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9 North Centre

Council enters 9 North Centre for the Arts

Maria Smith
 Cumberland Times-News

CUMBERLAND - Calling the city a "rich and vibrant" community that he expects to continue to grow, Andy Vick promised to make it "come alive with the arts."

He now has a new space to make that possible.

To symbolize the opening Thursday of the 9 North Centre for the Arts, a paper chain was cut with a pair of shears from one of the S. Schwab Co.'s cutting tables. Personal messages were written on each link of the chain.

"Obviously, I am ecstatic today," Vick, executive director of the Allegany Arts Council, said. "This is a wonderful thing for the community and a wonderful thing for the arts council. I couldn't be more pleased with the way things turned out."

While the arts council will operate from the first floor, the second floor, at 5,200 square feet, remains open for business opportunities.

The third floor features five apartments, each with a different, brightly colored door, ranging in size from 597 square feet for \$800 a month to 1,096 square feet for \$1,200 a month. The three interior units have been rented - one to a doctor, another to a graduate student/personal trainer and the last one to a professional moving into town.

With original hardwood floors throughout and tin ceilings on the first and second floors, the building smells and looks brand new without a single remnant of Goodwill Horizon Industries Inc. evident. Forty of the original, nearly 70-year-old lights are in the building.

The opening is the culmination of Doug Schwab and Betsy Hurwitz-Schwab's vision that began in 2005.

Betsy said it started during an arts council retreat where Vick talked about the need for more space and mentioned the Goodwill site.

Doug added that as the S. Schwab Co., once known for its Little Me clothing, was transitioning, it was time to do something different.

The couple purchased 9 N. Centre St. in August 2006 and by November, renovations began.

Goodwill, in turn, purchased two buildings from the Schwab Co. in the Upper Potomac Industrial Park off U.S. Route 220 in Bowling Green.

"I think this really represents Allegany County growing and the arts community in Cumberland growing," Chuck Dicken, a board member of the arts council, said.

Susan Davis, the council's secretary, said she's proud of the space and "extremely appreciative" of the Schwabs for helping to make it happen.

"They are tremendous community contributors," she said.

"Doug and Betsy raised the bar in community philanthropy," Vick, who also credited the staff and volunteers, said. "I don't know anyone willing to jump that high. Without their generosity, we wouldn't have been able to do this. This is a grand space and more than I could ever have hoped for."

Andrea Vernot, deputy assistant secretary of the state's Office of Tourism, Film and the Arts, said she was ready to move in and declared Allegany Arts Day on behalf of Gov. Martin O'Malley.

Bill Mandicott, a member of the Maryland State Arts Council, presented a proclamation.

Doug Schwab also commended city officials and staff.

Mayor Lee Fiedler thanked the Schwabs for taking the chance and said soon after the couple bought the building Betsy took him on a tour. In no way, he said, could he envision what it's become.

"I stand here in awe of the people here - young and old - families who have done so much for our city," Fiedler said. "Thank you because you built this community and you are rebuilding this community."

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Photos



From left, Gary Horowitz, Margaret Romero and Jerrri Dell talk during the grand opening ceremony of the 9 North Centre for the Arts Thursday. The gallery is located at the address bearing its name in Cumberland. **Wesley Haines/Cumberland Times-News** (Click for larger image)

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Roseanne Bernstein was one of those in the audience. She and her husband, Milton, operated the L. Bernstein Furniture Co. from the site from 1914 until 1981. A piece of steel with L. Bernstein Furniture Co. Cumberland, Md., inscribed on it is in place along the back stairway.

Marion Leonard, vice president of the council, said the space "takes your breath away."

"It is awesome to bring the latest in art design and architectural form into this fantastic community," she said.

The long list of those who made the project possible includes Dan Isackson of Kann Partners, a Baltimore architect firm; Randy Riggs of Hillegas Construction; Gill Simpson Inc., electrical work; and Service Unlimited, plumbing.

For more information, visit www.9northcentre.com.

Contact Maria Smith at msmith@times-news.com.



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