

The Magic of Conversation

'Arts on Fire' set for June 19 born of the magic

By Natalie Gelb Solfanelli

Projects often begin over coffee during breaks at meetings.

People find common goals, ideas are scribbled on napkins, business cards exchanged and names of potential other partners discussed.

It grows from there.

This is the magic' of conversation, which is why the Lackawanna County Arts and Culture Department sees one of its major roles as creating environments where a cross-section of the population can learn about, discuss and brainstorm ways to achieve common goals in the arts and culture sector.

Last September, the Arts and Culture Department sponsored *Wake Up with the Arts: A Breakfast Workshop* at the Electric City Trolley Museum. Approximately 70 people attended to listen to a speaker from Arts Quest talk about the events and organizations they manage in Bethlehem, including the famous Musikfest and new Steelstax Arts and Culture campus.

Participants then broke into groups to brainstorm ideas they would like to see in Lackawanna County, which resulted in a document now on the County's Web site under the arts and culture page.

It is a tool that the department and the Council on Arts, Culture and Education (ACE) use for cultural planning for Lackawanna County. A smaller, follow-up breakfast took place April 28 at the Electric City Trolley Museum.

During the brainstorming session there was repeated mention of the need for more events that would draw both local residents and tourists, such as an arts festival.

This expressed need inspired ACE council member, Bob Savakinus to pursue the idea of reviving an event at the Anthracite Heritage Museum Iron Furnaces (there had been an event there years ago) that would focus on Industrial Arts.

The idea was especially timely since Keystone College had received a Lackawanna County "Arts Engage!" grant for a high school sculpture program to start in May and to finish with a public iron pour in June.

Bob contacted partners who might be interested in creating a sustainable event.

These partners included:

- The Lackawanna County Arts and Culture Department;
- The Lackawanna Historical Society;
- The Anthracite Heritage Museum;
- The Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority (LHVA);

- The Main Street Program administered by Scranton Tomorrow;
- The Elm Street Program of United Neighborhood Centers;
- Lackawanna County;
- Keystone College;
- WNEP;
- The Steamtown National Historic Site and;
- The Electric City Trolley Museum.

Planning is now in full swing for the event called Arts on Fire, and the hope is that this event will develop into a yearly celebration of Lackawanna County's unique industrial past and its creative, artistic future.

The free festival is scheduled for Saturday, June 19 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

In addition to the iron pour, there will be other artists, historical groups, vendors, music and ethnic foods.

The Electric City Trolley Museum will provide trolley rides back and forth from the museum for just \$1.

In the evening, there will be a cocktail party at the Iron Furnaces to support the Anthracite Heritage Museum.

For information on the "Wake Up with the Arts" breakfast workshops, Arts on Fire Festival, "ARTS Engage!" or the Keystone Sculpture program, please contact Deputy Director of Arts and Culture, Maureen McGuigan at (570) 963-6590 x102 or mcguiganm@lackawannacounty.org.

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