



ECFTA MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD

AGM – November 24, 2021

From the leaky boat of 2016 to the airplane ready for flight in 2021, we have had an incredible term guiding the Board and this Arts Centre vessel – especially given its unpredictable and demanding boiler!! Our first challenge over 2016 and 2017 was to try and tame it which resulted in a capital grant from OTF150 to upgrade registers, thermostats, pipes and insulation, and then progressed to having to replace the boiler – thank heavens for the community’s generous response to the BOILER BLITZ.

The boiler aside, what has grown from the hard work of directors, staff, artists, instructors, donors, tenants, friends and neighbours, is an arts centre that lives up to the collective vision expressed in our Strategic Plan:

The Elora Centre for the Arts is a unique community resource that fosters creativity, a high level of artistic expression, and the belief that a vibrant arts centre is integral to the health of our community.

A few highlights that capture life at the Centre during our term –

- the 2017 installation of the exterior sculpture *Sound of the Rain* by artist XIAOJING YAN and the upcoming Pathways project with outdoor sculptures from local artists
- the initial Supportive Arts program in winter of 2018 which became the pilot project for our three-year OTF grant, now in its second year and hosting 3 sessions per week, having survived year one during COVID where instructors worked their magic over video
- the return of tenants to the building and the current full house that gathers education, dance, music, performance, karate, artist and photography studios - also a vigorous short-term rental schedule which has featured a tent during the summer/fall of 2021
- the establishment of the satellite gallery in The Mill to feature local artists and earn revenue which goes back into ECFTA programming
- the pop-up gallery which has grown into the Artisan Shop, a wonderful sales venue for local artists, another revenue generator for our programs
- the publication of the book version of SEE THE FOREST THROUGH THE TREES, an extraordinary exhibit of paintings and photographs from our 2019 outreach program, Planet Youth, which included artists from kindergarten to high school

- a Board which has evolved and has included directors representing the arts, education, small business, development, real estate, accounting, music, event-planning, community development, legal and governance
- the emergence of an incredible staff under the direction of Executive Director, Lianne Carter who evidently can handle everything from marketing to gallery, to artisan shop, to community outreach, to property management to boiler expert
- the blossoming of grants – a Molly Kleiker/Lianne Carter dynamic that has yielded over \$600,000 of income from 2019 to 2021 – these funds are largely for programming but there is a portion for capital improvements to the building and our new Pathways outdoor project
- the exciting plans for a significant capital expansion (2000 square feet including accessible washrooms, a spacious entrance with atrium, and much needed storage) so that we can broaden our community reach – we so appreciate the amazing design and guidance from architect and longtime ECFTA supporter, Edward Thomas
- the upcoming Capital Campaign to realize this project – we will have time during the Q&A at the end of the meeting to give a few more details about the Capital Expansion and Campaign

For Matt and me, the most rewarding part of having completed a term as CoChairs has been the opportunity to build new relationships and friendships. From the outset in spring of 2016 we were on the same page and were supported by the hard-working Board: strongly motivated to see how we could help the Centre to regain a dynamic role in the community in a financially viable way. We set a goal to generate positive activity, and a positive atmosphere in the building and in our interactions with partners in the community and beyond – Centre Wellington Council, Libro Credit Union, Studio Tour artists, Centre Wellington Community Foundation, local Lions, Rotary and Optimist clubs, Portage Rehabilitation Centre, 100 Women Who Care, BigBrothersBigSisters, Neighbourhood schools and churches. A nod to director, Lee Bonnell, who worked hard to make connections with many of the service groups.

Rediscovering the role for the Centre has been a largely organic process. I remember a pivotal moment while Lianne and I attended a Community Foundation workshop in Fergus and it became clear:

We (collectively) are observing our community, we are identifying the needs, and we are developing ways to meet these needs through creative thinking and expression. Our partners in this mission are the talented artists, musicians, artisans, dancers, actors, chefs and writers who know the power of art.

This has all come around. Thank you directors for your incredible support and your faith that we could do it. Thank you amazing staff for your energy, time and commitment. It seems miraculous that the Centre has weathered the worst of Covid and is heading into a phase with growth in exhibits, programs and the building. We will continue to work closely with new CoChairs, Deepti and Kathryn, to ensure a smooth transition. Matt and I will stay on the Board until March 2022, and we have both committed to guiding the capital project and capital campaign over the next couple of years. A final note - we are so lucky to have Deepti and Kathryn – with their genuine people skills, their organization and strategic thinking, as well as their commitment to community - the Elora Centre for the Arts will continue to thrive. And we all look forward to Deepti's next delicious Indian dinner!!

Sheila & Matt