

Creative juices were flowing at arts information session

by Karen Longwell

MUSKOKA – Muskoka is now officially a designated arts community, but how do we let the world know about it?

A brainstorming and information session at Rene M. Caisse Theatre on March 2, coupled with the unveiling of the Designated Arts Community logo, brought in representatives from the arts, government and business community, said Arts Council of Muskoka co-ordinator Tamsen Tillson. The Arts Council of Muskoka (ACoM) organized the event to solicit input on a co-operative advertising campaign and the new arts directory of Muskoka.

The directory will list information for all of the arts, including visual and performing artists, theatres, festivals and others in Muskoka.

With the manufacturing sector on a downslope, there seems to be no better time to focus on the arts as one of the driving forces of our economy, said Christopher Thorpe, general manager, Muskoka Community Futures Development Corporation.

“The growth in the arts, the cultural sector, the knowledge-based economy is really going to be the saving grace ... if we can in one way or another help to stimulate that, we will,” said Thorpe.

He said the designation could have a lasting impact on the community.

“I think you are going to find, because of this, more people participating in the arts and gaining access to them, and I think you are also going to find that other people will wish to locate here to become part of this wonderful community.”

In April, Muskoka Arts and Crafts Inc. (MAC) approached the district to have Muskoka designated as an arts community, said Kryisia Bower, ACoM chair.

“Muskoka Arts and Crafts has, with this initiative, brought attention and recognition of one of the

major resources here in Muskoka — the arts in all its forms,” said Bower.

MAC was inspired to pursue an arts designation when members heard of a similar initiative in Warkworth, Ontario, said Elene Freer, Chapel Gallery curator.

“We thought if they could do it in a small town, we could surely do it for Muskoka,” said Freer.

Freer unveiled the designated arts community logo, which was designed by Carolyn Wagland, with Gravity Art and Design based in Huntsville.

The logo will remain in the public domain and appear on promotional material, said Freer. Organizations are free to use the logo to promote Muskoka as an arts community.

In addition to the logo, Wagland also created the arts directory through free database software called Joomla, which is used for non-profit groups.

The directory will be free and available for the entire arts community in Muskoka.



Those gathered provided input on categories and what the directory should be called, said Tillson.

Tillson said the directory is still in its beginning stages, but should be online soon.

Both the directory and advertising campaign are part of an open process and the public is encouraged to provide input.

For more information on the directory or collaborative advertising campaign contact the Arts Council of Muskoka at 645-5225 or email info@artscouncilofmuskoka.com.



ARTS COMMUNITY. Elene Freer, Muskoka Arts and Crafts Chapel Gallery curator, unveils the new logo promoting Muskoka's arts community designation. (Photo by Karen Longwell)

Hospital still restricting visitation

by Matthew Sittler

BRACEBRIDGE – Visiting restrictions at South Muskoka Memorial Hospital (SMMH) remain in effect this weekend to prevent the further transmission of a gastroenteritis outbreak that's affected patients and staff.

Outpatient services including day surgery continue to operate as usual. The hospital advises that any booked appointments should be rescheduled by calling the hospital.

“Gastroenteritis is currently prevalent in the community and the number of patients and staff with symptoms has led us to make the decision to restrict visiting both for the safety of other patients, staff and

the community,” said SMMH chief nursing officer Bev McFarlane. “Anyone experiencing symptoms of diarrhea, vomiting or nausea should try to isolate themselves from others as much as possible and pay special attention to good hand washing.”

As of Wednesday, 15 patients in the hospital's north wing and 10 hospital staff had been affected. On the upside, McFarlane said that as of Wednesday, there had been no new cases reported during the previous two days.

Visiting hours will be reassessed on Monday. “People obviously get upset when they can't go in and see a loved one, but the restrictions are for everybody's best interests,” said McFarlane.

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