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Arts Board Chair: ‘A Lot of Excitement’ for Current, Future Projects

The city’s Arts Advisory Board, which includes a number of new members, is bringing high energy and enthusiasm to ongoing projects and future plans, its chairperson said recently.

“We’re a fresh crew. Aside from our city council representative, Linda Williamson, all of us are new to civic volunteer boards. And, so, it’s really fresh set of eyes and a lot of excitement about what we’re working on,” Holly Heartso said.

She noted that the board’s biggest project at the moment is a community mosaic, which involves “building a big picture from a lot of little pictures.” Boone residents can purchase four-by-four-inch tiles to paint, and those tiles will be assembled into one image. A location has not yet been selected for the finished product.

“To start, we hope to have it travel around with us a little bit. We intend to take it out for Pufferbilly Days,” she added.

Heartso said the board recently awarded six \$500 grants to support local art projects. “I feel very good about the process we followed in evaluating and awarding the grants. Everyone (on the board) liked what we saw and we were excited,” she said. “The impact will be really neat to see and the projects play out. I’ll continue to highlight each of those organizations that received grants with posts on the board’s Facebook page.”

While noting that many sponsors of community projects are approached by and donate to many local causes and organizations every year, Heartso indicated that the board could consider whether to encourage more private support or seek various grants for the arts if city rules allow. “We’re interested in figuring out how we can bolster our own budget independently and make our programs grow. That’s why the community mosaic is such a nice fundraiser,” she said. “We would love to commission some big art for the community to enjoy – maybe on a downtown building, at the green space or something like that – but our dreams are big but we have a lot of baby steps that we’ve got to take to get there. The world is our oyster at this point; we really can explore everything.”

Heartso recently met with an Iowa Economic Development Authority staff person who shared details of state funding for the arts. “We’re a small but mighty team,” Heartso said of the volunteer board. “Unfortunately, we’re pretty strapped for time at the moment but that’s very much on our radar. There are a number of different grant opportunities and definitely ones that we qualify for.”

The board has taken on responsibilities from the Boone Chamber of Commerce for this year’s Art in the Park as part of the Pufferbilly Days festivities. “We’re working in partnership with the chamber. They’re going to host a couple of other events out of the park during that day, and we’re in charge of recruiting all of the vendors and food trucks. We’re also going to have some live music and a barbecue contest,” Heartso said.

The Arts Advisory Board will be accepting vendor applications until July 31. Heartso is optimistic that the board will secure 45 vendors, including various food trucks, for the event. “Last year was very, very rainy. So, we just need some good weather this year and it will be a great day,” she said.

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