

## ***Williamsburg Community Art Center***

### **2004/05 Annual Meeting**

The gallery held its 2004/05 Annual Meeting at the Williamsburg Regional Library on Sunday, October 16th, 2005. President Michael Kirby opened the session by expressing thanks to all volunteers for their contributions to the operation and well-being of the gallery. Special thanks were extended to Darrell Craig and Maggie Sobataka, along with their committees, for the excellent art and craft exhibits presented throughout the year. Similar accolades were given to Apryl Altman and Rice Trolan for managing member, student and jail art exhibits. And to Gene Chis, Karen Schwartz and Patricia Rapoport for the outstanding Members' and High School Shows.

The following agenda was reviewed:

1. 2004/05 Year in Review
2. Focus Group Findings
3. Repositioning the Gallery
4. New Building Visual Concepts
5. New Locations Searched
6. Next Steps

#### **YEAR IN REVIEW**

The fiscal year started with a highly successful "Painted Violins" fundraiser in partnership with the Williamsburg Symphonia, which concluded with a gala reception at the Community Building attended by over 120 guests and resulted in each organization netting over \$15,000. It was followed in December by a juried show of outstanding high school student art. Early in the new year, scholarships were awarded by the gallery to high achieving art students through a matching grant from the Virginia Commission for the Arts.

The Members Art Show in June attracted work from 100 member artists and the First, Second and Third place winner received cash awards from the inaugural "Jean K. Walker Awards of Excellence" presented by the late Jean Walker's son, Ambassador Howard K Walker.

During the summer months special social receptions were held at the gallery for residents of Governor's Land, Ford's Colony and Kingsmill to familiarize them with the gallery and its community outreach programs. They helped build awareness and a positive attitude toward the gallery and helped gain several new members.

From a financial standpoint we had a less than spectacular year. We experienced a modest net income loss, due in part to reduced sales from invited artists shows, and disappointing participation in our Outreach programs. However, over the past three years we have almost doubled our Development Fund, from \$70,000 in FY 2002 to over \$134,000 in the current fiscal year. This increase is due to successful fund raisers from the Trellis Benefit Dinner to the previously mentioned "Painted Violins" event. In addition, we received a generous grant from Dominion Resources, and we have transferred surplus funds from the operating budget. Consequently, our balance sheet as of August 31, 2005 showed a total equity of over \$170,000, which places the gallery in a sound financial position.

As stated earlier, we have expanded our Outreach Program for the new fiscal year through the fine efforts of Maggie Sobataka and her committee, and we will continue our focus on art education. We expect a significant turnaround in results and will build increased community awareness of the various ways in which we serve residents in the Greater Williamsburg area.

During the summer months we conducted a dozen focus group meetings with our members to solicit their views on what they like about the gallery, areas for improvement, and what new ideas we should consider. In addition, we reiterated the need to find a new facility, as Colonial Williamsburg wishes to reclaim our current building. The search for a new location offered the board a unique opportunity to reposition the gallery as the Williamsburg Community Art Center, and we asked participants for comment and validation of this vision.

Well over 100 members participated in the focus groups and following is a summary of their comments:

## Likes

Member Previews of Visiting and Member Artist's Exhibitions  
Student and Jail Art Shows  
Art Classes

VMFA Lectures  
Volunteer Support  
The Friendly, Social Atmosphere

## New Ideas/Suggestions/Improvements

More Craft Exhibits (e.g. metal, wood carving, jewelry)  
Increased Diversity in Membership  
Expanded Community Awareness (media coverage, advertising)  
Workshops with Recognized Artists

More Classes for Children (summer camp)  
Classes that Include Pottery, Glass and Jewelry  
Newcomers' Welcome Events  
Realtors' Gift Certificates  
More Fund Raising Events (e.g. "Paint the Town", Members' Art Sale, Black-Tie Formal Ball)

It was suggested we partner with other arts organizations for increased awareness and revenue sharing, including:

Farmers' Market, Williamsburg Botanical Gardens, Muscarelle Museum, Heritage Humane Society, Local Hospital and Health Care Organizations.

## NEW BUILDING AND WHAT IT SHOULD OFFER

### Building:

Purchase a Lot with Option to Expand  
Locate where the General Public Congregates

Ensure Adequate Parking

### What it should Offer:

Increased Exhibition Space for Visiting and Member Artists  
A Designated Student Gallery  
Classroom and Studio Space  
Kitchen - Small Café  
Offices and Meeting Room  
Sculpture Garden

Restroom Facilities (both men and women)  
Moveable Walls  
Handicap accessible  
Adequate Storage Area  
Appropriate Security and Climate Control Systems

There was consensus that we should take the bold and ambitious step of repositioning the gallery as **The Williamsburg Community Art Center**. It is a role the gallery has been fulfilling on an informal basis for some time, and now is the time to make it a reality. In many ways, having gallery in our name fails to distinguish us from other local commercial galleries. While we all have a common purpose of appealing to artists and art aficionados, the shift in focus to art education, enabled by the community art center title, provides us with a clear differentiation in the marketplace.

Generic slides of what the exhibition and classroom space might look like were shown. In addition, a list of over 25 properties that the New Facility Search Committee had explored were presented with explanation of why they were rejected.

In conclusion, a list of Next Steps was presented:

- Focus our energies and efforts on finding a suitable building site
- Seek support and endorsement of the community art center concept from the three local municipalities
- Launch a capital campaign, once a building site has been secured
- Incorporate members' ideas and suggestions into the design of the new building
- Retain an architect and builder
- Commence construction once funds have been acquired

A complete financial statement for fiscal year ending 31st August, 2005, along with a list of board members is available at the gallery.

Please direct any questions, or comments to Michael Kirby, President. (258-5625) or via e-mail at kirbyscorpio@aol.com.