

Lane Arts Council begins Arts & Culture Roundtables

EUGENE—Lane Arts Council and community partners are hosting a series of Arts & Culture Roundtables — community conversations addressing diversity, equity and inclusion in the local arts community, with a focus on racial justice.

The first two virtual conversations will be held Thursday, May 6, and Thursday, May 20, from 5 to 7 p.m. Facilitators Ritu Roy and Eric Braman will guide these conversations to better understand and acknowledge the inequalities that exist in Lane County's arts community.

The arts are an integral and powerful tool in helping communities reflect, grow, and heal, but first, we need to examine how our local arts community excludes some of the most relevant voices of our time. The first two community-guided conversations will:

- Take an honest look at the issues and challenges in

our own arts communities

- Identify strategies to improve equity, accessibility, and representation in our own practices, programs, operations, and organizational cultures
- Recognize gaps and identify existing resources and support for artists and arts professionals
- Cultivate space for the voices of black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) and other underrepresented community members to be heard

Following dates will be influenced by the needs that arise from these initial conversations.

The roundtables are free and open to all with registration on Lane Arts Council's website, www.lanearts.org/roundtables.

Arts & Culture Roundtables are a partnership of Lane Arts Council, Arts & Business Alliance of Eugene, Florence Regional Arts Alliance, Minority Voices

Theatre and Wordcrafters in Eugene. The series of community conversations is sponsored by Springfield Arts Commission and Columbia Bank.

In 2020, Lane Arts Council and community partners began bringing together Lane County artists and arts administrators for facilitated conversations around the current issues impacting our arts community, and provide opportunities to share challenges, questions, ideas, and support. While previous roundtable conversations centered around the COVID-19 pandemic, we are shifting in 2021 to focus on equity and inclusion in the arts.

Lane Arts Council is a nonprofit that works to cultivate strong and creative arts communities. It provides high-quality arts experiences, engaging people of all ages in arts education and encouraging artistic endeavors.

Ceramics studio hosts annual Mother's Day sale

On Friday, May 7, and Saturday, May 8, for two days of Mother's Day weekend, local ceramic artist Mike Schwartz will once again host his annual sale at his Mudmusic Studio.

To assure health safety, this will be an outdoor sale with entry into his studio limited to two people at a time. Schwartz will be masking and asks all visitors to do the same.

"The current situation means everyone working together," he said. "The sale will be outdoors, rain or shine, so that social distancing may be maintained."

Since the weather may be uncertain, the sale will be set up at the front of his garage just behind the overhead door so that both visitors and art will be protected from the weather if necessary.

The artwork will be his unique signature pit-fired ceramic pieces. As the term implies, pit firing is an ancient process in which the pieces are not fired in a kiln, but rather in an open fire. No glazes are used; the dramat-

ic colors achieved are due to the interaction of fire and smoke working on salts and metals applied to the ceramics.

The pieces themselves are thrown by Schwartz on his potter's wheel, so each is a one-of-a-kind work of art.

A psychiatrist in his prior professional life, Schwartz moved to Florence in 1995 and learned to become a potter to fulfill his view of retirement.

Currently, Schwartz's work can be seen in five Oregon coast galleries, from Gardiner to Astoria. Locally, his work may be seen at the River Gallery on Bay Street year-round.

Preview his art at www.mudmusicstudio.com.

The two-day sale will be from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. each day. Mudmusic Studio is located at 04899 Heceta Beach Road, 1.3 miles from Highway 101.

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Of the remaining board members, SVFR Director Sam Spayd agreed with Farnsworth and both spoke in favor of moving monies to the accounts which paid the highest rate of return.

The funds being considered totaled nearly \$4 million, which the joint boards voted in favor of allocating after receiving a future formal resolution detailing the investments specifics at the next WLFEA meeting.

Next, WLFEA's plan to work with the Lane Council of Governments on the development of a strategic plan presented the first of a number of discussion points.

Farnsworth disagreed with Chief Schick's presentation, arguing that the joint boards had asked for a separate strategic plan for both organizations as opposed to the plan presented by Schick, which further consolidated emergency services moving forward.

"I am confused. I thought we were doing a Western Lane Ambulance District strategic plan and a Siuslaw Valley Fire and Rescue plan," said Farnsworth. "It looks like we dropped both of those in favor of a pre-determined, pre-imagined merger that looks more like a WLFEA strategic play. Are we going to publish a strategic plan that is unique to each agency?"

pen to share a business office. ... What I am seeing here in this document is the bias I have spoken about in the past, which shouldn't be here until the feasibility study is presented to the board. Instead, we have abandoned two separate and unique plans in favor of your dream and vision to merge the whole thing — lock, stock and barrel."

Schick spoke next, stating, "I think that is unfair and uncalled for, Director Farnsworth. I was brought in specifically to bring these agencies together. If the boards decide to go in a different direction, we go in a different direction. I have no say in the process. It is up to the board of directors. I was brought in to bring the agencies together and I will do that and until I am given different directions by the boards."

The Fire/EMS chief was hired in May 2019 to lead both districts.

At that point Webb stepped into the discussion, reminding the directors that Schick was doing what had been asked of him, i.e., to assist in determining if the process of merging the two entities should and could continue.

SVFR Director Ned Hickson followed up Webb's comments by pointing out there was an agreement and interest in pursuing a consolidation of services — as well as a potential merger if deemed feasible — that

started long before Schick was hired.

"I am a little surprised by the tone that I seem to be hearing in talking about a further consolidation of our services. This is something we began working towards before Chief Schick even came here, back when we hired Interim Chief Abel, with the intention assuring both our interim and permanent chiefs possessed the skill sets necessary to continue that direction," Hickson said.

The discussion then turned to a proposal for a public survey on the merger situation and the way questions were stated.

WLAD Director Cindy Russell stated she believed the words and concept of merging the two districts was overstated in the survey. Her comments were supported by the ambulance district board.

COVID protocols were next on the agenda and the boards agreed the safety of employees was of paramount importance as they approved and unanimously passed the Family First Coronavirus Response Act. The act was designed to provide additional support for WLFEA employees impacted by COVID by allowing for additional sick days in the event a member of either SVFR or WLAD has family members who become infected.

There were also a few tense moments around the

issue of PERS funding, as there was disagreement about the upcoming requirements for future PERS responsibilities.

Farnsworth and Schick again interpreted date-related to future expenditures differently, but the discussion eventually settled on a \$500,000 allocation for Capital Reserve funding.

As the meeting approached its finish, Schick presented a tentative plan to further the process of moving the two districts towards further consolidation, suggesting a further integration of emergency operations — not a full merger.

Staffing, operations, administration and budget expenses were areas where Schick suggested the integration could continue.

There was little discussion of Schick's final presentation, as the need for a clear strategic plan had become the path boards decided needed to be taken first.

The next WLFEA meeting is scheduled for May 27, beginning at 6 p.m.

All board meetings are available for viewing at www.svfr.com and westernlaneambulance.com.

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