

NEWAA Starts the New Year Strong

You should have heard by now that we're seeing more and more investment in the arts in the Fox Cities. Between the murals casting the alley walls of Appleton and the fleet of pop-up galleries around the area, art is becoming recognized as a cornerstone of a creative, thriving community.

This grassroots movement has compounded, and we're starting to see organizations form to support our artistic endeavors. This year, we saw the uprising of a new arts organization, Northeast Wisconsin Arts Association, or NEWAA. Jean Detjen, the founder and executive director, formed the organization this year to continue the progress we've already made.

"This area has been through sort of an 'arts renaissance.' NEWAA comes in to bridge this creative economy with the public and support our local artistic talent," Jean said.



Part of NEWAA's mission is to bring visibility to the talent in Northeast Wisconsin. One way the organization accomplishes this is through its artist listings online, where it houses a directory of talent in 28 different categories.

"Say an event planner is looking for a live painter for an event. She can go online and search the category to

find an available artist and make a connection," Jean explained.

The website also features arts organizations, supporting businesses, and arts patrons from 18 Wisconsin counties. NEWAA also sponsors pop-up galleries and events bringing together different artists for new public exhibits.

"People are moving here for our culture now. They're using their hobbies and passions as a way to connect with a new community and have fun. There's no better investment, then, for attracting people to live here than investing in our arts," she explained.

NEWAA will be hosting its first open house this month on January 20th on the first floor of Foxley's Gallery in Appleton. The new exhibit space allows for NEWAA to put work on display full-time, and serve as a meeting space for artists and the community.

"We are so thrilled about having our headquarters at Foxley's Gallery. It's allowing us to add depth to our role as resource providers and liaisons to help artists thrive," Jean said.

"Art is at the core of our primal, ancient, human instinct. Our hopes, dreams, yearnings, imaginations, and pain and suffering connect with art on all levels," she reflected.

NEWAA steps in to feed the growing creative economy so we can surround ourselves with more relatable, connective spaces. They also raise their hands as advocates for social justice and



collaboration for all of humanity.

"Art can be a way to connect beyond the politics. It takes away the clutter and brings connection," she explained.

Jean testified at an Assembly Committee hearing in Madison last October to advocate for more arts funding and creative economy development initiative grants in Wisconsin. If it goes through, it would be the first increase in arts funding in 20 years.

To learn more about NEWAA and its events, artist listings and gallery, visit www.newwisconsinarts.org. The organization is quite active on Facebook, and will provide news and updates on events, artists, and state of the arts in our community and Wisconsin. Visit its ongoing exhibit in Foxley's Gallery at 623 W. College Avenue in Appleton.

Want to learn more about our local art scene? Check out next month's edition of Appleton Monthly: The Arts Issue!

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