

Brownstone

WASHBURN
CULTURAL CENTER

ISSUE 10
DECEMBER 2022

What Does the Washburn Cultural Center Mean to You?

By Steve Cotherman

Over the last couple of years (nothing like a pandemic to bring out our introspective side), the Cultural Center's staff and board have been asking lots of questions about the future. What does the Center look like in five or ten years and beyond? After thirty years, what and who are we? What do we need to do to ensure the long-range viability of both our historic brownstone building and the programs within? And mostly, what does the Center mean to the citizens of Washburn and the Chequamegon Bay area, and how can we best serve them?

We think we've begun to answer these questions in exciting and forward-thinking ways. For example, and you'll read more about this elsewhere in this issue of Brownstone, the Center board has asked staff to begin the transitional process of becoming a regional art center. This new direction is based on Washburn's recent branding initiative, where the City and area were defined in part by our people's love of the outdoors, connection to Lake Superior, and creative diversity. There seems to be no lack of interest and participation in arts and crafts, music, and theater; that 2020-21 branding effort showed that Washburn is a place of makers.

So how do we best use our big old brownstone bank building to serve this core audience of outdoorsy creators? Well, one important way is to make sure that the building has the structural and programmatic amenities to support the arts. We've already replaced our tired thirty-year-old carpet on the third floor with hard vinyl flooring that is more suitable to art workshops and easily cleaned. For aesthetic and practical reasons, we also replaced carpeting in the first-floor galleries with a combination of vinyl and new high traffic carpet. No need to worry about spills and muddy feet when you have new floors designed for heavy use.

We've been painting meeting rooms and gallery spaces for a few years now and will continue that improvement as time and funds permit. One big project has been improvement of storage spaces in the basement and even adding a badly needed custodian sink in our utility room. In the future, we'd like to install a sink on the first and second floors as well. Each of these investments in infrastructure makes our building a more welcoming space and much more efficient.

The really BIG project for early 2023 is to install central air conditioning on the second and third floors. For thirty years

we've been attempting to cool those large spaces with window units and it's just not working anymore. If we want visitors and volunteers to be comfortable in the historical museum, then we need to be able to control the temperature; more stable temps and humidity levels are also necessary for the long-range preservation of fragile artifacts and works of art. And if we are to become an art center, with year 'round art workshops, dance classes, theater rehearsals, and public meetings on the third floor, we need to be in control of our environment. As any old timer in town will tell you, it's not getting any cooler during the summer around here! To remain viable and sustainable, our building needs to keep up with changing times and climate conditions.

Now, I don't have to tell you how expensive some of these improvements will be, especially central air conditioning. Our board is working to identify funding sources for these and other facility projects and programming initiatives, but now more than ever, your support is very important. I would ask that you please continue to give generously so that the Washburn Cultural Center remains vital and relevant to our community for the next thirty years and beyond. On behalf of the board and staff, thanks!! ■



Participants in CBAC's "The Gathering" discuss their practices over apple cider.

WHAT
DO YOU
THINK?

Imagining a Regional Arts Center

By Maggie Hart

At the end of this past summer, I sat down with Steve Cotherman and Aron Lorber for the first time to discuss the Washburn Cultural Center. We spoke of aspirations and history—how the WCC has functioned in the past and what it could grow to be. The three of us, then and now, return to the phrase *Regional Arts Center*.

As it stands today, the Washburn Cultural Center acts as a magnificent community resource to those already integrated and familiar with the arts in Washburn. From watercolor workshop veterans to CBAC members, many established groups rely on WCC to provide a space for their creativity to flourish. On paper, some might call this the workings of a Regional Arts Center. However, in order to boast this title with confidence, there are two areas upon which we must improve: **reach and access**.

What I believe bars us from said title and from greater public engagement is the amount of creative-minded people aware of our resources (reach) as well as diversifying these resources to attract people of varying artistic disciplines, socioeconomic statuses, and age groups (access). Most would agree that the arts in Washburn are

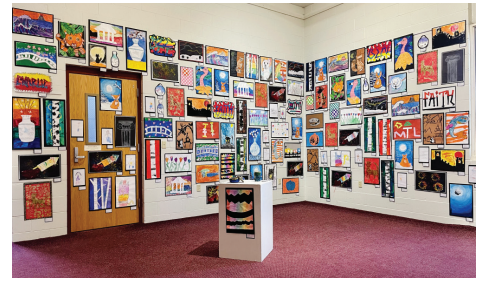


Eric Chandler reads his poem "Retention Time" at the "Same Location, Multiple Perspectives" poetry reading, September.

remarkably strong and growing even more so with each day. To nurture this growth and assure its future, I believe it is of the utmost importance that we not only cherish our existing relationships with community members and creative groups, but actively work to connect with new ones.

I could continue my rambling indefinitely, but I'm sure you're wondering: *So, what have you done to that effect?* All of this began with a deep dive researching the programming and resources of peer institutions—midwestern art centers, galleries, and community organizations. I sought inspiration to propose events that would draw in the fence-sitters of our community, those who want to be involved but don't know where to begin.

The first manifestation of low-cost, low-commitment programming to connect area creatives with us and each other was the inaugural Art Supply Swap. During Art Escape, we opened up the 3rd floor to serve as a space where people could bring their surplus art materials to exchange with others. The thinking behind this event was to encourage sustainable approaches to art making through community connection. Even those without things to bring were welcome to take whatever items spoke to them to use in future creative endeavors, and the leftover items were donated to us for use in future low-cost programming. Despite a nearly torrential downpour of rain that day, around 40 people circulated through, most asking me when the next art supply swap would be. Overhearing area newcomers converse with longstanding CBAC members about their practices and interests affirmed to me that this is the type of thing we need to be doing more of. Not only did this event encourage artistic exploration through offering supplies for free, but it also acted as a community-building space. Artists from different circles were sharing ideas



Washburn Public School District Annual K-12 Student Show, May.



Backwoods Artists, August.



"The Gathering," CBAC Annual Fall Show, October.

with each other and seeing WCC act as the common ground for creative exchange.

Looking forward, I have a list of programs I would personally love to see realized.

However, it would be presumptuous to say that *my* ideas are what this community needs.

In order to serve the creative community, it is necessary to make a concerted effort in understanding its wants and needs not through speculation and projection, but from direct communication and feedback. To this end, we are currently strategizing about connecting with fellow arts business and organization leaders in the area to hold a public forum wherein community members may share with us their creative needs and what resources the WCC may provide in service of them. ■



MISSION: The Washburn Cultural Center is a community center dedicated to fostering, presenting, and preserving the cultural, artistic, and historical life of Washburn and the surrounding area.

DESCRIPTION: The Cultural Center is a place for cultural enrichment and serves as an educational resource and architectural focal point for the entire Washburn community. Our building is listed on both the State and National Registers of Historic Places. Known as “The Old Bank Building,” the magnificent brownstone structure was

built in 1890 by A.C. Probert, founder of the Bank of Washburn.

ACTIVITIES: The WCC Board manages and cares for Washburn’s iconic 1890s bank building and is working to build an open and inviting place for all kinds of community programs and events, from hosting baby showers and high school graduation parties to housing the Washburn Historical Museum, from presenting a full slate of monthly art exhibits to creating programs for young and old alike, from operating a retail gallery and antique store to hosting the annual Holiday Boutique. All of these activities and more will continue to be on our radar in the weeks and months

to come. Your input is important, so if there are things you think ought to be happening at the Center, please let us know!

BOARD MEMBERS: Dick Olson, Pres.; David Bratley, Carla Bremner, Darlene Charboneau, Susan Mackreth, Joanne Meierhofer, Jedd Ungrodt, Jana Van Evera

CONTACT INFORMATION:
 Washburn Cultural Center
 Steve Cotherman, Director
 P.O. Box 725, Washburn, WI 54891
 (715) 373-5591
 washburnculturalcenter@gmail.com
 www.washburnculturalcenter.com

The Washburn Cultural Center would like to acknowledge its donors for their generous support in 2021.

In 2020, gifts were received in memory or these individuals:

- Phyllis Gierzak
- Tom Hagstrom
- Shirley Haugen
- Karlyn Holman
- Helen Korpela
- Isabel Moe
- Phil Ross
- Don & Lois Terry
- The Family of Anton & Carrie Swanson

Many thanks to these major contributors:

- Richard L. & Barbara L. Barry
- Phebe Blackburn
- Richard J. Gierzak
- Gary Holman

- Kristy Jensch
- Otto Korpela
- Bill & Jane Luckenbill – Bill’s Collision Center
- Ron & Kay Maassen
- Sharon Miller
- James & Susan Mills
- Robert & Sharon St. Germain
- Adeline Swiston
- Sarah Ungrodt
- Ungrodt Properties
- Jana & Peter Van Evera
- Washburn Iron Works

Thanks to these generous supporters:

- David & Terri Bahe
- Sally Bair
- Linda & Edward Calhan
- Darlene & Rick Charboneau
- Chana & Al Chechik

- Ann & Donn Christensen
- Dottie Coleman
- Dona Copperud
- Steve & Mary Cotherman
- Mark & Sheri Eggleston
- Rita Foltz
- Phil Freeman & Wendy Stein
- Warren Gall
- Linda & Jack Gunderson
- Bill Hagstrom
- Wanda Sytsma Hanson
- Richard Harnois
- Patra Holter
- Dora Kling
- Paul & Kevin Korpela
- Denny & Judy Kurschner
- Catherine Lange
- Dan & Sally Larson
- Emily Macgillivray
- Mark & Nancy MacIntyre

- Catherine McMahon & Russell Newman
- Susan & Bob Mackreth
- Sharon Miller
- Lorraine & Phil Norrgard
- Dick & Sandy Olson
- Walter Pearson
- Jan Ross
- Rick & Theresa Seppa
- Gayle Smerer
- Janet Smucker
- Carolyn Sneed
- Peter Sytsma
- Jedd Ungrodt
- Ken & Jane Weiler
- John & Nancy Werner
- Michelle K. Williams

Join today! Your membership or generous donation helps us care for our 1890 brownstone landmark building and plan and present a full year of arts programs and exhibits.

- \$5,000.....Lifetime
- \$500Benefactor
- \$100Business
- \$50Family
- \$30Individual
- \$25Senior/Student

In Memory In Honor of:

Name _____

Organization _____

Mailing Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____



**WASHBURN
CULTURAL CENTER**

P. O. Box 725
Washburn, WI 54891

Visit WCC's website and...

- Become a WCC member online
- Virtually visit previous art exhibits
- Get news and info about WCC's programs

[washburnculturalcenter.com](https://www.washburnculturalcenter.com)

Like us on Facebook 

<https://www.facebook.com/WashburnCulturalCenter/>

Follow us on Instagram 

<https://www.instagram.com/washburnculturalcenter1283/>

2023 Calendar of Exhibits and Events

March—"Listening In: The Earth Is Speaking," CBAC Annual Spring Show

April—"I See, I Paint," Mati Palm-Leis

May—Washburn Public School District Annual K-12 Student Show

June—Fiber Arts 2023

July—Superior Artists Group: Dora Kling, Royanne Goossen & Friends

August—Backwoods Artists: Watercolors by Wei Lan Lorber & Her Friends and Students

September—"Paris," Works by Betty Sitbon; and Recent Work by Olivia Haman's Art Camp Kids

October—"The Gathering," CBAC Annual Members Show

November—Washburn Cultural Center Permanent Collection of Art

December—Annual Holiday Boutique

An up-to-date schedule of upcoming exhibits and our monthly hours are available at

<https://www.washburnculturalcenter.com/upcoming-events>