



Jacoby Arts Center becoming hub of cultural activity for the region

By MELISSA MUSTAIN

For The Telegraph

ALTON — After an amazing transformation by a dedicated group of volunteers, the space once known as the Jacoby Furniture Store has become a jewel of an arts center for the community.

The Jacoby Arts Center's doors opened to the public on Sept. 18, 2004, and the growth and expansion continues to fuel the energy of those involved. It is the largest and most prominent of the undertakings of the Madison County Arts Council. The store was generously gifted to the Arts Council by the Jacoby family and now houses a community arts center including a beautiful gallery, education center and gift shop. The Arts Council and its supporters have already spent more than \$100,000 to convert the building into an arts center that one visitor said "rivals galleries in New York City."

During the first summer in the building, renovations included a new roof, and on the first floor, new plumbing and walls. The building has been made environmentally safe, fire alarms have been installed on all levels and the original floors have been revealed.

Classes continue to be offered for children and adults with opportunities to experience many different types of art media. New exhibits come into the gallery every six weeks.

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The current exhibit, running through the end of February, features seven area photographers' artistry and is quite amazing in technique and concept. The exhibit that opens March 4 will showcase the talents of local glass artists.

The next steps for expansion are in the works, but commitment from the community at large is needed. Completion of the gallery, updating the heating and cooling system, and creating the infrastructure required for expansion to the second and third floors are all a part of the strategic vision of the Madison County Arts Council for the Jacoby Arts Center. In order to expand the upper and lower floors of the building, the center needs a new elevator, a second stairwell and a sprinkler system. By expanding the usable space, the center will be able to expand its offerings.

It is the vision of the council to expand its activities throughout the center, offering the community opportunities to experience all the manifestations of the arts: visual, literary, music, theater and dance. A long-range goal is to expand its range of classes and programs over a wide variety

of disciplines: drawing, painting, printmaking, fibers, video/film, dance, theater and music. None of this is possible, however, without donations of money, time and services from individuals, groups, businesses and organizations who know how vitally important a community arts center is to the progressive economic development of the region.

The JAC is large enough to house other organizations and individuals who are in need of a place to practice, perform, exhibit or have an office or studio. The Madison County Arts Council wants to foster partnerships with organizations and individuals to increase visibility and reach out to as many diverse audiences as possible while serving as a networking resource and umbrella for other organizations and idea exchanges that further enhance the region.

Donations of all types and sizes are necessary to continue operations. Donations of time, professional services, goods and money are all vital. Membership in the Madison County Arts Council also will help to support the growth and expansion of the Jacoby Arts Center.

Individual memberships are \$25 a year. Family/business memberships are \$100. Membership provides a 10 percent discount on classes, and with a \$100 membership an individual can sign up for three classes and get a fourth class of equal or lesser value free.

For a \$1,000 donation, individuals can be listed as founding patrons and have their names permanently displayed as benefactors to the Jacoby Arts Center. Donations of professional services such as carpentry, business services and printing are welcomed.

The Jacoby Arts Center also has a wish list of goods that would help it with classes and activities such as a digital camera, desks and easels. The center also needs volunteers who can donate time. The center's operations depend on its volunteers. With support throughout Madison County and beyond, the Jacoby Arts Center will continue to be an excellent addition to Downtown Alton and the entire region as it continues to develop as a place of commerce, recreation and culture.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information, call 462-5222. The Jacoby Arts Center is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays and from noon to 4 p.m. Sundays.