



The Monadnock

SHOPPER NEWS

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MoCo Moves: Campaign To Build MoCo Arts’ Future

Transforming Lives Through Movement And Creative Expression For 25 Years



Performing in a musical theatre production of *Singin’ In the Rain Jr.* are: Wednesday Prouix, Caleb Hansel, Ashley Discenzo-Knapp, Emily Lake, Connor White, and Brooke Oster.

By Lori Catozzi Cook

MoCo Arts in Keene is on the move. This family-centered, non-profit arts education organization with classes in dance, theatre, and multi-arts camps has gone through phenomenal growth over the last 25 years of its existence. Unfortunately though, the building has not.

“Space is cramped, there are not enough studios, and class sizes and program offerings are constrained,” says Executive Director/Artistic Director of Dance Reagan Messer. “MoCo



will build on the site of a former distressed downtown building, the old YMCA, revitalizing a key piece of property just steps from Keene’s vibrant Central Square,” he adds, about the new site at 38 Roxbury Street.

“This is the right staff and the right board to lead the organization through this transformation – a new location, a larger space, the establishment of a downtown hub of creative education for our youth.”

Just to compare how much more MoCo Arts will be able to offer at the future address, the existing building – at 76 Railroad Street – has 7700 square feet of space, where as the Roxbury Street facility will offer almost a whopping 17,000 square feet of space! This new center will have a dedicated Black Box Theatre with seating for up to 200 people (no more trying to accommodate the audience), three full-size studios, dressing rooms, restrooms, a large lobby, and convenient and safe off-the-street parking and pick-up and drop-off points. And the vicinity of the new MoCo Arts will make it convenient for parents to shop on Main Street or grab a coffee while waiting for their children.

“Being a part of MoCo Arts has been a great experience for our family,” says Deirdre Chretien, who has two daughters that dance at MoCo Arts. “Over the past five years, we have watched our daughters grow into expressive and self-aware little girls. As a family, we have made new friends and reconnected with old ones that we once again have a great excuse to see. We are excited for MoCo to move into its new location so that the hardwork of our daughters’, and all MoCo’s performers, will have the space it deserves.”

“MoCo is hugely important in our community because it gives those creative and artistic students a safe, reputable place to learn and perform,” says another MoCo parent, Jennifer White. “MoCo Arts has been an important part of our family life since 2005. Both of our sons have been involved in the theatre program and gained both valuable experience and self confidence as a result. Our younger son, Connor, is in the dance program as well, and has thrived in it because of the compassionate and knowledgeable professional instructors and staff. We are immensely grateful to have MoCo in our community and credit it for giving our sons amazing opportunities. We look forward to seeing the new MoCo Arts become a reality and will continue to attend the amazing productions even after our son graduates.”

The design of this \$5 million facility was a union between Katie Cassidy Sutherland Architects in Keene and H3 Hardy Collaboration Architecture of New York, NY. “The design really complements the historic district,” adds Messer. “But it stands on its own; it doesn’t mimic it.”

During the entire design process, energy efficiency has been a focus; whether it be stage one or stage two of this endeavor, solar panels will be added. And Keene’s own MacMillin Company is acting as construction management; bids are currently out. The desire to be in this new space is by the summer of 2018.

Since the initial campaign ask a year ago, \$4.1 million has been raised. “Without the community’s support, we couldn’t get this far,” says Messer. “The support has just been tremendous.”

Now, the final shove toward reaching their goal is underway to make this dream a reality. Messer says: “Now we are reaching out to the public to help us. Every dollar matters. Because turning a kid away is not part of our mission.”

To make a campaign donation, visit www.move.moco.org or call Director of Development Beth Brown at 603-357-2100, Ext. 204 or Messer at Ext. 203.

One thing the new facility will not change is MoCo Arts holding its larger events at The Colonial Theatre or the Redfern Arts Center at Keene State College. As Messer puts it, “We have great presenters locally for big shows.”

In the meantime, MoCo Arts will continue to provide high-quality programs for children through adults.

“Under the direction of our experienced artistic staff, MoCo Arts provides an inclusive, nurturing, supportive atmosphere designed to enrich the lives of our students as well as the collective life of our community,” he continues. “Arts education is an equalizer that gives kids in our community – all kids – skills that help them flourish. We welcome all students where they are in their movement and creative arts journey – beginners through advanced.”

To learn more about the offerings at MoCo Arts, visit www.moco.org.



This dancer from the 2016 Creative Dance Festival is Caroline Miller.