

ADIRONDACK LAKES CENTER FOR THE ARTS CELEBRATED THEIR QUAD-COUNTY DECENTRALIZATION COMMUNITY GRANT RECIPIENTS AT SARANAC LAKE

Posted by [Deborah Kaufman](#) | May 8, 2016



Adirondack Lakes Center for the Arts of Blue Mountain Lake, NY (the Arts Center) held a celebration for the recipients of the 2016 New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA) decentralization grant awards at the Adirondack Carousel in Saranac Lake last weekend. As regional administrator for the ADK Quad-County Cultural Arts Grants, the Arts Center supports arts and cultural initiatives in Clinton, Essex, Franklin and Hamilton Counties.

According to **Christine Pouch, the new Executive Director** for the Arts Center, “There are 35 grant recipients under the community programs category this year and another five teaching artist awards for a total of \$90,000 grant awards given to North Country arts programs.” Pouch, a resident of Indian Lake since 2006, brings 15 years of non-profit resource and business development experience to her new role as Executive Director and administrator for the region’s NYSCA’s decentralized grant programs.

Her attitude toward making magic happen with limited resources and often numerous obstacles is typical of the type of people who work for arts and cultural organizations. Oftentimes, they keep community programs alive by sheer determination and the dedication of local volunteers that always seem to be there when you need them the most.

NYSCA’s decentralized grants play an important role in ensuring that access to community arts and cultural programs continue from one year to the next. Without the support from the state and organizations like The Saranac Lake Rotary Foundation that works with organizations to help secure grant funding, many of these programs would simply disappear.

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Extract from article

.....A grant was awarded to Rebecca Kelly and husband, Craig Brashear's Appleby Foundation this year. Their foundation is responsible for the creation of the Tahawus Center for culture, community and commerce in the North Country. According to Brashear, "We've been doing business in the Adirondacks since 1987 as Rebecca Kelly Ballet through the Arts Center in Lake Placid. About seven years ago we were inspired by then Senator Hillary Clinton to put some more roots down in the area, and began looking for a location that we could develop into a center for community, commerce and culture so that we could have a more permanent situation."

Their Tahawus Center in Ausable Forks, NY, once a Masonic Hall in much need of renovations, today hosts events with a dance studio on the top floor, houses a gallery/community space on the second floor, and offers ground floor business space on Main Street. According to Kelly, their vision for Tahawus is a place where people can explore their ideas and creative energy. "Something we could be proud of... a cultural hub for the greater AuSable Forks community."

Craig Brashear with Rebecca Kelly Ballet



Kelly and Brashear's passion for the arts has been a treasured asset for Adirondack communities going back to 1987. As Kelly describes it, "We came to the Adirondacks because of a meeting when we were performing in NYC in the Symphony Space Theater on the Upper West Side. There happened to be a man in the audience by the name Robin Pell who was, at the time, the Director of the Lake Placid Center for the Arts. He said, 'you must bring your company up to the Adirondacks.' So, I said sure...not knowing exactly where that was. We thought Upstate New York was Albany and after that it was Canada. We went up there in 1987 for a two-week residency - and have been back every year since for 37 years now."

Over the years, Rebecca Kelly Ballet has become synonymous with their popular OnStage dance program that began in 1989 for students between the ages of 7-19 years of age. The program continues today helping children dance techniques with ballet as the core. "Thousands of kids that have come through the program as young people, and are now bringing their own children to OnStage for training," noted Kelly.

Rebecca Kelly of Rebecca Kelly Ballet



For many couples, an impressive career in ballet and modern dance would be enough, but for Kelly and Brashear that was just the beginning. The Tahawus Center is their latest investment in the Adirondack region. With the support of NYSCA funding (for cultural programs) their renovations will continue this year with insulation to the attic as a priority for additional usable space.

When you look at the wealth of artistic and cultural talent that participated in this year's NYSCA Decentralized Grant Program, it's hard not to be impressed. The one common thread that seems to emerge after talking to a few of the 2016 recipients is that funds distributed through the NYSCA's Decentralized Grant program are not only worthwhile, they return much more than one would expect in terms of quality of life and cultural amenities...they preserve the cultural heritage of our North Country communities. They literally keep dreams alive for artists and arts organizations and serve to inspire the creativity of our youth...not just for today...but for generations to come.