

Steve Hertzberg is the new president of Headwaters Arts

Written By CONSTANCE SCRAFIELD

'I talk to people in Orangeville about the Alton Mill (Arts Centre); some people say; 'Oh, yes, I think I know where that is but I've never been there.' And others say, 'I go there all the time.' Because once people go to the Mill, they love it and go back lots of times.'

So, said Steve Hertzberg, newly President of Headwaters Arts, in a telephone interview with the Citizen this week. While Mr. Hertzberg is not an artist, he has always 'had a love of art since an early age. I became art gallery hopper when I was travelling, in France. When I was sharing a house with friends, it was me that said we needed to rent art from the AGO to dress the place up a bit, when we rented a house as students.'

He was proud to tell us, 'I have a wife who's an artist. So, I have some experience in the art business.'

His wife is award winning Pat Hertzberg, textile and multi-media artist. She was formerly Resident Artist in Mississauga's Living Arts Centre. Last year at the Headwaters Arts juried show and sale, her piece, Northern Spirit, 'a fibre art piece about our melting Arctic and a call for climate action,' won both the Peoples' Choice Award and tied, with Michelle Hudson, for the Artists' Choice Award. It rarely happens that an artist's wins the acclamation of both the public and fellow exhibiting artists at that show.

They have been living in Alton for a while, having, 'spent most of our lives in Mississauga. We've been living up here about six years.'

'Work wise,' Mr. Hertzberg told the Citizen, 'I worked my last year in the federal government. I had worked with small start-ups in financial management. I was in two departments: one industry department. In my last year, I was with the Canada Revenue Agency in Toronto. On the financial side, I have a range of business experience.'

Like so many moves, timing was the push.

He said, 'Pat was Resident Artist at the Living Arts Centre; once the term was done, we looked for place to live up here.'

They found a house that suited them very well in Alton, '...a place that would actually work for a larger studio for Pat.'

A member of the Board of Directors with Headwaters Arts, now its president, Mr. Hertzberg has his ideas about what is important to consider in the coming years for the organization and his role in it.

'One of the things we want to do is to build on the success of our art gallery,' he commented. 'The gallery is a big strength of ours. We're located in the beautiful [arts] centre there. Trying to find the right path with that synergy. We need to find the way to get people to come; we really have to pitch it the right way.'

He feels his job in part is 'to increase the connections between the community and the artists. The first thing is to increase the gallery's presence in the community.

'The second thing is how do we hold special events for the community to meet the artists, connecting our local artists with the community? We can be a leader in doing something with those connections.'

After all, as he rightly observed, 'We're de facto the only art gallery for Caledon and Orangeville. If we can make connections, we can bring more people in.'

‘Finding directions to increase our member engagement to volunteer for doing things’ is another of his priorities. ‘I want to build our member engagement for doing things, to participate, help set up a show, give two or three hours on a day that fits their needs. It is a good way to meet people and make new friends. It’s something to do regularly.’

He commented with real feeling, ‘It’s something, participating in the arts community is something that pays you back.’

His financial background naturally brings the subject of the fiscal strengths of Headwaters Arts. ‘Corporate sponsorship funding, sponsorship revenue, that’s a job that some of us do. I quite enjoy it, meeting new people.

I’m putting in quite a few hours right now. It’s a transition time. As we move forward, we’re looking for people to fill new positions. When people are engaged, we’ll be able to spread the work and it will be shared by many.

‘That’s positive for everybody. And I’m up for the challenge.’

As he sees himself more as one of the people to bring in sponsorship, Mr. Hertzberg said, ‘I don’t plan to be as hands on with the gallery. Pat was in the Shift Show,’ an exhibition of nine artists at the Headwaters Gallery.

In his campaign to garner sponsors, Steve Hertzberg remarked, ‘I’ve been cold calling. I haven’t done it before. I find people generally very kind and I’ve enjoyed doing it. We need to get better at it. We have them go on to our website on the sponsors’ page. With our advertising in In the Hills, their logo goes on there.

‘We have banners where their logos for special events. We certainly would like our artists to also let us know about potential sponsors. An organization like ours, a not-for-profit, we do apply to get grants from Caledon. Our main revenue is arts sales and a big part of it is sponsorships. What I’d like is to have a lead sponsorship person. It’s an area we need to focus on.’

Considering the Headwaters area as a whole, Mr. Hertzberg commented, ‘I think we should try again to build a cohesive community within Headwaters. I think the political will is part of it. Municipalities should track what they spend on culture.’

His message, ‘Headwaters Arts is engaging members of the public and an art gallery where there’s always something new to explore. I would encourage everyone to come out and enjoy the gallery at the Alton Mill Arts Centre.’

Pat Hertzberg’s website is www.pathertzberg.com