

ACE celebrates 45 years in March

By Lisa Britton
Go! Magazine

LA GRANDE — Art Center East is celebrating its 45th birthday this month, but its roots lie with a different name.

The Eastern Oregon Regional Arts Council formed in 1977 to help disperse federal dollars to support the arts and support emerging art centers, such as Crow's Shadow in Pendleton and Fishtrap in Enterprise.

When the council disbanded, ArtsEast emerged to provide art services, in partnership with Eastern Oregon University, across a 10-county region. It was located on the campus of EOU and focused primarily on supporting art education in schools.

In 2015, ArtsEast merged with the Union County Arts & Culture Center to become Art Center East, located in the Carnegie

library building at 1006 Penn Ave. "I think it was a benefit to our community when that happened," said Nancy Knowles, ACE board president.

Combining the organizations also helped pool resources in Union County.

"(Before merging) they were vying for the same membership and same volunteers," said Darcy Dolge, ACE executive director.

Class offerings grew after the merger, and today ACE provides workshops in various art techniques, music lessons, drumming, community choirs and much more.

"We have such a giant roster of talented, creative people," Dolge said.

ACE also hosts shows in its galleries to showcase artists from around the region.

In a continuation from its ArtsEast days, ACE provides

art-related outreach as well with the AiRS program — Artists in Rural Schools. This program pairs teaching artists with schools around Eastern Oregon to enrich the regular art curriculum.

To see a full class schedule, or to view current art shows, visit artcentereast.org.

CELEBRATION

Although the official birthday is March 2, Art Center East is celebrating throughout the month with a membership drive, new merchandise commemorating the milestone and weekly promotions announced in its online newsletter (sign up at artcentereast.org/our-story/newsletter).

The various membership levels are listed online at artcentereast.org/membership. Members receive discounts in the ACE gift gallery, 20% off class fees, the Frequent Maker Program (spend \$200 on classes and get



River & Wave/Contributed image

Art Center East is located in the Carnegie Library building, 1006 Penn Ave. in La Grande.

\$25 off the next registration) and 15% off the purchase of The Crafter's Box.

For the Household level (\$50 per year) or higher, members receive a limited edition print. This tradition started in 2013 — Susan Murrell, associate professor of art at EOU, selects a print made by an EOU senior.

"Each time you renew your membership, you get a new print," Dolge said.

ACE is a nonprofit organization and depends on grants, memberships, business sponsorships and individual donations.

"We are very much a community-centered organization," Knowles said.

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