

Creating Our Cultural Hub

New Barrington Cultural Commission Aims to Enhance Barrington's Reputation for the Arts

WHEN BARRINGTON WAS FOUNDED IN 1865, there was no way to guess that the town would be blessed with so many talented artists and citizens who enthusiastically love music, arts and literature.

But it has. Now that cultural sensibility has fully blossomed and no matter which art it is, such experiences represent an integral benefit that comes from living here and being part of this community.

Now comes the next logical step. Barrington's culture embodies what more people should be aware of and the Barrington Cultural Commission was established in August 2009 to unify the arts into a cultural garden.

The commission will do more, reach more people, create more.

The commission's mission is to "position Barrington as a cultural hub" and that will mean not only stimulating cultural activities including art, music and more, but also ensuring the public is aware of them, and has a way to actively support them.

As in many cities and towns across America, a community's culture is often appreciated best by those directly involved in such efforts. A primary goal, therefore, is to widen everyone's levels of interest.

"There's a tremendous amount of enthusiasm, if not talent, for the arts throughout this community," commission chairman David Nelson said. "However, it's our view that they're disconnected. They're dispersed by their separate pockets of interests and, too often, appreciated only by those people with similar interests. What we aim to do is pull these many pockets of culture together in a coherent piece that our entire community can sample, become more familiar with, appreciate and truly enjoy."

The hope, too, is that the new commission – which will be privately funded – will be the catalyst

for culture here by helping plan, organize and maintain an active calendar of events that the community at-large can support and enjoy all year long. This means the commission will help attract, implement and publicize a series of events that will primarily include art festivals, theater and music. This means reaching out to all arts, humanities and other cultural organizations throughout the community as well as encouraging new organizations to take root.

"Barrington has a heart and one of the most active volunteer ethics in the state," commission member Norval Stephens said. "We started the Barrington Area Community Foundation to provide seed money to address unmet needs. What we need are events and activities that stimulate thought, bring in art, and provide speakers and other cultural events that feed the mind, the eye and the ear."

Stephens also noted how the Barrington High School choral program's madrigal singers won an international trophy in Italy two years ago and the Historical Society has brought exhibits to our town that much larger cities would envy.

"As the Cultural Commission grows, we will attract the interest, the support and the funds to

do some very special events. This will add to the sense of volunteerism, the sense of heart we now have with United Way and the Community Foundation," Stephens added.

Thus far the commission has become involved in the "Love, Barrington" Family Fun Fest event through the Barrington Park District in February and has been very active in planning the Barrington Art Festival Memorial Day weekend. The new Art Festival has become a highly anticipated event as it will, for the first time, bring 140 juried artists to downtown Barrington – they will be organized along Cook and Station streets from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on May 29 and 30.

"Overall, I see the Barrington Cultural Commission as a way to make the most of, if not more of, what we have," Village President Karen Darch said. "We've always had a good reputation, but with the Commission we'll be able to talk to each other more, manage calendars better and even cross-promote these activities. All in all, this will be very good for Barrington today and well into the future." U

Gary Schmitz is a Barrington resident and member of the Barrington Cultural Commission.

The Barrington Cultural Commission welcomes your suggestions and feedback. Here is a list of its founding members.

Committee co-chairs are: Susan McConnell, Dee Dee Gallagher-Johnson, and David Nelson.

Members are: Peg Blanchard, Peggy Crawford, Karen Darch, Kim Duchossois, Anne Garrette, Michael Harkins, Linda Hovde, Donna Jung, Mary Klest, Jeff Lawler, Joyce Palmquist, Detlev Pansch, Susan Russo, Julie Salk, Jack Schaefer, Gary Schmitz, Patty Dowd Schmitz, Freddie Smith Pederson, Lisa Stamos, Norval Stephens, Tamara Tabel, Nancie Tobison, and Kathy Umlauf.

For more information, please call the Village of Barrington at 847-304-3479 or visit www.barrington-il.gov.