

Fishtrap finding a home on Main Street

By Katy Nesbitt
Go! Magazine

ENTERPRISE — Fishtrap, steward of Wallowa County's literary arts for 35 years, will soon be moving into its new headquarters on Enterprise's Main Street.

The former Lear's Grill in the Bowlby Building is under the final stages of renovation and soon a kitchen/conference room, office and event space will serve Fishtrap's staff and guests.

Shannon McNerney, Fishtrap's executive director, said the nearly 1,500 square foot event space that takes up much of the former Lear's dining room will be used to host popular Fishtrap events like The Big Read, Winter Fishtrap and the monthly Fishtrap Fireside series featuring local writers. Local community organizations will be invited to



Katy Nesbitt/Go! Magazine

Fishtrap's new home will be in the Bowlby Building on Main Street in Enterprise.

use the space, McNerney said, for anything from music to lectures to fundraisers.

"We want to make it available to area nonprofits and organizations, as well," McNerney said.

Wallowa Valley Music Alliance is considering using the space for

Tunesmith, its monthly songwriter showcase event and the MidValley Theater could be using it soon for a rehearsal space.

The room holds 100 people seated and is designed for maximum flexibility, McNerney said. The room's stage, which mea-

sures 12 feet by 8 feet, will fold up against the wall like a Murphy bed to save room when it isn't needed. The room is being wired for sound and will have two 65-inch televisions for streaming events or movie nights and the walls will be lined with bookshelves.

"We designed it considering how we are going to use it in the future as needs and technology changes," she said.

As for accessibility, McNerney said the entrance is level from the city sidewalk and the bathrooms are ADA compliant.

Beyond the event room is a large kitchen with a conference table for meetings, classes and workshops.

Adjacent to the event room is a walled-in former alley between Fishtrap's new home in the Bowlby Building and Friend's Restaurant. Once home to a barber shop, the narrow room — walled with brick and Bowlby stone or volcanic tuff — will be the shared office space. McNerney said the staff hasn't all worked in the same building for two years. When the office space is ready for desks, chairs and computers, some will continue to work from home while others may work flex schedules.

The COVID-19 pandemic changed how Fishtrap conducted business in many ways besides remote working — events moved online and the fabled Coffin House on Grant Street wasn't bustling with day-to-day operations or weekly events. The aging facility needed a lot of attention and Fishtrap's programming was outgrowing it. McNerney said with the booming real estate market in 2021, it was decided to put it on the market. It sold within a month to a family who converted the historic house back into home.

The proceeds from the sale, McNerney said, are saved to keep Fishtrap around for at least another 35 years. As of April 1, Fishtrap will lease its new space from Bill Warnock and Michele Starr who are overseeing the remodel. The added amenities, like the sound system, furniture, kitchen appliances and technology are being funded through grants and fundraising.

"We've raised \$40,000 and plan to raise another \$15 to \$20,000," McNerney said.

Fishtrap's staff hope to be using the space by early April, McNerney said, with a grand opening scheduled for May 19.

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