



Milford, Michigan
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BHAG PLAN for the

The Suzanne Haskew Arts Center

Aka: The “S.H.A.C.”

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The Village Fine Arts Association

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Village Fine Arts Association (VFAA) is Milford Village's fine arts organization. Our goal is to share the joy of creativity with our community. Artists and art lovers gather together to make fine arts education and events a part of the greater Huron Valley Experience. Our present mission statement is to: Provide individual artists with opportunities for fellowship, inspiration and education by organizing, promoting and presenting monthly meetings with guest artists, educational workshops and juried exhibitions. We coordinate and participate with other community groups in art-related events to increase our visibility and further showcase our community's creativity derived from the freedom of artistic expression.

The VFAA was officially established in 1992 by several artists that gathered together to share their love of art. It is one of those co-founders, our belovedly feisty Suzanne Haskew, that the present board of directors endeavor to honor with the next evolution of the VFAA. Up until now, the VFAA has been a 100% volunteer organization and, not having a home of our own, we have held our meetings, workshops and juried art shows in various venues around Milford, MI area.

In 2008, the board of directors held a strategic planning meeting. We examined our goals and dreams and present capacity. While the dream of our own "space" was a hot topic, it was decided that we could first serve ourselves and the community better, if we focused on getting really good at what we already do. We eliminated programs that were marginally successful, and focused on the ones that provided the best return for our members and show entrants' hard earned dues and fees. These programs include (but are not limited to) the following:

- 10 monthly meetings per year with guest lecturers from all areas of the arts. These informational meetings are free to all, including the general public.
- "Artist of the Year" competition that runs the length of our 10 month program. This competition, started by Suzie Haskew and continued in her spirit, encourages members to bring at least one piece of artwork to each meeting. The pieces are then judged by our guest speakers for 1st, 2nd and 3rd place, and points accumulated throughout the year. The artist with the most points (which can simply be accomplished by bringing a new piece of artwork to each meeting) receives a cash prize, and a month display of their work at the local art shop... Main Street Art.
- 10 newsletters per year with general information on the happenings of the VFAA and artist opportunities
- 2 Fine Art shows and competitions, for all Michigan artists, offering cash prizes and Gala openings with live music, beverages and finger food.
- 1 community project or event every year or so. These have included a mural at the Huron Valley Sinai Hospital cancer ward, and fund raiser for a new front door overhang for a local school for special needs adults.

Since 2008, our monthly meeting attendance, show entries and gala attendance have steadily grown. After each event, we can truthfully state that “this was the BEST one yet!” We are holding steady at an operating budget of \$13,000 per year and currently have cash balances in excess of \$12,000. At this writing, we are able to pay for all of our programs with membership dues, show entry fees, sponsorships, mini-grants and general donations.

It was at the time of Suzie’s passing in February, 2012, that a seed was planted for dreaming bigger. We were offered funding in the name of Suzie and were asked, “What is your vision?” The VFAA board of directors labored long about what we would like to do in memory of Suzie. We were all over the map with wants vs. needs. A new set of display walls to replace our well used existing set? A new tent to replace the one destroyed at a Milford Memories rain storm? Paid staff to take us to the next step? The discussion kept coming back to “our own space”. So, it is with this dream in mind, that we endeavor to define our next strategic plan. A home for the VFAA, and the Suzanne Haskew Arts Center (aka: The S.H.A.C.)

THE DREAM DESCRIPTION AND MARKET RESEARCH:

As noted in the Executive Summary, VFAA programs have survived, and in fact thrived, throughout the recent economic turn down. We believe we are unique in that our focus is encouraging artists to create art and provide a venue and incentive to do so. We do not take any commission on any art sold at our shows. Our show awards are many and generous. Awards sponsorships go 100% to artists. We are all about encouraging, and even rewarding, the creative process, whether you are an artist or an art lover. The VFAA board feels we are a unique niche. But there is something missing.

We started asking the question: What can the VFAA provide to the community, that no other art organization in the area is providing? There already are galleries, artist co-ops and the Huron Valley Council for the Arts (HVCA) that provide the usual art stuff. However, in asking local artists, parents of creative children, and especially young artists (high school through college graduates) what they would like to see in the Milford area with regards to the arts, the answer was: Some PLACE to create art. Some PLACE to congregate with fellow artists to share each other’s creative work, ideas and inspiration. Some PLACE where my kids can get the art education that the schools no longer provide. Some PLACE for my studio, other than my basement, attic, closet, dining room table, etc.

Research revealed several models already in operation around the country that meet this criteria: providing a place in the community where all artists, whether young, old or with special needs, can come and create. We believe that adding this facet to the programs we already provide, will serve our area which currently has no community space for creative endeavors, will help nearby businesses with increased traffic, and continue to serve our current mission and do so in a unique for-the-community way. When we started thinking this way, the examples presented themselves, and we focused on what we think will work in Milford. Studio space where artists create, classroom space where art and art as therapy can be taught, meeting space for guest lecturers, display space for art

shows, office space for the VFAA archives, and more. Members and acquaintances started sending links to similar entities:

The Program:

The VFAA S.H.A.C. is fashioned as a combination of artist studios for rent like

- The Pyramid Atlantic Art Center:
http://www.pyramidatlanticartcenter.org/art_programs/studios.html
- The Brooklyn Art Space: <http://brooklynartspace.org>
- 555 Creative Community: <http://www.555arts.org>

And a non-profit community art studio such as:

- The Art Experience, which also serves special needs citizens:
<http://www.theartexperience.org>
- Off Center Community Arts: <http://www.offcenterarts.org>
- The Radius Community Art Studio: <http://www.radiusstudio.org>

Besides being a home for our already well established programs (Meetings, workshops, art shows, special events), the VFAA S.H.A.C. will also offer the following:

- Studio Space Rentals
- Open Studios
 - For individuals
 - For adult groups
 - For youth groups
 - For special needs groups
 - For Art therapy sessions
- Space for art instructors to teach classes to all of the above
- Space for other community groups to gather
- Space for periodic art sales during summer concerts and farmers market days

The Place:

When we became more focused on the “what”, the “where” presented itself.

At one time, we had an interest in part of the abandoned elementary school. However, while waiting for the fate of the school to emerge from limbo, we were directed to the recently vacated South Town Market (formerly Colonial Motors) building in the south end of Milford Village and subsequently to the partially leased “Agnew Building” next door. These facilities are perfect for a mixed use of meeting and event space, messy studio space, class rooms and even performances. **This report focuses on the Agnew Building.** After meeting with the property manager and visiting the space, we found out the facility is available for purchase only.

The facility has been unsuccessfully leased off and on since the demise of its original use. Business owners at that end of town recognize that “south town” does not have the foot traffic of the main drag down town, however, it IS the southern “entry portal” to the Village of Milford. Just about everyone drives up Main Street off of Huron. The building has “location, location, location” for visibility and immense potential for being a special Milford jewel: A community arts center for all to use and enjoy, and an anchor facility that promotes foot traffic to the south end of town to see what is “happenin’ at the S.H.A.C.”.

MARKET ANALYSIS

As members of the Cultural Alliance of South East Michigan (CASM, now Culture Source) and ArtServe Michigan, we have access to information that allows us to keep close track of trends and statistical analysis for funding of the arts. Funding is starting to come back, partly because financial data collected by CASM’s Data Project provides strong evidence to community leaders that “for every \$1 spent on the arts, \$52 is pumped into the local economy.” (<http://www.culturalalliancesemi.org/cultural-data-projects-2012-issue-of-data-matters/>) We also know that communities are willing to approve a small tax millage to sustain special community projects in existence if they are visible, tangible, and available for the general population’s use. (Milford Times article).

Our target market is those that we already serve (local artists and art lovers) and those in our community that are under-served in art instruction, art therapy, creative opportunities, and community space. These include youth artists that rarely have access anymore to public school art instruction (my children had to decide if they wanted to follow a science curriculum, or art... they could not do both), young adult artists that do not have venues for creating and displaying their art, and special need adults and children that are under recognized for their artistic expression and the therapy creating art provides. In other words, a “hands on” facility with a large, open creative space

The VFAA S.H.A.C. will provide a small, but visible and easily accessible location for artistic expression. Local residents can walk to the facility. There is an elementary and middle school within walking distance of the proposed facility. After school programs can be implemented for latch key purposes. Partnerships with special needs organizations and education will be part of the program.

The facility is not large, so the number of individuals of our “market” to make a viable arts center, and the cost models associated with the services, are presented in the financial analysis. We feel these numbers are reasonable to achieve over time, after the VFAA S.H.A.C. has established itself as the “go to” place for inspiration.

Competitive Analysis:

In the process of defining the VFAA dream, we endeavored to purposefully NOT duplicate what any other art organization or business was already providing in the community. We found that, not only is there no other facility offering the proposed

services to our community, but those local businesses and organizations that are art related welcome the idea as an enhancement to their presence. The VFAA's goal has been to create a service that no other organization is providing in our area. We endeavor to collaborate with the other art organizations and businesses in the Huron Valley to enhance the cultural diversity of our community, while continuing the programs that are already well established.

Our biggest challenge to achieve this goal is the fact we are 100% volunteer organization that is already at capacity of what it can achieve with the resources (people and equipment) that we already have. We have addressed this in the financial analysis.

Our biggest strength is that we have been around for over 20 years, and have developed many connections and relationships in the art community to help us achieve this goal.

Our "competitors" may be artists that are already providing art instruction in their homes or elsewhere. The VFAA S.H.A.C. will be a facility that they can consider using to teach their existing students. We are not trying to gain market share from others, rather provide a working, "hands on" facility for all to use and grow.

We feel the time is ripe to launch this endeavor. "Supply" of places to create art, outside of public school art classes, is low and being minimized or eliminated, which in turn increases demand.

We have begun research on regulatory restrictions to our plan. An initial meeting at one site was arranged with Randy Sapelak, the Village of Milford Building Official and Zoning Administrator. He was provided with a copy of the DRAFT plan. He stated that the B-3 zoning for the building location will allow all of the activities outlined in this plan. Facility improvements will be required and include handicap access and possibly additional toilet rooms. Fire Protection Sprinklers were discussed but it was not clear at the time if they will be required. Randy has subsequently advised that they will not be required at the Agnew Building.

ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

The VFFA is a 501 c 3, non profit organization. It is overseen by an Executive Director and 11 board members, consisting of artists, retired business people, and art lovers. Up until now, the VFAA has been a 100% volunteer organization. Incorporating the S.H.A.C. into the VFAA programming will require paid staff and office equipment. It is anticipated that the initial proposed endeavor will require a part time executive director and a part time office staff, totaling 1 "full time equivalent" employee or "fte". Having staff and a building will open up additional grant funding sources that we have not qualified for before. Also, contract instructors and mentors will be utilized on an "as needed" basis and paid by revenue generated from open studios and art instruction. We anticipate the need for a dedicated computer system, appropriate software, printer and fax machine.

Resumes of the existing Executive Director (the author of this plan) and board members are available upon request. The Executive Director has extensive experience in managing non-profit organization programs and many board members have been an integral part of keeping the VFAA alive and kicking. There are also art instructors including our President (Linda Onderko) who was a close friend of Suzanne Haskew, and who has experience teaching art to special needs adults and youth.

SERVICE:

The services we are proposing are already outlined in “the program” section of the “Dream Description...” as well as in the financial analysis. The VFAA has already been around for over 20 years and believe this next big step will provide a permanent home, or at least the foundation of services that will lead to our own “space”.

MARKETING:

The research for the VFAA S.H.A.C. plan includes discussions with other art organizations and businesses. Since the service we are proposing is not currently available in our community, every single connection so far has provided enthusiastic approval and support. However, a market research survey will be developed to specifically ask the community how they feel about a community arts center. A positive response will provide data that can be used to secure funding. The goal is to obtain at least one, if not both, of the facilities. Once the facility has been obtained and enhanced for the proposed programs, marketing will begin with spreading the word through our current connections in the local artist community, public schools, art schools, community groups and local businesses. These include but are not limited to:

- The Cultural Alliance of South East Michigan (now Culture Source)
- The VFAA Facebook page, newsletters, meetings and Email Blasts as well as promotion at our already existing meetings, art shows and work shops
- The HVCA Art Shop and Facebook page
- 210 Main Street (an artist co-op across the street)
- The Bar (also across the street)
- The Aubergine Gallery (an artist co-op in mid-town Milford)
- The Art Experience (located in Pontiac with a similar program and has provided program and budgeting advice)
- Huron Valley Schools District
- Oakland Schools
- The Art Institute of Michigan
- Art schools at U of M, Oakland Community College and Schoolcraft College
- The Huron Valley Chamber of Commerce (we are already a member)
- The Highland Business Association (ditto)
- The Milford Down Town Development Authority

Once the facility is under operation, the activities of the venue will be clearly visible to the thousands of Huron Valley residents that drive past the building every month. We can capitalize on that exposure by:

- Staging working artists on the sidewalk or in the interior windowed office to paint
- Providing tables for artists to sell product during already established events such as the Thursday Concerts in the Park, the Farmer's Market (we will investigate if the Farmer's Market can be moved to the facilities' parking lot instead of closing Liberty Street) and Milford Memories, if acceptable to the Milford Memories producer.
- Partnering with local restaurants to provide meal discounts for patrons of the VFAA S.H.A.C. for a day of "arts and eats", and therefore being advertised through their contacts.

We will also incorporate the same strategies we use for advertising our monthly meetings and art shows which include press releases, poster and pamphlet distribution around local businesses, and banner signage.

FUNDING REQUEST

The facility we wanted was available for purchase only at the time of the last revision (March 10, 2013) before this final report (December 18, 2013). We did not need the entire facility for our proposed program. Fortunately, the buildings are already divided into separate components with separate access. We are interested in two of the areas that comprise about 3,500 square feet (out of 8,000 sf of office and 7,000 s.f. of industrial space). In discussions with the property manager, there are other businesses that already lease two of the other areas. The owner representatives of the facilities have told us that they prefer NOT to separately lease the facility and prefer to sell outright. The VFAA Board decided to not purchase the building, to continue our programs as usual, and wait for the building to be sold then inquire about leasing. The building was subsequently purchased by 125 South Main Street LLC in December 2013, and they reached out to us knowing we had inquired about space for an art center.

We propose the following:

Enter a lease agreement with 125 South Main Street LLC for Tenant Space 700, which is a 3,700 s.f. high bay industrial building part of the facility.

Plan:

The Financial Projections section that follows details the projected programming costs and projected revenue. In summary, the revenue at full operation will pay for the proposed programs, but we know that it will take some time to get them established. Therefore, we will be seeking funding to be set aside that will cover three (3) years of operation, with only the amount needed to cover the revenue shortage during program development to be used. That maximum total for all 3 years is (rounding up) \$332,000.

Besides the programming, it may take as much as \$50,000 in possible capital improvements and inventory (with an exception or two) to upgrade the facility to accommodate the programs' minimum. To cover capital improvements, we can option to seek the same \$332,000 but that programs be covered for 2 years, with the capital improvement costs to be paid out of these initial funds. The goal is to be 100% self-funding after five years.

Action:

A lease proposal with two options was received from 125 South Main Street LLC on December 5, 2013. The terms are very favorable and below market rate to help the VFAA get the SHAC established. It was decided by a special vote of the VFAA Board of Directors to forge ahead and opt to lease a portion of the High Bay space, aka Suite 700. Beginning February 1, 2014.

Future Funding:

The long term intent is to provide a community space that is either partially or fully funded by the community under a special tax assessment. Other community funded art organizations that we have contracted and "picked their brains" have stated that being visible in the community is essential for developing community support for a publicly funded arts program. A two or three year operation will provide the time and exposure needed to prove the worth of a community arts center. Once the citizens know you, experience you and are convinced of your value, there is a greater chance of them willing to pay... via special tax assessment... for the continuation of your programs. That is our ultimate although not critical goal, including keeping the programming to a manageable level and keeping it focused enough that we keep the programs that work and pay for themselves, and just get really good at what we do.

Thank you for this opportunity to present our ultimate dream. We appreciate your time.