

Storytelling event helps foster a creative community



Storyteller Beatriz Badikian-Gartler performs June 4 during the Inspired! Live Lit storytelling event at Public Landing. Photo by Alex Ivanisevic/22nd Century Media



Storyteller Amy Burrows performs June 4 during the Inspired! Live Lit storytelling event at Public Landing. Photo by Alex Ivanisevic/22nd Century Media

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5:00 am CDT June 11, 2019

Laughter rang through the Public Landing Restaurant June 4 as Lockport residents listened to Amy Burrows debut her comedic personal narrative. Burrows was one of five storytellers who presented during the (art) Inspired! Live Lit event.

Lisa Colleen and Barbara Eberhard are the producers of (art) Inspired! Live Lit, a storytelling event on the first Tuesday of every month at the Public Landing Restaurant located at the Gaylord Building 200 W. 8th St., which they said has attracted about 40-60 audience members per month. The two describe the free event as “a celebration of

self-expression featuring storytelling and more.”

Colleen said the event provides a unique experience for the audience because of the connection created between them and the teller.

The storytellers featured at the June 4 event were Colleen and Burrows — who are both from surrounding areas — Ada Cheng — an Asian American professor-turned experienced storyteller — Beatriz Badikian-Gartler from Buenos Aires, Argentina, who has a Ph.D in English from the University of Illinois at Chicago and in 2000 she was selected as one of the One-Hundred Women Who Make a Difference in Chicago by Today’s Woman magazine, and lastly Randy Kim who co-produces “TALK Stories: An Asian / Asian American Diaspora Storytelling Show” with Cheng.

Colleen has been storytelling in Chicago for a couple of years and she observed there are many storytelling events in the city but not many in the suburbs, “so we had the dream of creating a storytelling community here in Lockport because it is a really strong artist community,” Colleen said.

Eberhard, who is involved with Gallery Seven in the Gaylord Building, said each of the evening’s storytellers chose an art piece from the gallery that tied into their stories. The first show was in October and they have hosted the event every month since. Aside from the storytelling event, Eberhard and Colleen have also hosted a Live Lit writing class which began in January. They will be taking a break from the class for summer, but it will resume in September. The class is a four-week course — one class per week — and costs \$50. Colleen said she found that the community in the classroom gave people the encouragement and practice they needed to take on the stage.

Amy Curtis, a Lockport resident who has been in the writing class, hopes to present a story at the July Live Lit event. She said what she particularly enjoys about the event is, “I feel that we live in a time when everything is divisive and it’s about what separates us and makes us different, yet our stories connect us, I just love hearing from someone I might otherwise not know or would have never met.”

When asked how the group was brought together for the show on June 4, Colleen said they are friends from the city who she asked to come out for the event, “but the goal is to get local storytellers to come out from Lockport because that is how we will create the community,” she said, adding that she hopes by watching a storyteller an audience member will decide to take the Live Lit class and then get up on stage themselves.

“I love stories and I believe in their ability to heal and help people and empower them, and watching the faces of the people who have never been to a storytelling event is thrilling,” Colleen said. “We are in a society where we do a lot of texting and not a lot of face-to-face, so when someone gets up there and bravely bares their soul it is thrilling.” Colleen and Eberhard said they welcome participants who have and have not taken the writing class to be a part of the storytelling event. For more information visit inspiredlivelit.com and contact Colleen and Eberhard at inspiredlivelit@gmail.com.