

NEW NAME, NEW PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

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Nicole Inman/Beloit Daily News Jerry Sveum hangs art in the Beloit Art Center in downtown Beloit. The center recently changed its name from the Beloit Fine Arts Incubator.

BELOIT - The Beloit Fine Arts Incubator has a new name and new plans for the future.

Now called the Beloit Art Center (BAC), the center at 520 E. Grand Ave. is a home for emerging artists, promoting art through classes and events, and offering gallery and studio space in partnership with the community and regional artists.

According to President of the Arts Center's Board of Directors Jerry Sveum having incubator in the name confused people. They did not understand the implication. Some even thought they were hatching chickens, he said.

"For years the BFAI has been a hidden treasure, unknown by most of the community. The Board was trying to follow a model designed for a big city, but it was destined to fail in a city the size of Beloit," Sveum said. "It was down to a vote by the Board whether or not to close and it was decided to continue on with the name change and new direction."

The past five years have brought a lot of changes to the Beloit Arts Center. What started as one artist renting studio space is now 17 tenants renting space alongside the Beloit College Ceramics Club. Sveum stated that two spaces became available this month.

For 15 years the art center did not have to pay rent. However, for two years they have paid rent on a rent-to-own structure through the Greater Beloit Economic Development Corporation. Rent paid is put into an escrow to be applied to the purchase of the building.

"One of our big needs is an external elevator to make our building accessible to everyone. The ballpark figure for an elevator is \$150,000," Sveum said. "To pay off the mortgage we will need about \$100,000. Arts in America are financed by philanthropy. For BAC to really succeed long term it will need corporate and membership support from the community. We sent out membership support letters a week ago and so far the response has been very encouraging."

BAC is a place for artists to show their work. New art exhibits are presented with a reception on the first Friday of each month from 5 - 8 p.m. The exhibits then remain on display throughout the month.

"Artists like to show their art at BAC, it displays well in our beautiful gallery, and we've gotten a reputation that it is a good place to show," Sveum said.

A juried painting show opened on Nov. 3 with a focus on food, which is open to the artist's interpretation. Local artists were invited to enter up to four paintings with a first, second and third place cash prize.

In December, BAC will offer a glass show featuring beautiful glass art including fused glass, blown glass and stained glass pieces.

"This will be a dynamic show with the work available for sale just in time for Christmas," Sveum said.

January will feature artists from a surrounding community. Also in 2018, visitors to the Beloit Art Center can look for Beloit's own Mark Preuschl, a juried photography show, art from local high school students, and Tom Noll's paintings of performing rock n' roll stars.

In addition to the main gallery space, the center has added the Bell Gallery, which is a smaller gallery for artists who may not have enough work to fill the main gallery space or are just getting started.

For more information and a schedule for upcoming events, visit the center's website at <http://www.beloitartcenter.com>.

Not just a place for exhibits, the center offers art classes for different mediums including photography with Steve Bogdonas, ceramic classes for adults and children with Susan Swedland, and an open studio on Thursday nights for \$5 that allows people the opportunity to come with their supplies and paint for the night.

In 2018, BAC will offer Photography 101 to teach individuals how to operate a camera and make pictures stand out. In later classes students will focus on SLR cameras, design, and composition.

Artists can look for an opportunity in the future to help the Beloit Art Center design a new logo to reflect the name change. Sveum says there will be a competition and a prize offered to the selected logo artist.

"There are a lot of things going on at the center and we are gearing up for expected growth in the new year," Sveum said. "BAC invites the community to take advantage of what we have here, whether it's like me a viewer of the arts or as an active participant, we have opportunities for all levels."