completing a vibrant 3-panel mural depicting the Chagrin Valley. The event netted \$35,000 and was by all accounts a huge success.

Facilities

Our building renovation is now 5 years old. Our striking facility has been enhanced with a newly completed magnificent mural and exterior LED lighting on the east and west sides of the facility. The parking lot has been re-sealed and striped with parking lines. Our Valley Art Center Gift Shop has truly been transformed with shelving and a new jewelry display case with the help of volunteers. The pottery studio has been refurbished with 2 new kilns, an exhaust fan, an extruder and new shelving. Looking ahead, we foresee a need for as much as \$100,000 in necessary upgrades and repairs in the next 5-10 years and are making plans to address those costs with our "Art of Preservation" campaign.

Respectfully submitted,



Dana Davis,
President, Board of Trustees



Mary Ann Breisch,
Executive Director