



Contact Info:

Therese Thiedeman, Administrator

Charles County Arts Alliance

Phone: 301-392-5900

E-mail: info@charlescountyarts.org

Website: www.charlescountyarts.org

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ARTS ALLIANCE TO HOST “OPEN HOUSE” TO ASSESS FUTURE ARTS CENTER AT SMALLWOOD VILLAGE IN WALDORF, MAY 17-18

The Charles County Arts Alliance (CCAA) will host an Open House at Smallwood Village Center in Waldorf on the weekend of May 17-18, 2008, to obtain public input on the potential use of a large 8600 SF space as a future community arts center. The Open House is taking place in cooperation with the owners of the property, Saul Centers, Inc., and the Charles County Government. The Open House will be held from 2:00 – 5:00 pm each day at “space 235” on the second floor, “at the bridge” which connects the two buildings across the courtyard area. Saturday, May 17, is designated for input from CCAA members, and Sunday, May 18 is designated for input from the broader arts community and general public in Charles County. Light refreshments will be served.

The Smallwood space is envisioned as the first multidisciplinary arts center for Charles County citizens to enjoy and use. It could offer a wide range of options for visual and performing arts activities for both adults and children throughout the week and on weekends. The space could accommodate art studios, music/drama/dance studios, writer workspaces, classes/workshops/seminars, a conference room, rehearsal space, small performance space, an arts café, and office and meeting space for arts organizations.

This new opportunity is being considered for the arts community of Charles County as the result of an initiative of Charles County Commissioner Gary Hodge (District 4 – St. Charles/Waldorf) and the new owners of Smallwood Village Center, Saul Centers, Inc., of Bethesda, MD. This offer of space by Saul Centers is being made in conjunction with their major renovation and revitalization of the Smallwood Village Center. The renovation, which is scheduled for completion in October, will include the construction of an extension of Post Office Road directly into the Center, greatly improving access.

The Charles County government is currently studying the feasibility of locating the community arts center at Smallwood, and will report its findings and recommendations to the County Commissioners and the Arts Alliance later this summer. The members of the Charles County Arts Alliance were briefed on the initiative on Sunday, May 4, at their annual business meeting in Swan Point.

Commissioner Gary V. Hodge comments: *“The arts --- in all their diverse forms of expression --- enhance and enrich our lives. This initiative to create a new arts center in the heart of Waldorf would make appreciation and participation in the arts more accessible to our citizens. I would like to thank Frank Saul and Saul Centers for making this generous offer of space to our arts community, and for having the vision to consider this in their plans for a vibrant new Smallwood Village Center. If we are successful, this initiative will enhance the quality of life of all our citizens.”*

According to Saul Centers spokesman and Smallwood Property Manager, James Donlan:
“Saul Centers is pleased to have the opportunity to partner with Charles County and the CCAA in this exciting endeavor.”

CCAA President Diane Rausch states: *“We are extremely grateful to Commissioner Hodge and Saul Centers for their initiative and strong support of the arts as a quality of life amenity in Charles County. This is an outstanding, historic and exciting opportunity for the arts community to come together and help us create the first-ever multipurpose community center in Charles County dedicated to promoting ALL the arts. It is also the first concrete outcome from our ongoing ARTS VISION 2020 strategic planning effort we have been engaged in over the past several years.”*

CCAA Administrator Therese Thiedeman adds: *“The Open House provides a unique opportunity for you, the Charles County arts community and citizens, to tell us your wants and needs to further your growth as artists and arts organizations. We are only limited by our imaginations! Don’t miss it – we hope to see you at our Open House the weekend of May 17-18.”*

Open House attendees will be free to explore the large space, and offer creative ideas and suggestions for the use of the space. The Arts Alliance will entertain proposals of interest from potential future occupants as well. The County and the Alliance will consider these ideas as input to the feasibility study.

The Arts Alliance, founded in 1987, is a nonprofit 501-c-3 organization that promotes ALL the arts – music, visual art, drama, dance and literature. For further information on the upcoming May 17-18 Open House, please call the CCAA at 301-392-5900.

PHOTO ATTACHED: “PLANNED” site

PHOTO CAPTION: *The second floor of Smallwood Village Center is being considered as a potential new home for the first multidisciplinary community arts center in Charles County. The Charles County Arts Alliance will host an Open House on May 17-18 to seek public input on this option.*

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The mission of the Charles County Arts Alliance (CCAA) is to stimulate, promote, encourage, and provide recognition of the arts and the creative spirit. Founded in 1987, the CCAA promotes ALL the arts in Charles County: music, visual art, drama, dance and literature.

The Charles County Arts Alliance, Inc. is funded by a grant from the [Maryland State Arts Council](#), an agency dedicated to cultivating a vibrant cultural community where the arts thrive. An agency of the Department of Business & Economic Development, the MSAC provides financial support and technical assistance to non profit organizations, units of government, colleges and universities for arts activities. Funding for the Maryland State Arts Council is also provided by the [National Endowment for the Arts](#), a federal agency, which believes that a great nation deserves great art. Further support of the CCAA comes from the [Charles County Government](#), [CCAA membership](#), and by tax deductible donations. Thank you all!