

Rails End Gallery and Arts Centre

October 1, 2020

Annual message to our Members from the Executive Director/Curator

The year leading up to March 2020 seems like ancient history as I write this report for the Annual General Meeting of Rails End Gallery and Arts Centre for the year ending March 31, 2020; I call it the pandemic effect! Problems like a surprise lift breakdown, the air conditioning failure a few days before Haliburton Art and Craft Festival, near washout of Trash N Treasures seem inconsequential in light of the current year. But isn't it lovely to cast our minds back over 2019-20, a year highlighted by excellent local artist shows, growth in support from the business community, an uptick on our social media accounts and wonderful shared experiences of both art and music?

In The Gallery Shop

Last year we saw a steady climb in both artist members and sales volume. Visitors are quick to notice the variety and quality of work we carry, so thank you to all the artists who help us enrich the lives of so many travelers and local residents with their gorgeous work!

Bringing art to life

Our mission is to provide opportunities for everyone to engage with the creative arts and I just love the comment from a visitor who wrote "This small gallery punches above its weight" in a TripAdvisor review. Yes, we do! Haliburton High students brought us "Out of Focus" early in the year, followed by Laurie O'Reilly's "Earthscapes", a daring exhibition that found an appreciative audience for art that communicated big ideas about the Earth and humankind. "BIRD", our fall show featured works by digital artist June Krisko and wood sculptor, Greg Gillespie as well as an illustrated Artist Talk to a packed room. Then came winter - The Rails End Ukuladies Carol Singalong, holiday shopping followed by an end of fall term pop-up from HHSS and the Rails End Members Salon "WATER". Quick to adapt to COVID19 restrictions we took the People's Choice Award "social" and held our first online poll. Congratulations to the winner Janet Trull for "Water's Edge". Plans are afoot for more online exhibitions in 2021.

Woven between exhibition threads we presented concerts by Nic Russel and Friends, Trina West and Albert John Saxby, an indoor Trash N Treasure preview and sale, maker workshops, ukulele practices, community drum circles, books on film meet ups, knitting circles, even a bit of day time disco - did I miss anything?

Support is key to our success

We are lucky to have such a versatile space to work with and the stewardship of Haliburton's landmark rail station is one of our important tasks as an organization. In the spring *Pine Reflections*, of Carnarvon, generously provided the garden Volunteers with some advice, plants and mulch resulting in a fine display! It's been a pleasure to share our outdoor spaces with the community this past summer and enjoy the renaissance of Head Lake Park as a people place! We have a growing number of individual donors adding Rails End to their annual charitable giving plan and I can't help but think this is as much due to the power of community art as the indomitable spirit of our volunteer community and staff.

Events are us

Our events rank high among the best offerings of summer in the Haliburton Highlands. Haliburton Art and Craft 2019 just keeps getting better and better according to patrons, artists and our volunteers. While Trash N Treasures, that friendly frenzy in the park, and the happy harmonies of Haliburton DrumFest now bookend peak cottage season! (Check out our blog posts for event pictures and stories to see why next time you are on the Rails End website.) The BIA and Haliburton County Chamber of Commerce appreciate Rails End's value to the tourism economy. A member of both organizations, we are a cultural destination for all and a source of civic pride. The financial support Rails End receives from Dysart et al in the past, and looking ahead, is tangible evidence of the township's commitment to cultural resource planning, itself a key component of economic development. It's plain to see Rails End Gallery and Arts Centre is an important part the Dysart et al vision to be a vibrant community in which to live, work and play.

Thank you

Thank you to the Board of Directors for its dedication to purpose, to our Volunteers and the Membership for their unflagging support, to Michelle St. Pierre, Administrative Assistant, for being the yin to my yang and to the

wonderful arts community I am so lucky to be part of. We are six months into the current year, in the middle of a predicament none of us could have foreseen and yet I feel oddly optimistic. The motto of Dysart et al has never seemed more appropriate than today and so, in closing, I remind you of it as we go forward...

"Confidently yet cautiously" yours,

Laurie Jones