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Art at the heart of Franklin Arts Center

Kelly Humphrey / Brainerd Dispatch
Franklin Arts Center, seen here Thursday, Aug. 11, 2022, in Brainerd, is home to 44 commercial tenants and 25 apartment units.

A diverse mix of commercial tenants provide outreach, experiences

By Chelsey Perkins
Brainerd Dispatch

Brainerd

One doesn't need detective skills to unearth Franklin Arts Center's past: lockers line the halls, walls feature chalk-dusted blackboards and carved acts of rebellion add character to cupboard doors and window sills.

Where Brainerd students once dissected frogs or passed notes to a crush, local creatives now dance the salsa, glaze pots, paint canvases, sew capes or edit photographs. Visitors can shop for yarn, receive acupuncture, strike yoga poses, enter the world of virtual reality, engage in art therapy and soon, even get a haircut — all in one day, if they'd like.

Nearly succumbing to the churn of progress after its days as Franklin Junior High faded into memory, the 90,000-square-foot



Surrounded by fabric and finished pieces, Karen Knierim discusses the clothing she designs July 7, 2022, as part of her business Ethereal Threads, which operates from a studio in the Franklin Arts Center in Brainerd.

Chelsey Perkins / Brainerd Dispatch

brown brick building in north Brainerd found new life thanks to the relentless advocacy efforts of civic-minded

residents. Remodeling by the owner Artspace divided the decommissioned school into both a 25-unit

apartment complex and a patchwork of businesses, nonprofit organizations and personal artist studios.

These days, a full 44 tenants operate within the commercial wing, ranging from architectural designers

to composers to painters.

Sixteen years after its birth, the vision of a community space dedicated to the arts is thriving, tenants say, buoyed by boundless reinvention.

Tiffany Sustercich is capturing that spirit as she adds her spin to one of center's original commercial spaces. In recent years, the Brainerd woman rekindled a passion for shaping clay that first emerged as a teen. Now, she's transforming the pottery studio into a multifunctional mecca for clay artists of all ability levels.

"It is artists, hobbyists — people looking to develop their craft further, not production potters," Sustercich said of the clientele she hopes to attract. "So really trying to keep the inspiration of art going

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Readers share job and career advice

DeLynn Howard
Brainerd Dispatch

When I was a little girl, I wanted to be an elementary school teacher.

As I got older, the idea of being a teacher stuck but I had moved up in the age bracket some. I thought a high school English teacher sounded like a much better idea.

I did two years of college at Central Lakes College (formerly Brainerd Community College when I attended) and moved on to Moorhead State University to major in education.

A number of circumstances brought me back home shortly after starting my junior year there. Do I wish I had that four-year degree under my belt, no matter what my major

would have been? Yes, of course. But do I regret it? No, because the choices I made eventually brought me here — to the Brainerd Dispatch. Twenty-three years later and I'm still loving my job.

So, what advice would I give my younger self? Do whatever feels right. You only get one life.

Thanks to those who submitted their pieces of advice. You never know who that advice could reach and help.

I wish I knew then what I know now

I would have started my author website years earlier and completed my social work degree in my 20s.

ADVICE: PAGE 17



Contributed / Shutterstock

A great piece of reader-submitted advice is "Failure is never trying at all."



Chelsey Perkins / Brainerd Dispatch

Tiffany Sustercich discusses her process in creating the mugs she will sell alongside others' works at Lakes Area Pottery on July 7, 2022, in Franklin Arts Center in Brainerd.

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versus making 100 of something.”

The mission of offering shared space and equipment for local potters will continue, but

Sustercich is bursting with ideas to redesign the studio and expand its reach. This mission starts with propping open the door a lot more often, inviting the clay-curious to step inside and find their muse.

In mid-July, a half-dozen potter's wheels and three kilns were en-

route to support classes beginning this fall for all ages offered through Peace and Pottery, one of Sustercich's small businesses. Subject matter will include lessons on the wheel, hand-building, jewelry-making, painting and more. So detailed are Sustercich's plans, she

envisions locally sewn aprons to give to youth students with the promise of earning patches in a scout-like fashion for mastering various pottery skills.

Some of those students might find themselves

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FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Business: Franklin Arts Center.

City: Brainerd.

Commercial tenants: 44.

Interesting fact: People frequently visit the former middle school building to find their old lockers or classrooms and reminisce, particularly in the summer months when class reunions typically take place.

“We encourage them to go downstairs, look at the cafeteria,” Vreeland said.

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ADVERTORIAL

Cragun's Resort debuts \$10 million dollar course renovation

By Sheila Helmberger

Even if you have golfed the award winning Cragun's Legacy courses 100 times before, the experience is about to be completely new.

The Legacy Courses renovation is in addition to a current \$22 million dollar resort renovation making changes and upgrades to the lakefront resort, on everything from the marina, lobby, meeting spaces, 206 lakeview lodge rooms and cabins. A massive redesign of all things golf at Cragun's has been underway since 2018.

This fall the resort made the debut of one of the most exhilarating pieces of the project. “Things have been pretty exciting around the property,” says Eric Peterson, general manager and development director at Cragun's Resort on Gull Lake. “We are taking our existing 36-hole championship course and are doing an expansion and complete renovation. When complete we will have an 18-hole and 27-hole championship course along with our popular family friendly 9-hole par 3 course.” When you are already known around the country as one of the premiere courses in the destination golf directory, an upgrade and redesign will have to be incredible. Cragun's has accomplished just that.

Currently the project is about 80% complete; the colossal changes to the courses came with a \$10 million dollar budget, earmarked exclusively to be spent on the golf courses. Construction has been underway for a year and a half.

The “Lehman 18” is named after the designer, Tom Lehman, who was hired to create the blueprint for the new course. A decorated PGA Tour professional and golf course designer, Lehman is a Minnesota native. He was given the job of completely reimagining 27 of the existing holes and creating the new course that beautifully showcases a course that plays over 7,400 yards from the longest tees and winds through the expansive 850-acre piece of property.

The new redesigned “Dutch 27,” which will feature three nine-hole courses, will be called the Red, White and the Blue. Interchangeable, the trio combines to give golfers three different 18-hole combinations that will offer a unique experience every trip out to play.

The extraordinary contemporary designs started with the removal of all existing bunkers and sand traps on the old holes. “Thirty percent of them will be put back in,” says Peterson, “but with more strategic locations.” The new traps will feature the popular Ohio Best White Sand, a vibrant sand, white in color, and engineered for performance in a golf course setting.

“If you knew the golf course as it was, you will recognize a few of the holes and corridors when you come out, but the way it will play now will be all different,” says Peterson. “Every green, and the area surrounding it, was adjusted to offer a whole different playing experience. We have changed fairways, we have reversed some of the holes,” he says, “We had holes that used to go one direction and now we are using the same corridor, but we have flipped the hole completely around.”

From the beginning, he explains, the end goal for all the changes was to establish golf holes that were more playable for the average player, but also kept the game challenging for the experienced golfer.

If walking out of your front door and teeing off within minutes sounds enticing to you, learn more about the possibility of living on your favorite place to play. Building lots are now available with beautiful views in the newly created Legacy Ridge and Legacy Point neighborhoods and they may suit you perfectly. Exquisite landscapes and close proximity to the Lehman Legacy and Dutch Legacy Courses at Cragun's, will put nationally acclaimed golf in your own yard.

Peterson assures if Cragun's has always been your favorite place to golf, it is the one thing that will never change.





Kelly Humphrey / Brainerd Dispatch

A sign outside Franklin Arts Center, seen Thursday, Aug. 11, 2022, in Brainerd, includes some of the artistic endeavors visitors will find inside.

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wishing to explore their creativity further, and Sustercich has thought of that, too. She's expanded the opportunity to lease drying rack space with a communal option, where people can purchase clay directly in the studio, share glazes and use wheel-throwing tools.

Plans also call for the doubling of the gallery space, which will feature pottery from local artists, including those learning at and using the studio. Sustercich's own glazed mugs stamped with words or designs will be on the shelves, too. Combined with other retail offerings, the pieces form the

foundation of a little store carrying one-of-a-kind art.

Sustercich's ambitions for Lakes Area Pottery go beyond promoting clay arts. She sees it as a gathering place, both for other commercial tenants with monthly potlucks and for the artist community at large with "Artist Connect" social hours.

"I'll have a little sitting area and a little coffee bar, and I'm hoping that artists come in and chat," she said. "It'll be a different feel."

That feeling — one of camaraderie and connection — is a welcome one after the pandemic kept the doors locked and much of the building dark and silent for some time, said Julie Vreeland, one of the property managers. But, in some

ways its own side effect of COVID-19, studios began to fill back up as people sought the opportunity to get out of the house.

"I think what's happened in the last year is that people kind of got tired of working at home, so they were looking for a space to move to," Vreeland said. "And because we're so unique, they knew we were here and kind of gravitated this way."

For Karen Knierim, stepping away from home to work on her craft means a short walk down the hall, sometimes with a wagon. The clothing designer and her husband Chuck live in one of the apartments on the eastern side of Franklin. About two years ago, Knierim decided to move the operation

of Ethereal Threads — an 18-year-old business specializing in historical garb a la renaissance fairs — to a studio space.

"I can't believe how much more efficient I am at sewing without having to fold up everything on the kitchen table so we can eat," Knierim said. "Leaving piles of stuff out when I'm working on stuff just saves so much time."

Racks bursting with the finished products of hooded coats, Vikings-era attire and capes destined for the Minnesota Renaissance Festival demonstrate Knierim's productivity. The couple modified the studio to improve its efficiency for the sewing operation, including the addition of a wall and closets to contain the fabrics from which the hand-crafted

WHAT YOU'LL FIND AT FRANKLIN ARTS CENTER

- ▶ Studio No. 10 — Spirit Movement Dance Studio, with a barber shop coming soon in the same space.
- ▶ 20 — Doctor Don.
- ▶ 30 — Inner Healing Hypnosis.
- ▶ 112 — Picture Day Pro!
- ▶ 113 — A Needle Pulling Thread.
- ▶ 114 — WonderTrek Children's Museum.
- ▶ 115/219 — Anakkala Tax.
- ▶ 116 — Strong Towns.
- ▶ 116A — Seth's Lane.
- ▶ 117 — Zen Fox Photography.
- ▶ 118 — Teacher's Lounge.
- ▶ 119 — Better Days Acupuncture.
- ▶ 120 — Honeybadger Analytics.
- ▶ 121 — Tracy Miller Fine Art.
- ▶ 122 — Jeff Mozey Photography.
- ▶ 123 — Carrie Benson Photography.
- ▶ 125 — The Yellow Chair.
- ▶ 126 — Lakes Area Pottery.
- ▶ 127 — Rothvanni Studio.
- ▶ 200 — For Marketing.
- ▶ 215 — True Photography.
- ▶ 216 — Deluxe.
- ▶ 216A — ISMS.
- ▶ 216A — VR Odyssey.
- ▶ 217 — Accessibility Design.
- ▶ 218 — Conference center.
- ▶ 220 — The Finishing Stitch.
- ▶ 221 — Korenne Writing Studio.
- ▶ 222 — Ethereal Threads.
- ▶ 223 — Transformed by Love Ministries.
- ▶ 224A — Legacy Chorale.
- ▶ 224B — LAH Musique.
- ▶ 224S-1 — Emily Skelton Design.
- ▶ 224S-2 — Kathley Krueger Painting.
- ▶ 224S-3 — Angela Anderson.
- ▶ 224S-5 — OO Design.
- ▶ 224S-6 — Lynch Painting.
- ▶ 225 — Art Matters.
- ▶ 226 — Laura Kotsmith Pottery.
- ▶ 227 — Dead Crow Studio.
- ▶ 228 — Lakes Area Yoga Studio.
- ▶ 229 — Layaway Financial.

wares are made.

Vreeland noted many of the tenants choose to modify spaces to fit their needs. Sometimes, reminders of the past classrooms are sparse, the transformation dramatic. Other times, a blackboard peeks from behind a display and one can almost imagine the neat rows of desks arranged before it.

The age of the building — erected in sections in the 1930s, '50s and '60s — is a

limiting factor in the extent of remodeling permitted. Asbestos means the floors and walls must remain intact. This doesn't seem to limit the creativity with which some of the spaces become something new, including walls and floors built right over the originals.

The lack of running water access in some spaces is another hurdle

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PEQUOT TOOL
Automation in Advanced Manufacturing

By Bryan Reeder and Laura Stromberg (Pequot Tool)

Pequot Tool Manufacturing is a thriving precision manufacturing shop in the area and they would like to take this Labor Day to recognize the people who make it happen — their employees. Through a culture of education, united with new tooling and evolving technology, Pequot Tool is creating a transformation of what success looks like for its employees. Part of this transformation is automation in advanced machining processes, enabling hiring of highly skilled technical manufacturing professionals.

ROBOTIC IMPLEMENTATION

Pequot Tool has an automation team that performs development and robotic implementation for their manufacturing processes. Automation is a priority that Pequot Tool recognizes value in and their frontline development team literally builds robotic machines from the ground up, programs, and then teaches the robots to do complex manufacturing procedures. Today's automation includes robots that load/unload machines or scaffold systems that are mounted and feed the machine, or used as a stand-alone that is capable of running multiple machines. By partially automating production, facility cycle times are reduced, quality is improved, and a safer workplace is created.

LOCALLY TRAINED FROM CLC'S ROBOTICS PROGRAM

With the emphasis on robotic automation, Pequot Tool utilizes Central Lakes College robotic program to secure prospective employees. They currently employ three graduates from CLC's robotics program — Vance Peyton, Lucas Bollig and Dustin Rollins, as automation technicians and engineers. Pequot Tool is putting their knowledge to the test by tasking them to implement automation to alleviate repetitive or manual tasks.

It's a common misconception that replacing workers with automation will eliminate jobs; it could not be further from the truth. Automation opens the door for Pequot Tool's employees to advance to higher skill jobs as the robotics team creates programs for the manual or monotonous part of the labor.

FUTURE FOCUSED

Pequot Tool's commitment to automation advancements keeps them in step with emerging technology and enables them to evolve faster than its competitors and be cost competitive in the global market. Today is a new era where machines work in tandem with people, rather than just being operated by them. Increasing demand for higher precision parts is fueling the growth of Pequot Tool which in turn is supporting the ability to challenge its employees with a different kind of work... the next generation of labor.

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in a facility that wasn't designed for how it's used now. Vreeland said with sinks at a premium, the building has not accommodated a restaurant or coffee shop that would naturally boost foot traffic.

An old science room featuring multiple sinks, however, lent itself to becoming a shared space for multiple tenants. People may rent a 10-by-10-foot cubicle there for \$50 per month. Some of those taking advantage of this option are apartment renters, while others, like Susterich, end up outgrowing their areas and taking on something larger.

When Rebecca Anakkala decided to rent a studio in 2010, 100 square feet wouldn't have been an option. A massive quilting machine is the backbone of Anakkala's The Finishing Stitch, which provides quilting services to people who've pieced together their own design.

"This started off as being a way to put groceries on the table," Anakkala said. "That was my contribution while I stayed at home. It just morphed into this."

The space she now occupies is a far cry from the days of tip-toeing around Legos while her son played on the floor next to her. Being in Franklin permitted her to create boundaries between work and home life — clients no longer must traipse through her house, for example. "I have my own



Rebecca Anakkala stands next to her quilting machine July 7, 2022, inside the studio she rents for her small business The Finishing Stitch at Franklin Arts Center in Brainerd. Chelsey Perkins / Brainerd Dispatch

space. It feels a little bit more professional than having people come to my house," she said. "The one thing I miss is I can't quilt in my pajamas and slippers anymore."

Bits of home, however, came with her: one wall in Anakkala's studio features a plethora of county fair ribbons earned by her and her children over the years. Her husband Jason operates his tax preparation business in another Franklin studio,

and her son now lives in one of the building's apartments.

Tracy Miller might not be quite as settled in as Anakkala, but the studio she recently moved into already feels like an integral part of her creative process. The former Coloradoan, a fine art painter for almost three decades, hung finished canvases along the frame of a blackboard in the main area of her well-lit space. The next step is a full-blown gallery of Miller's work,

created just steps away. A smaller attached room is now her painting studio, filled with various works in progress along with a wide selection of paints and brushes.

"This has been so wonderful for me to move into this building because I have every facet of my business right here. Every facet of it, I was able to get it all out of my house. My husband's probably very thankful, too," Miller said with a laugh. "I had stuff

in the garage and everywhere."

Miller began her artistic career hand-painting silks, such as scarves and neckties. After 15 years, she said she wanted to try something new. A workshop on nonrepresentational abstracts set her on an entirely new course with a brush in her hand. Before long, her signature style of vibrant, colorful, abstract animals emerged. In early July, Miller was busy

painting a set of six large pet portraits for a client, with each pet featured on a different denomination of paper money.

Miller's eye-catching animal portraits and other works of art aren't only for private collectors. Her art is licensed by multiple companies nationally and internationally. Seventeen of her paintings are available for people

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Dr. Wade Swenson Joins Lakewood Health System Medical Staff

Wade Swenson, MD, MPH, MBA, FACP, joins Lakewood Health System's medical staff as its new oncologist.

Originally from Moorhead, Minnesota, Dr. Swenson received his undergraduate degree from the Minnesota State University Moorhead and his medical degree from the University of North Dakota School of Medicine. He received his master of public health degree from the University of Iowa College of Public Health, and his master of business administration from the University of St. Thomas Opus College of Business. Dr. Swenson completed residencies in internal medicine, hematology, medical oncology and bone marrow transplant at the University of Iowa.

He is a member of the following associations: American Society of Clinical Oncology, American Society of Hematology, American College of Physicians (Fellow), International Society of Thrombosis and Hemostasis, American College of Healthcare Executives, Healthcare Financial Management Association, National Rural Health Association, Minnesota Rural Health Association, and the Institute of Healthcare Improvement.

As an oncologist, Dr. Swenson practices full-spectrum medical oncology and hematology, including breast, colon, lung and prostate cancers and hematologic malignancies. He was drawn to the ever-changing fields of oncology and hematology because of the prom-

ise of improved therapies, the relationship between physician and patients and the trust required to make important treatment decisions.

"I am passionate about community-based, mission-driven healthcare organizations," said Dr. Swenson. "Lakewood is an innovative rural health system that successfully prioritizes high-quality care, the patient experience, and an exceptional workplace culture."

Dr. Swenson has two children, and in his free time, he enjoys traveling, hiking, and spending time on Minnesota lakes.

Dr. Swenson will be seeing patients in Lakewood's Staples clinic starting Sept. 6.

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Chelsey Perkins / Brainerd Dispatch
One of several studios within a shared space, with each cubicle featuring its own sink in a former science room is seen July 7, 2022, in Franklin Arts Center in Brainerd.

to personalize their credit cards at Card.com, including a sloth, tree frog, buffalo and great-horned owl. For those wishing to emulate Miller's brightly hued creations, 11 paintings became Craft-Ease Paint by Numbers kits, including some of her most frequent subjects — dogs and horses.

In-person instruction on blank canvases — in her Franklin studio, of course — is something Miller hopes to offer down the road.

"A lot of people don't understand how to work with acrylics real well, so that's probably what I would do is teach how to work with acrylic and also teach how to paint more abstraction in your work," Miller said. "I'm not a realistic painter. I don't pretend to be."

While Miller dwells in the abstract, Bradford Folta Jr. deals in hyper-realistic detail in his corner of Franklin. Folta is the founder of Honeybadger Analytics, a company focused on locational analytics and geomatics. Practically speaking, this means Folta partners with small governments, municipalities, businesses and utilities to help them run more efficient systems. The city of Detroit Lakes is one client, and Folta took information already available to create an intricate map of the city's water infrastructure.

On the geomatics end, Folta uses scanning technology and other methods to collect data and recreate buildings and more from the ground up — every angle, every texture. He's completed scans of the entire Franklin building, for instance, along with

the Northern Pacific Center, the finished product of which has been used to show potential vendors the space from afar.

"We could map Brainerd in 3-D and then drop it into our VR headset and do a walk-through and understand and see every sign," Folta said. "If you were standing out on the lawn, we could see you and measure how tall you were to about a millimeter."

To the uninitiated, it might seem like this line of work leaves little room for creativity. Folta views it much differently, emphasizing he believes after two decades of this kind of mapping technology, the surface is only just scratched.

"This is the thing that is running dispatch systems for the county. It's the thing that drives our society, it's Google Maps in the

background, right?" Folta said. "... Why don't we use it more to do our demographics or our crime analysis? Or why is Brainerd making a significantly less ... median income than Baxter? Like, what is that disparity? What is that difference? How do we bridge that gap?"

Folta said people in the field tend to be narrowly focused on their own corner of the world, like police data or environmental data. But he sees potential in those different areas joining forces to build systems of all kinds that work for everybody.

This is the reason Folta rented a second space in Franklin to open the Minnesota Geospatial & Geomatics Institute. Once ready, the institute will offer a certificate program to train people in the fields, with an emphasis on how to convey the gathered

information. The act of making places safer and more accessible is also the realm of Jane Hampton and her team at Accessibility Design. The 30-year-old business modifies about 230 homes each year in Minnesota and Wisconsin, making it easier and more comfortable for people with disabilities or senior citizens to live where they'd like.

"It's really nice to see people kind of light up when they realize what we can do for them, you know, as far as making their home situation where they spend most of their time a lot more conducive to them," said Joe Drew, access designer.

In Franklin for about six years, the business consolidated into one space during the COVID-19 restrictions and expanded its footprint.

Helping people live better lives in their houses in the wake of the pandemic — which normalized work-from-home situations in a way like never before in the United States — is particularly rewarding, Hampton said.

"We've been talking about telecommuting for years, because if the person who has a physical challenge doesn't have to go work, they can be at home and be very proficient in computers and, you know, all sorts of things," Hampton said. "We have one client that was on a sip-and-puff (for people without the use of their hands) and he does accounting. I mean, amazing. Now with COVID, people understand that more."

Hampton said people with architectural design brains not only want to be creative, but they must be. A community

of other creative thinkers is a natural place for the organization to thrive.

"We can't do cookie cutters. So this is a creative environment on all different levels," Hampton said. "And there's another common thread of not only are we taking our creativity through the drafting table — or the computer now — to our individuals, but if you look closely, everybody in here, for the most part ... have an outreach experience."

"Their creativity is something that is helping others. And so we vibrate with them as well on that level. ... It's a lovely community, and Julie (Vreeland) does a fantastic job. So I'm glad you're here spreading the word."

Chelsey Perkins, community editor, may be reached at 218-855-5874 or chelsey.perkins@brainerddispatch.com. Follow on Twitter at twitter.com/DispatchChelsey.

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