

FRIENDS OF THE FEC

100 members of nonprofit group raise money, awareness for iconic Florence landmark

BY JACK DAVIS
Siuslaw News

Before there was a Florence Events Center (FEC), the nonprofit organization Friends of the FEC (FFEC) was hard at work raising money and awareness for the proposed Florence All Events Center.

FFEC members have worn many hats over the years, including fundraisers, ambassadors and volunteer stage crew workers. They usher during performances, take tickets, work in the office, help with venue set up and tear down and even operate stage lighting.

Currently there are about 100 members of the FFEC.

One of the first projects the Friends undertook in 1996 was to promote a children's music festival for the newly opened events center.

Current FFEC President Margaret McDiarmid said, "Early on, in 1996, Hal Weiner started putting on a Children's Music Festival in January when there was little else going on in the middle of the winter and he found that more and more children were not being exposed to music. Then when school budgets got tight, and much of the music program went away, it became more important."

The Children's Music Festival evolved into the Winter Folk Festival and as of last year became the Winter Music Festival, the FEC's largest event of the year. The common thread throughout the 20-year history of this event is the focus on providing Siuslaw Elementary School students with free performances and exposure to a variety of musical venues.

The winter Music Festival does turn a profit according to McDiarmid, but the FEC is still in need of funds to help with equipment and upgrades.

"There are certain things we need, like tables, computers, projectors and, in my view, most definitely LED lights on the stage. Many of the lights I work were there in 1996 and they



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Friends of the Florence Events Center board of directors, from left, Treasurer Bonnie McDuffie, Vice President Ken Janowski, President Margaret McDiarmid and Secretary Maire Testa

were secondhand then. It's time for a change," McDiarmid said.

In addition to being president of FFEC, McDiarmid has been a volunteer lighting operator since 1996.

"The gentleman who taught me lighting, when Florence was a little smaller than it is now, warned me never to put on every light I had because I could 'brown out' Florence," she said. "That's how much electricity we use. Our electric bill is horrendous."

One of the FFEC's earliest and most effective fundraising efforts was the Community Brick Campaign, began in 1996. The campaign sold almost 1,000 bricks over the years at \$100 each.

The pot was sweetened when the Meyer Memorial Trust offered a matching grant.

The campaign was recently suspended, but McDiarmid said the brick sales will start up again in a year or two. The bricks are on display, set into two grids on either side of the main entrance.

In addition to the winter Music Festival, the FFEC sponsors or co-sponsors several other events like Oktoberfest on Oct. 1, Chad and Jeremy on Oct. 29 and Pink Martini on Nov. 18.

FFEC has worked to bring local art to the FEC with a gallery showing that features local artists. The gallery is currently showing 25 oil paintings by local

artist Kat Deuter.

FFEC Treasurer Bonnie McDuffie said, "We have an art competition coming up called Artistic Visions, which is a juried art show in two-dimensional art, three-dimensional

art and photography, in October and November. The last show like this featured over 100 pieces of art."

Moving forward, the FFEC is looking for additional volunteers.

"We find ourselves in the same position as all volunteer organizations in town," McDiarmid said. "We need volunteers at every level of the organization."

McDuffie said, "Setup and tear-down is probably where there is the biggest need for volunteers right now. That's when we need the bulk and the muscle."

McDiarmid said at least two volunteers on the set up and tear down crew are more than 80 years old.

FFEC is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization with a four member board.

For more information about Friends of the FEC, call 541-997-1994.

Congratulations to the FEC for 20 years and FRAA's successful partnership with Art events.

Join FRAA and the FEC on December 2nd and 3rd for this year's Holiday Arts Festival.

Visit FRAA to learn more about our Arts education classes for adults and youth in both the visual arts and spoken word.

Florence Regional Arts Alliance
www.facebook.com/FlorenceRegionalArtsAlliance
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Florence Regional Arts Alliance Presents:



SPOKEN WORD POETRY CONTEST - 6 pm
PRIZES: \$500, \$250, \$100

Original poems... 3 minute time limit... \$15 entry fee. Limited to 40. Register online. General Admission-\$10

YOUTH POETRY CONTEST - 2 pm
(18 and under) \$5 entry fee
Prizes: \$100, \$50, \$25

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