

*Great Communities make great art
and
Great art makes great communities*

November 2011

I. A Look into the Art Future of the Grand Traverse Region

The Case for Art

As Traverse City takes a greater step onto the national stage as a desirable place to live, work, create, and recreate, there is a growing awareness of the local need to build a more favorable infrastructure for the arts. While we are blessed with many wonderful and successful organizations in the area, Traverse City must do a better job of representing individual visual artists in the community. Additionally, the area should have a suitable broad-based initiative to represent our community at large in the area of teaching, making, and celebrating art, collaborating among different arts organizations. Previous initiatives, including The ArtCenter Traverse City have been too narrowly focused and have struggled in efforts to be recognized, sustainable, and meaningful to Traverse City.

Several significant cultural and art-related initiatives have taken root and are thriving in our community. Local giants like Interlochen Center for the Arts, the Traverse City Film Festival, The Dennon Museum, National Writers' Series, The Traverse Symphony Orchestra, and the Michigan Legacy Art Park serve the arts alongside many smaller local art centers such as Glen Arbor, Leland, and Crooked Tree in Petoskey. Each of these is well defined, serving a particular constituency. We can all be proud of the excellence they represent.

Broad-based community support and recognition for the arts enhances quality of life, creates jobs, attracts businesses to our community, leads to greater local economic stability, and makes the community a more desirable place to live. Above all, a successful visual arts initiative will further enhance the cultural attraction and tourism that are so vital to the Traverse City economy.

The new initiative represents a significant departure from the current model and evolves from the sixty-one year history of Art Center Traverse City. Over the next few years, it will emerge as a full-spectrum support for all visual arts media and bring together artists, supporters and patrons, galleries, education, businesses, and members of the community. Much of the support for this initiative is already in place with community and business organizations like The Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Development Authority, The Downtown Traverse City Association, The Convention and Visitors Bureau, and others.

Driven by excellence in art, Traverse Arts will respond to those community needs that have been so strongly articulated in this region. It will involve:

- New and expanded community engagement with art at all age levels
- Full-spectrum art programming for education and presentation

Full-Spectrum Programming

Building on the history of art education and presentation in the region, we will develop programs for all ages, all skill levels, and an expanded array of media. The current base of two- and three-dimensional art will explode with programs in fiber arts, pottery, ceramics, photography, *etc.* Exhibits and competitions will rotate continuously for students and professionals, alike. Later, we will see collaborations with other organizations in areas of musical and dance performance, literature, filmmaking, *etc.*

In addition to expanding the current scope of serving artists, Traverse Arts will also focus on the role of art within the community. Programming will enhance appreciation of art through education, lectures, and demonstrations. Through collaboration with other art organizations in the community and around the state, we will work to share ideas and exchange information and resources.

Virtual Facilities

Many people ask the natural and appropriate question: "Where will this enterprise be located?"

Our interest and passion is to teach, make, and present art. So, for the first several years, the Traverse Arts will operate in "virtual" facilities. Our focus will be on improved programming and delivery of cultural value to the community. Consequently, this is not a "bricks-and-mortar" initiative. The council can operate from a small central office, housing files, computers, and communication equipment. We will acquire the use of facilities on an as-needed basis. This approach eliminates the fixed costs and overhead associated with owning and operating a permanent facility. It also forces the organization to establish and maintain new and unique relationships with other facilities in the community.

A very active board of directors, paid staff, and volunteers will manage the initiative. They will be dedicated to the promotion and support of the arts as they operate the facility, develop and coordinate programs, and ensure that we adequately serve the community. We will work closely with other community organizations, patrons, supporters, and artists: both local and from outside the area.

Very simply stated, our goal is to expand opportunities for local visual artists, both at home and in other markets, attract artists to our community, and enhance the quality of life in the region

The time is optimal for Traverse City to support such an initiative. It will further enhance the cultural landscape of this wonderful community. You are invited to be a part of this renaissance of art in Traverse City.

Please join us.