

# What's Goin' On at the Beach

The Official Newsletter of Pelican Beach



## Multi-Million Dollar Children's Regional Art Center Opens in Delmar Township



Jenna Hamilton, age 4

Just 2 years ago the historic Post Office & Federal Building, located in the heart of Pelican Beach's Delmar Township sat vacant. The building is a historic landmark that has existed since the early 1900's when it was used as a Federal War Planning Office. After World War 2 the building was decommissioned by the State Department and sold to the U.S. Post Office. The building served as the main postal center for the tri-county area. Because of growth in the late 1970's the building became impartial and was eventually closed. That historic building is now revitalized and open to the public as the Jonathan Dapra Center for the Arts.

In late 2003 the Board of Directors of the Delmar Township Artists Guild was looking for ways to increase their services and reach for artists within the region. They had long outgrown their home at the Colonnade Museum of Art and had to rent rooms and halls for some of their classes.

"We knew we needed a larger facility that could not only support our current offerings but allow us to continue to expand our reach within the community" says Board Chairman Mary Lewis. "Our planning committee spent over a year. As Lewis explains, one afternoon a Board Member had a flat tire on his way to work. As he looked for an area to pull over, the first place was the utility entrance of the now empty Federal Building. As the Board member waiting for the repair serv Suddenly it hit me," said member Jesse Randolph. "This building would be perfect!"

Perfect is not quite how anyone on the Board or executive staff would describe the process of obtaining the building. The Federal Post Office has transferred the deed of the building and grounds to the Department of Education in the mid-eighties. At the time, the Department of Ed had considArchitects made the Department aware of a variety of internal problems with the building that would not make it easily

accessible for OSHA and EEOC requirements. So the building sat, unused and, for the most part, unattended for the last 25 years.

The Artists Guild made a deal with the Department of Education in which the Department sold the building to the Artists Guild for \$1 and commitments to renovate the building and to offer extended children's educational programs for the arts. "This was a big challenge" says Lewis, We all wondered if we could raise this kind of money through individual donors."

Not only was the Guild able to raise all of the money, "we raised \$6 million from individual contributors here within the region" said Lewis. "We know that the arts have a special place here in Pelican Beach." The State of Delaware contributed a grant of \$2.5 million through the efforts of newly elected state senator's Monty Hall and Maggi Moneypenny. Renovations began in 2007.

The new Jonathan Dapra Center for the Arts will open next Monday the 4<sup>th</sup> in a public ceremony presided by the State Senators and local artist Harpy Paintier. Upon opening the public will find a wonderful new building featuring state of the art facilities. The new building includes the main gallery as well as three smaller private galleries. One will be the permanent display area for the Dale Chihuly glass sculpture donated to the Center by the Artists in memory of a deceased member of the guild. The building also contains 8 classrooms,

all equipped with multimedia. A new computer graphics lab boasts 25 Apple and Windows workstations and integrated lecture media. There is a dance room, a theatre, 4 meeting rooms, a professional darkroom and a pottery lab.

Local artists are thrilled with the new center and see it as a two-fold opportunity. "First, it gives us the opportunity to share our creative visions and teach students of all ages about different creative endeavors." Says local Ingrid Illustrator. She also thinks it will be an excellent opportunity to create a better livelihood for local artists who will have the opportunity to have shown in the galleries and sell their work. "It is the perfect opportunity for artists and students."

Some local residents have been quite vocal in the disapproval of the funds the Arts Center were granted by the State. Local high school football coach Guido Bawler feels that the center should have scaled back their "extreme" building plans and worked only with the private funds. "Local athletic programs have seen cuts for the past four years," said Bawler, "That \$2,5 million could have gone to programs that encourage healthy lifestyles, good physical conditioning and encourage team skills." Bawler plans to picket the opening day ceremony. He will be joined by a local group of Tea Party activists whose spokesperson, Sarah Parlor, says that investments like this "are just a fancy way of the government telling us what should be important." A recent State poll though, found that the majority of area residents believe that the new Art Center is a positive addition to the region.

"The new Arts Center will be a wonderful new adventure in the arts and everyone in the region is welcome to share the experience." Says new center Director Dave Levine. "We're very excited!"

**"We raised \$6 million from individual contributors... the arts have a special place here!"**



## Open Air Market to Begin Sales This Saturday

As the Spring seasons rushes over historic Pelican Beach, the members of the Finnely Cooperative farming Association will be sharing their organically grown produce with the community at their new Outdoor market.

Located in the Vasterburg Pavillion, the Co-Op plans to sell their locally grown, pesticide free crops in an open-air farmers market. The farmers market will be open every Saturday from April 2, 2011 through Memorial Day weekend.

"We're very excited to share our fresh grown produce" says CO-Op leader farmer Kenny McCrackle. The market will be a terrific place to get fresh groceries and meet up for your friends and neighbors from the community. The market will feature locally grown fruits and vegetables that are in season. The Co-Op will also be featuring a variety of guest farmers, bakers, butchers and fisherman who will be selling their wares. "Everything we sell is 100% organic, which not only means that you can be assured that your food is safe from harmful chemicals and pesticides, but it is naturally delicious."

Previous attempts to create a farmer's Market in the pavilion has been met with mixed results. Last year the City Manager allowed for a rolling permit process for vendors which resulted in a mixed bag of weekly offerings. Local farmers represented a fraction of the vendor's selling. A frequent visitor to the pavilion, Kelly Guillless, found the schedule confusing (*Continued on P. 2*)

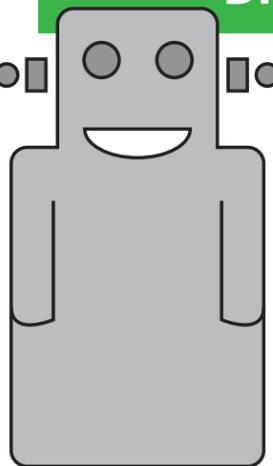
**Market, Cont'd**

and ultimately avoided the area. "One week I could walk over and buy a great selection of fresh bread and veggies, then the next three weeks I would show up planning to buy food and they were showing everything from Monster trucks to tattoo conventions! I was so frustrated I just got in my car and drive to the next county to shop at the Fresh Foods store."

The Co-Op and the City hope that this new, season long commitment to the Farmer's Market will encourage more and more local residents to buy local. They also expect that regional visitors will come to the city to experience the only organic Farmer's Market in a hundred mile radius.

The Farmer's Market is open from 7 AM until 6 PM every Saturday through Memorial Day.

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# Proposed Safety Law Will Prohibit Open Cans at Beach

More than 1400 officers, many with the Pelican Beach Department patrolled the 2010 beach on a Saturday afternoon. At the end of the day, more than 400 arrests were made for open containers of beer and other alcohol. Although the crowd was down by 50% over prior years the number of arrests were up 300% over prior years. New legislation in Pelican Beach Township wants to extend the Open Container law to include any containers other than clear bottles of water or major, branded sodas and juices sold by authorized beach vendors.

According to announcements made by the Police Department, this new legislation will help officers to keep the beach area a more secure and family friendly place. City Councilman Ron Bebubb has said that he wants this legislation put in place to make sure that "Boozers and partying college kids" will take their activities to other beaches and leave Pelican Beach a more "family friendly" environment.

Many people are asking whether they really need this type of county ordinance. A number of local merchants think that this prospective law will significantly damage their summer sales. "This is basically cutting my boardwalk business out of the loop and not allowing any

of my customers' access to the beach" says Blue Iguana restaurant owner Kathy Hates. "If this legislation passes most of the boardwalk eateries and snack shops will find it difficult to remain in business."

Many experts agree that the proposed law is flawed. "I think that the city council had everyone's best interest in mind" says attorney Bob Wratcher. "When they first wrote it in committee it was introduced as a measure to help the city lower the cleanup costs associated with daily usage of the beaches during the summer season. Unfortunately, the best intentions ended up mutating into a highly restrictive piece of legislation that is bad for business" A number of the City Council members have expressed their concern over the bill. Councilman for the 4<sup>th</sup> District, Ray Roppo feels that it is restrictive to business and it will significantly reduce visitors to all kinds of city events and festivals. "Somewhere along the way this turned into a small minority's utopian view of how the Pelican beach should be... quiet and filled with families drinking water and eating ice cream." Roppo says he will not vote for the bill as Pelican Beach already has very restrictive laws for open-containers on the beach.

Lance Lionboard, a 6-year tenured Lifeguard at the beach agrees. "The police already do an excellent job of keeping beer and spirits from being brought down to the beach area. Our life guard patrols on constantly looking out for infractions and coordinating with the authorities."

It should be noted that Pelican beach does have a "wet zone" – a specific area that has been set aside as accessible to those wishing to consume alcoholic beverages. The North Point beach area past the gallery has always been open to evening parties and local bar patrons. Cans and bottles of all types are prohibited, but alcohol in plastic cups is allowed in the wet-zone after 6 PM most evenings. This current legislation would remove this wet-zone.

The City Council will hold open meetings on the bill on Tuesday the 24<sup>th</sup> of this month. All members of the community are encouraged to attend and share their opinions. There will be an open-mic portion of the review and any member of the public may address and question the council.

The downtown Pelican Beach Merchants Association plans to voice their disagreement with the potential new law. Association President Tim Tetaller says that every merchant in the beach and boardwalk proper has registered their disagreement with this bill. "It is hard to believe they would vote for it based on this feedback."

## IT'S BEACH SEASON AT WILD & WONDERFUL DUNES.

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