

Executive Director's Report

Respectfully submitted by Thomas Scurto-Davis, Executive Director on 11/29/18

New years begun, good results so far:

- **New Hire:** We've hired our new DFO. His name is **Joe Slater**, he comes to us out of a brief retirement, recognizing he still has more he'd like to contribute. He arrives at the Center a seasoned veteran of GAAP, having spent 16 years at the Curtis Institute as their Senior Director of Finance and before that as the Controller of the Philadelphia Orchestra. He has had his baptism by fire in that his third day was the first day of the audit, and he escaped his first finance committee meeting completely unscathed, so thank him when you see him.
- **JWCS Update:** Our Catherine School partnership is underway and we have just this moment received the matching funds from the Neubauer Family Foundation, ensuring the first year of the project is completely funded. In addition, we are still on track to receive \$20,000 in each of the next two years in EITC tax credits from Universal Health Services and rounding out that money for year two is \$5000 we've just received from the Dexter F. and Dorothy H. Baker Foundation (via a connection with former Board President, **Elaine Lisle**. So we've secured next year's funds and only need an additional \$5,000 to finish funding the third year of the project
- **Joe Slater** As most of you know the Opening of the Member's Exhibition was a smashing success. I heard not a single bad comment nor a single complaint from any members, but I did hear several, "this is the best Members' Show ever!" comments and have had several people actually thank me for honoring their work and taking such care in layout, hanging and lighting the show. But the credit is largely owed to our own **Paige** and **Suzanna Gold** (who runs the exhibition programs at NOBA in Bala). It was a joy to participate in the process and I think **Derek Gillman** (former CEO of the Barnes Foundation) made for a very impressive prize juror. Thanks to **Lisa Getz** for "getzing" Derek to participate! Of all the great things about it, I have to say my personal favorite was the huge shock expressed by the Community Award winner, Susan Clayman who was absolutely floored to win. This is the first time we asked the community to vote for their favorite work and to be able to share this award with the community was truly a blast. A final shout out goes to **Nathalie Wetzel** who generously provided this year's Best-in-Show award, the biggest it's ever been! If you haven't already bought something, please take another look around and see if there isn't a holiday present to yourself or for others that you may acquire. Remember, exhibitions income is important to the overall fiscal health of the organization!
- **Education Update: Ariel, Collin, the Registrars and Lisa** have all been working very hard to generate positive momentum in our Education programs. We've had more group visits from schools and elsewhere this year than ever before. Groups are taken on a tour of the galleries (there's even an art treasure hunt activity that lives at the front of the galleries that will rotate to match each exhibition). And I am happy to report that the tuition results show the efforts paying off. Both participation numbers and tuition revenues are up this year to date. Last year's total enrollment year to date was 990 registrations, this year so far, we've received 1550 registrations a growth of 33% or so. Tuition revenues this year are \$ 32,000 ahead of this same time last year (11/30) which is an increase of 17% and we are up \$22,000 over our budgeted tuition number YTD which represents 10% surplus over budget. When looking at overall operations, we are ahead of our net budget number YTD by 34%. While some of this is timing, these are all very encouraging numbers.
- **"Things we are grateful for":** Our calendar end annual appeal should have reached all of you by now, and we have been shocked by the very positive feedback we've heard in response to it. Some of the feedback includes descriptors like "Enchanting", "Filled with heart", "Very clever and sweet" our biggest critic said to Lisa, "I just wanted you to know the annual appeal was just perfect!" My favorite was **Judy Herman**, who called to tell me

she thinks it's the best annual appeal she's ever seen, and that's saying something given how many she's created. The credit for this idea goes to the **entire staff** who spend the better part of two lunch periods generating ideas which coalesced into this appeal and to each of them for hand drawing the illustrations, I am deeply grateful. Early results are positive about a week ago we had raised (from non-board individuals) more than \$3600 compared to just over \$1800 last year at the same time.

- **Kimco Mural Project:** But it can't all be great news, that's just not realistic! I am sorry to say the mural project at Suburban Square which had the potential of yielding about \$7,000 in net income and a fair bit more in public recognition, has hit a snag and likely won't happen in this fiscal year. Kimco realty had given us carte blanche to find two artists, pick the subject matter and propose two murals for their exterior walls, which we did. But upon proposing the two artists' work, the property Manager (who by the way was instrumental in getting support from "corporate" for Art in Action last year) decided that she needed to "run it up the flagpole." Evidently, she has yet to come down and I simply can't spend more time and organizational resources trying to nail them down. Between Ariel and me, we've spent about 20 hours on this and have nothing to show for it.
- **Surprise!:** But where there is rain, there may also be rainbows, right? So I am pleased to report that thanks to **Mort and Wendy Branzburg**, the Center is once again the recipient of a large grant (\$25,000) from the Delaware Valley Medical Center for our accessible art programs. One door closes, one
- **On the HR Front:** We've not had a great deal of success finding an appropriate match for our Institutional Giving Office position, however Pachy Banks has been doing a yeoman's job spearheading our grantwriting efforts since Allison's departure. We are meeting all our deadlines and even adding new foundations to our portfolio (see earlier about Baker Foundation) with some significant successes. Thus Pachy and I have been discussing how we might forgo the additional hire and restructure her position to be the only exclusive development position in the department. We're not there yet, and are still fielding resumes, but we are thinking (along with the other Directors) about what this might look like if we reimaged the development function at the Center.
- **Judy Herman** and I have begun to strategize about more actively pursuing legacy gifts for the Center's future. We met last night with Giulianna Calabi for about two hours. Giulianna is a long-time, significant supporter of the Center and we thought she would be a very good choice for our first conversation. We toured the galleries, gave her an update on all we are doing and the direction we are headed, and we asked her to consider her lifetime of support for the Center and what she might do to ensure its future. While we weren't after a direct answer to our request, we did want to plant the seed and see where the conversation might go. I am happy to report that she was very receptive, asking questions about how it would work and how legacy giving would be different from her annual giving (\$10K /ann). It was a productive conversation and I am encouraged that it may yield results down the road. If nothing else, it got the ball rolling, relieved the jitters associated with asking for significant gifts and helped Judy and I imagine how we might work off one another in future conversations.
- **Sink Hole:** Jim and I are still working to have the cause of the sinkhole more clearly identified before we attempt a repair. Unfortunately the time lag has caused a few problems resulting in a few cancelled class periods due to basement flooding. This is not a money issue, but rather reflects the difficulty in identifying a qualified company willing to show up and do the work.
- **Library Update:** In addition to the discussion about bequests with Giulianna, she is also going to donate a fair number of books to our library, and more and more students are donating every week. I have put the building of the book shelves out to bid and one of our great volunteers, **Jeffrey Kimsey-Carroll**, who also happens to build sets and other cabinetry for stages etc is working on a bid to build built in book shelves for the library. I expect we will have that bid in hand and begin construction of the shelves before the year is out.

- **GALA/Art in Action:** Unfortunately, Karen Lotman has backed out of being honored at this year's Art in Action fundraiser. However, **staff** has been working hard, in conjunction with event chair **Nathalie Wetzel** and a few committee members, to plan a great event honoring our teaching artists and accessible art program artists. I've been speaking with many teaching artists, asking if they would be willing to put two pieces in the show, one for sale on the walls and one donated piece to be entered into a silent auction to benefit the Center. I have been exceedingly please that everyone I've asked so far (about 10 artists) has said they'd be happy to, and one (**Bonnie Mettler**) has even offered to allow us to auction off her making a private portrait for one lucky winner! We are looking both for corporate support for the event and for auction items (experiences, vacation homes, concert tickets, private dinners, personal chef meals etc.) that can be paired with beautiful art and I encourage you to think deeply about what you might be able to obtain or offer for auction to make this event a success. Please let me know if you have something or have a great idea about a way you might help.
- **PAM show:** The professional artist member's show is next up. Please be sure to save the date of the opening and plan to attend with at least a few friends. The opening is Friday January 11th!
- **Strategic Planning:** As you all know from Jim's emails, the strategic planning consultants are now under contract and we have set up our first planning meeting to discuss the composition of the committee, the plan of action, schedule etc. That meeting is Dec 3rd, so expect further updates after that point.

Thanks for reading,

Thomas