



Letters in *News and Recorder* and *Putnam Courier* discuss Arts on the Lake and its renovation project

The following letter by Dr. Kathleen O'C. Hoekstra appeared in the *News and Recorder* on June 1, 2011 and in the *Putnam Courier* on June 2, 2011.

To the Editor:

It's been a while since I've found something good to write about in Putnam County. But, last night I attended a fundraiser for Arts on the Lake Community Cultural Center in Lake Carmel, and I couldn't wait to get to my computer! The efforts of a small group of very special residents and legislators in Kent have resulted in a now solidly established center where all the arts are embraced—and presented at the highest levels of professionalism—almost exclusively by volunteers. Some of the best evenings I've ever had were at Arts—either enjoying Shakespeare, Irish music sessions, one-act plays, poetry slams, jazz ensembles, blue grass, opera, and anything else James Shearwood, the artistic director, can think of. Art exhibits, curated by Roy Volpe and Sue Gamache, have been at a very high standard from the very beginning, though each season they manage to surprise.

Now, here's the best part: If I mentioned the names of the people who often perform in the theatre, or who exhibit their art you probably wouldn't recognize most of them— they are your neighbors! Yes, thanks to the people who made Arts on the Lake a reality, the talent in Putnam County is out of the closet. And the level of that talent is what has amazed so many of us who frequent Arts. Audience counts at Arts on the Lake have already demonstrated that there is a need for this kind of center. And the Arts organizers have shown that they can provide a consistently high level of arts and entertainment.

However, in order to expand their offerings to provide Putnam County residents with the best of the arts, the Center needs to significantly remodel the old firehouse which houses them. Attracting professional theatre companies and mounting fully staged plays requires far more than what is currently available. The same is true for the fine arts; exhibitions and art classes require space and lighting not currently provided.

The effort is now underway to raise \$30,000 to address these needs. Not an enormous sum of money for this unique contribution to our cultural life—to your children's—is it? To pass up this opportunity to develop a truly grassroots organization into the spectacular addition to the cultural—and tourism—life of Putnam County would be short sighted—a cultural tragedy. When you come to know Arts on the Lake as I have, you will realize that there is truly a jewel among us. Look at the website—www.artsonthelake.org. See the amazing breadth of what they offer—week after week, for kids and adults—and give what you think good arts and entertainment—in your own backyard—is worth.

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