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Todd Messier, Chair
Sean Butler, Vice Chair
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Antonia Conti
Marie Gallo-Hall
Jillian Miner

Wendy L. Rubin, Parks &
Recreation Director
wrubin@coventryct.org
(860) 742-4068
www.coventryrec.com

Economic Development Commission

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Barbara J. Barry
Timothy Liptrap
Carol Polsky
Mark Lavitt
Samuel P. Belsito

Eric Trott, Director of
Planning & Development
etrott@coventryct.org
(860) 742-4062
www.coventryct.org

Coventry Arts Guild Board of Directors

President, Justin Trzaskos
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The Arts in Coventry *Blending Tradition with Tomorrow*



Cultural Arts Strategic Action Plan

Arts As A Catalyst to Placemaking

- May 2016 -

**Funded by the Town of Coventry and the State of Connecticut
Department of Economic & Community Development**



History of the Arts in Coventry



Coventry, CT has a long tradition of artists, performers and authors who have spent part of their lives in town.

Pictured on the left is a portrait by **Benoni Irwin**, a significant portrait artist, who had a second home in Coventry until the late 1890's.

Below that is an image by Coventry born **George N. Barnard**, a well known photographer of the American Civil War.



Coventry has a rich musical character going back to the time of the Artists' Colony around the lake, and popular music of **1930s songwriter Hank Keene**. In the 1980s and 90s, The Coventry Arts Commission hosted a monthly Coffee House series along with the summer event **The Lake Wangum-baug Folk Revival**.

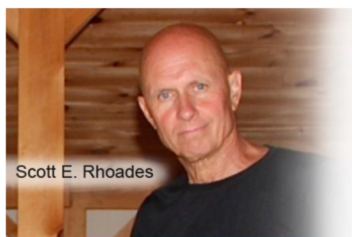
Coventry has a wealth of musicians of all genres, including former CT State Troubadour, singer/songwriter Hugh Blumenfeld.

*"Art is the
signature of
civilizations"*
- Beverly Sills

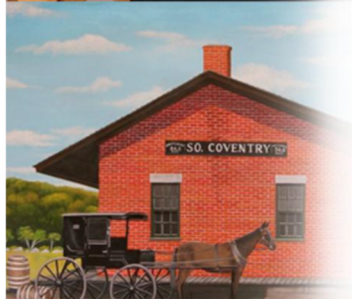




Bill Hoffman



Scott E. Rhoades



Kathleen Lepak



Richard White



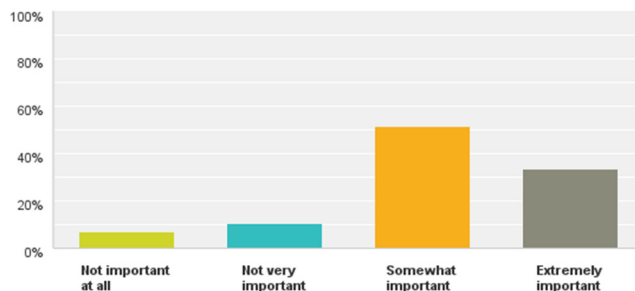
Cultural Arts Survey

A Cultural Arts Survey of the Town of Coventry was conducted by the Economic Development Commission in April 2014. The report summarized...

"Public input has reinforced our belief that cultural organizations create many opportunities for citizens to experience and learn about the arts."

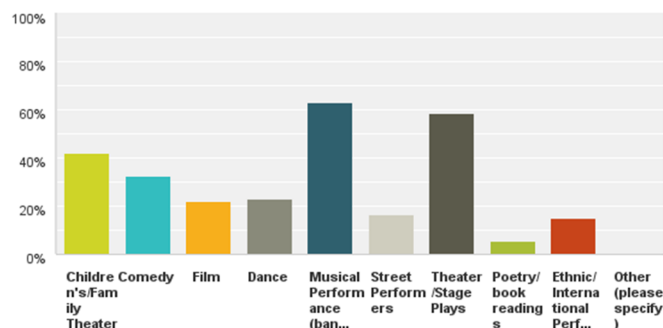
Q10 Do you believe it is important that town government financially support arts and cultural activities in Coventry?

Answered: 146 Skipped: 2



Q5 Which performing arts offerings are most important to you? Choose up to three.

Answered: 145 Skipped: 3



A New Chapter—The Arts Guild begins....

The Town of Coventry received a grant from The State of Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development Office of the Arts to create a strategic action plan to support the cultural arts and to ensure the ongoing presence and involvement of the arts within our community.

This program allowed the Town of Coventry to assume a leadership role in coordinating and facilitating sustained involvement in and support for the cultural arts by educating, enhancing, and promoting diverse art opportunities for Coventry.

Director of Planning and Development, Eric Trott and Wendy Rubin, Parks & Recreation Director, were instrumental in assembling a collaborative of town leadership, area artists, and members of the general public to create a Strategic Action Plan to enhance Coventry's cultural and artistic experiences.

Public Forums

A State Peer Advisor, Barbara Ally, was invited to mentor and facilitate strategic planning. Barbara has been in Arts Administration for over twenty years and has vast experience working with arts and community organizations.

A total of four public meetings were held to gain insight from the community on how to better support the cultural arts. These forums served as the impetus for the formation of the Coventry Arts Guild.



The work done in the four public meeting sessions under Barbara's guidance created the foundation for this plan. The purpose of this plan is to identify strategies and create mechanisms to ensure the ongoing presence and involvement of the arts resources.

Since the grant was received, the town's Economic Development Commission, Recreation Commission, Town Council and over 75 Coventry residents have been involved in the inception of what is now known as the Coventry Arts Guild.

During the open meetings, under the guidance of the State Peer Advisor, the Arts Community took stock of their strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats to develop a Strategic Action Plan for the newly developed Coventry Arts Guild. The Guild was formed and developed, and the group developed mission and vision statements.

The Guild Takes Stock

Opportunities

- Drama
- Dance for adults and/or performances
- Trendy things for 13– 21 year olds
- Grants and/or corporate funding
- Establish Community Art Guild
- Use of existing facilities in town
- Target market, i.e. mature and/or retirees
- More formal coordination efforts
- Connecticut Arts Commission
- Library facility
- Community centered planning

Strengths

- Music opportunities (Concerts, High School Music Program)
- Many local artists in the community
- Strong community interest in the arts
- Strong school program in the arts
- Good cooperation among municipal departments
- Commitment to history & tradition
- Successful concert series
- High School auditorium availability
- Town Green availability
- Library building expansion project being considered
- Growing market for the arts
- Strong volunteer base
- Within a bus ride to many cultural events & activities

Calling All Coventry Artists and Anyone Interested in the Arts!

- Meet other artists
- Find ways to expand your art or arts-related business
- Support the arts in town
- Participate in the development of a Strategic Plan

Please join us: **Tuesday, April 28th - 7:00 PM**
Town Hall Annex
1712 Main Street

The Town of Coventry received a grant from the State of CT Department of Economic and Community Development – Office of the Arts to work with a professional consultant and develop a plan to support the cultural arts in Coventry. This will be the first of two community forums to gain input and share ideas.

Please contact Eric M. Trott, Director of Planning and Development (etrott@coventryct.org) – 860-742-4062 or Wendy Rubin, Parks and Recreation Director (wrubin@coventryct.org) – 860-742-4068 if you have any questions.



Looking to the Future

Challenges

- Identifying a dedicated home/office space for the Guild
- Funding/Fundraising- The need for working capital for general operating and event support
- Getting more artists involved and becoming members
- Promotion to the general public about the cultural arts community in Coventry
- Involvement of the arts community with the Guild
- Increasing involvement and having the necessary help to manage all that needs to be done in the running of the Guild
- Continue to define roles and delegate responsibilities
- Many great ideas have been presented, needing follow through to make the ideas come to fruition

Successes

- Held an art exhibition at the Booth & Dimock library with 40 entries
- A Coventry Arts Guild logo was designed and adopted
- The directory of Coventry artists was started
- A Facebook page and website URL has been created for the Guild
- The first Guild membership dues were received
- A PowerPoint presentation of the Guild's progress was created
- Justin Trzaskos, the Guild's chairman, made presentation to the Town Council, Economic Development Commission, and Parks and Recreation Commission
- Promotion and involvement of the Guild has begun at the Coventry Farmers Market
- An Artist email list was developed
- The Guild developed a 2016 calendar and are currently developing a membership plan
- Plans are underway for an Arts in the Park event in September 2016.
- Guild by-laws were created and 501 (c3) non-profit status is being pursued

One goal of the grant was for the Parks and Recreation Commission to better define how to best represent the arts within the structure of their Commission, having inherited that role when the original Arts Commission disbanded in 1995. In doing this they set forth the following six goals:

Coventry Recreation Commission Goals

- Goal 1:** Reorganize and expand the Commission to garner additional input and support.
- Goal 2:** Enhance coordination and communication efforts among various community groups and residents overall.
- Goal 3:** Encourage and support new and existing organizations, activities, and events.
- Goal 4:** Seek alternative and innovative sources of funding for the arts.
- Goal 5:** Create and expand spaces/places for the arts through use of existing facilities, nontraditional facilities, and construction.
- Goal 6:** Encourage and support the initiation of cultural art opportunities not currently available to residents which will help the Commission fulfill its goals.

As the Coventry Arts Guild was developed they adopted a Strategic Action Plan with the following 6 goals, mission and vision:

Coventry Arts Guild Goals

- Goal 1:** Increase communication and awareness of the arts among Coventry artists
- Goal 2:** Increase general public's awareness of the arts in Coventry
- Goal 3:** Identification of venues and artist workspaces
- Goal 4:** Exploration of expanding town wide arts events
- Goal 5:** Form a group to spearhead identified initiatives
- Goal 6:** Explore funding opportunities for artists, organizations, and programs, as well as funding for participation in arts programs and events

MISSION

To create dedicated art spaces and events, as well as opportunities for artists to showcase and sell their work. Guild activities aim to promote, encourage and inspire the recognition of local artists, thereby bolstering economic development amongst local artists and providing a cultural service.

VISION

To become a primary resource for the diverse artistic community of Coventry educational institutions, organizations and the general public.

MOVING FORWARD

This is a plan that will continually strengthen culture and creativity, and increase their impact on our region's viability and prosperity. The Parks and Recreation Commission has invited the Guild to participate with them and to continue communication and collaboration. The extraordinary partnership between the Town and the Arts Guild is meaningful and significant in ensuring a vibrant arts future.

Guided by this document, and in partnership with those who share a commitment to the vitality of our community, Coventry will become more widely known as a community that is creative by nature, where art, beauty, inspiration and ideas are experienced, shared and celebrated. Working together, to become a culturally vibrant community and an asset to the region's vitality.

Let's create a vibrant future together. This is our plan, each of us plays a role that will enliven neighborhoods, boost creativity, strengthen our economy and enhance education.

We thank all who have contributed to this process. Now comes the best part, when we roll up our sleeves, work together and give this plan life.

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