

Press Release

The Riverdale Art Center (The RAC) Opened in Riverdale, New Jersey on November 6 and 7, 2009.

What: The Riverdale Art Center Grand Opening
& "Founders and Friends" Art Exhibition at The RAC Gallery

When: Fundraiser Invitational on November 6th, and Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony on November 7th, 2009

Where: The RAC Gallery
2 Newark-Pompton Turnpike
Riverdale, NJ 07457
Phone: (973) 513-9250
Fax: (973) 513-9249

Website: www.riverdaleartcenter.org

The RAC Gallery Hours of Operation:

Thursdays from 12 – 6 PM,
Fridays and Saturdays from 10 – 6 PM

Contact: Jamie Dunne, PR Director, Fiore Associates, 973-359-4444
email: jdunne@fioreassociates.com

The Riverdale Art Center (The RAC) opened to the public on November 6th with a fundraising event and exhibition opening that drew in more than 250 people. Chef Jean-Louis Gerin of Restaurant Jean-Louis manned the kitchen and donated the appetizers, Yves Crouzet provided the cheeses, and the wine was donated by a number of vendors, including Etienne Touzot of le Wine Shop in Greenwich, Connecticut.

The following day, on November 7th, The RAC opened to the public with a ribbon-cutting ceremony with Mayor William Budesheim of Riverdale. "The Riverdale Art Center is helping to usher in a renaissance in Riverdale," said the Mayor in his dedication speech, "and we are thrilled that The RAC is making its home here." Joe Bograd of Bograd's Fine Furniture in Riverdale gave a colorful and humorous speech.

A new nonprofit, educational outreach organization dedicated to enriching the lives of individuals, families, and communities through art, The RAC's four-part model includes: gallery space for local artists; educational art classes and seminars; therapeutic art outreach programs for those with special needs; and studio space for artists.

The RAC Gallery is housed in an 1881 Victorian house on Richard's Corner in Downtown Riverdale, New Jersey, a site on which George Washington's troops once camped during the Revolutionary War. Use of this building was kindly offered by Joe and Marcia Bograd, owners of Bograd's Fine Furniture which is located next to The RAC Gallery.

The RAC Studio is located in a historic brick factory in Riverdale that was constructed in the 1890s. Both the renovation of the Studio and Gallery were done using entirely green principles, employing the latest LED technology for lighting the Gallery and state-of-the-art fluorescent lights balanced for art at the Studio.

The Group show "Founders and Friends" opened on November 7th to celebrate those artists who were involved in supporting and establishing The RAC, as well as those who volunteered their time to help renovate the two locations and organize the opening show.

"Founders and Friends" features works from 25 artists: **Lesley Bazzano, Donna Brien, Anthony, Dennis, Marian and William Budesheim, Laura Gravenstine, Joan Hain, Ira Kaltman, Deon Koekemoer, Alan Lazarus, Jenni Lombardi, Elaine Lorenz, Chris Mayse, Heather McManus, Katie Mikulyak, Adam Nowiki, Eileen Poplis, Diana Puglisi, Mehdi Hashemi, Alba Mezini, Tom Uhlein, Jerry Valenta, Alex Vicenzi, and Patti Watson.**

The show is curated by two RAC board members: Professor Elaine Lorenz, Professor of Sculpture at William Paterson University and Joan Hain, a retired art teacher from the Long Island public school system. Laura Gravenstine, an artist and recent graduate from the art department at William Paterson University, served as Assistant Curator.

The RAC was founded by Patti Watson, a historian and sculptor who specializes in ceramic raku. She saw that there was a need for such an organization in the Riverdale area, and believed that artists needed more support than ever, given the state of the economy. She decided to establish a new cultural center where local artists can sharpen their talents, become part of a nurturing community, learn how to navigate the challenging profession of art, and find an outlet to showcase their talents to share with the public.

The RAC is organizing its educational program which will roll out in January of 2010. In addition, The RAC also plans to offer art therapy programs to people with special needs in the spring of 2010. "Art and healing go hand-in-hand," says Patti, who has worked as a consultant in the history of medicine for a number of New Jersey's pharmaceutical firms and nonprofit medical organizations.

"I believe that the hands-on practice of art encourages a strong sense of wellbeing, and that sharing art can build community," says Patti. "Art allows individuals to live fuller lives, and can help stimulate healing in those with special needs. Now more than ever, with funding cut backs to the arts, communities must find a way to cultivate the arts. Art programs can empower communities. They can stimulate new ways of seeing the world, and provide a means for sharing those visions with others."