

New art center gets community excited for art

Written by Darci Tomky

Prairie Winds Art Center of Colorado made its debut at a community reception during Holyoke's Country Christmas Monday, Dec. 2.

The former Masonic Hall at 443 S. Interocean Ave. in Holyoke is being transformed into an all-inclusive art place. Remodeling is still in the works, but Monday night community members were able to browse an art gallery showcasing local artists.

Organizers said the art center is the vision of a group of community-minded citizens of Phillips County. They recognize the role that the arts and culture play in people's lives and the void that exists when the arts are absent.

The idea of the art center is to "bring art to the forefront in our county," said organizer Teresa Mailander. "We have a ton of talent."



Monday night's reception for the Prairie Winds Art Center was a chance for community members to see the new in-the-works facility. From left, organizers Nancy Dee and Teresa Mailander visit with Gloria Bergner at Dee's watercolor station.□ □

—Enterprise photo

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Other organizers include Nancy Dee, Theresa Conklin, Kathy Wernsman and Julie Worley. It is not an official governing board but simply a group of individuals from both Holyoke and Haxtun who are artists themselves or business people, all of whom regularly participate in events that promote the arts and who acknowledge the need for additional art-centered activities for both youth and adults.

The art gallery in the upper level of Prairie Winds Art Center will showcase work as well as house a gift shop for the display and purchase of completed pieces. The building's lower level will be used for workshops, classes and a studio space for artists to work.

Original plans were to use the former Melissa Memorial Hospital building, but organizers feel the former Masonic Hall is a great space and a manageable size. However, right now, it's not a finished product and is still in the beginning stages. "It's tremendous repurposing" of the building, said Mailander.

While showcasing art and educating artists is on the forefront of the plans, another idea includes an artist-in-residency program, where an artist would stay for a period of time to work at the center, making it available for people to not only browse the gallery but also watch as they work.



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Haxtun artist Theresa Conklin, at left, demonstrates portrait painting with the help of Katie Swan. Organizers hope Prairie Winds Art Center will not only be a gallery but also a place for events like art workshops and artist-in-residency programs. □ □

—Enterprise photo

The gallery will be a great place to not only house local work but also traveling art exhibits. “Artists are very generous with their work and their time,” said Mailander.

In the future, the facility could also be used for other branches of the arts, such as literary arts, movement arts, music and theater production.

“Art is an economic development driver,” said Worley, who is the executive director for Phillips County Economic Development.

Prairie Winds Art Center organizers feel the center and its activities will give rise to new economic collaborations and will be designated as the art and cultural center of the region.

It will be establishing 501(c)(3) nonprofit status, and artists and volunteers will be collaborating to run the art center. Organizers will also be looking for grant funds as well as donations.

Sales of 2014 desk calendars are helping launch the new art center. Each month showcases a piece of art from a local artist/student, with information and comments from that artist on the back. To purchase a calendar, contact Mailander at 970-580-1939.

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Monday's reception just the beginning

Around 130 community members stopped by the Prairie Winds reception on Monday night. They were able to browse the art gallery, purchase local art pieces and munch on refreshments.

Conklin was on hand to demonstrate portrait painting with the help of Katie Swan as the subject of her painting. Dee also set up a station for a watercolor demonstration.

Joe Hall and Lou Kraus provided music for the Christmas reception.

"It was a great start," said Mailander, noting organizers were very pleased with everyone's reaction.

Monday evening was a great chance for community members to see what a valuable resource Prairie Winds Art Center will be for the area. There are several ways people can get involved.

—Be a host. Interested and responsible people are needed to greet visitors, explain a little about the art center, show the gallery and make sales transactions. They don't have to be an artist but might just like being around art!

—Take a class. The art center needs people who want to learn about art or handcrafts. People can make a suggestion for classes and sign up for the email list to stay informed on future activities.

—Display artwork. Let organizers know which month works, and they'll provide information about how they trade gallery space each month for some hosting/studio time.

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—Teach a class. Volunteer to share one’s craft with others by teaching a class in the workshop space downstairs.

—Watch an artist work. The community is invited to stop by when the “Open” sign is out front as they might catch the host working on a project in the studio space.

For more information about any of these things, contact Mailander at 970-580-1939 or [pt mailander@pctelcom.coop](mailto:mailander@pctelcom.coop) or Dee at 970-774-4747 or nrdee@haxtuntel.net.



Local artists Sheryl Farnsworth and Christina Martinez are on hand Monday night at the debut of the Prairie Winds Art Center art gallery, located at the former Masonic Hall, 443 S. Interocean Ave. in Holyoke. ☐☐

—Enterprise photo

Events planned in 2014

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Even though the art center is still in the works, it already has events on the schedule for January and February.

Dee will be offering creativity workshops for junior high students through adults on three Saturdays in January from 9 a.m.-noon each time. “Know Your Paints” will be Jan. 4, “Color and Feeling with Artist Vassily Kandinsky” on Jan. 18 and “Discover Your Connection to Nature with Water-Based Mixed Mediums” on Jan. 25.

To save a space in one of the workshops and find out more about materials/cost, contact Dee at 970-774-4747 or nrdee@haxtuntel.net.

A “Wine, Dine and Art Party for You and Your Sweetheart” is set for Friday, Feb. 14 at 6:30 p.m. Contact Wernsman at 970-520-0639 or Conklin at 970-580-6378 to RSVP.

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