

2021 Annual Report to RAL Art Center Membership from the Board of Directors

Overview of 2021

We have continued to be plagued by Covid-19 in the form of new variants. This has been partially mitigated by the quick development of three effective vaccines which became available in Spring of 2021. RAL Art Center has carefully followed CDC guidelines as our loyal volunteers returned and we were able to maintain our Tuesday through Saturday schedule of business hours. To safeguard our volunteers, staff and visitors, only fully vaccinated persons were allowed to serve.

Classes returned to normal scheduling in the spring, but the number of students in each class was limited to allow for safe distancing. First Fridays also returned with masking for the vaccinated optional but required for the non-vaccinated.

We applied for and received a second Federal Covid-19 Assistance to Small Businesses (PPP) forgivable loan of \$6,500 through the Small Business Administration designed to help small businesses during the pandemic. We fulfilled all the obligations and the loan has been forgiven.

We also applied for and received funds from several granting agencies totaling \$19,125. The Cole Charitable Trust awarded RAL with \$7,000 which was devoted to continuing our sponsorship of Art 4 Kids, organized by Karen Williams. When schools returned to normal in 2021, that program was discontinued but weekend art programs for children took its place. We received \$10,000 from the River Counties Community Foundation to assist RAL in providing youth outreach programs and developing additional youth art curricula. We received a general operating grant from the Virginia Commission for the Arts in the amount of \$2,125.

One of our most popular events returned. The Great Art Heist, chaired by Christine Mason, was a great success. Grand total Income from the event was \$18,900. Ticket sales totaled \$14,200, the silent auction generated \$2,800 and sponsorships totaled \$1,900. This exceeded any other year's income.

Another popular RAL event, the 60th Annual Labor Day Art Show, judged by Robin Caspari, had a live Awards Ceremony and Reception in 2021 with ribbons and monetary awards. This year's organizers were Mary Ellis and Barbara Kershner. Many people contributed to its great success. RAL sold nearly \$15,800 worth of fine art and had over 1,200 visitors during the month of September.

The ever-popular Jewelry Show returned on November 5th and 6th with RAL's four jewelry artists participating. Jacquie Colligan, Sue Broadway, Courtney Guerant and Pat Lawler presented their finest pieces to an appreciative crowd which

included members of the Chamber of Commerce who were conducting their monthly After Hours event which the RAL Art Center hosted. Our jewelers sold \$5,200 in the two-day event!

Several important management and staff changes took place. Dale Coburn retired as Customer Experience Manager. In her place Sharon Stone was hired as our new Gallery Manager. Sharon will oversee all aspects of the Gallery including management of the sales desk as well as implementing solutions to improve processes and procedures. A new Office Manager, Carlesha Reed, was hired and her duties include managing data entry in Wild Apricot, our membership management software. Carlesha will also increase social media presence for RAL. Stephanie Finklin continues as our very capable Bookkeeper.

Planning and scheduling of Classes and Paint Nights has been transferred from Cheryl Mihills, who managed this brilliantly for five years, to Sharon Stone and Doug Mock.

Executive Director, Doug Mock is continuing in his important role of leadership, oversight of all staff, outreach to the greater community and advancement of our updated Strategic Plan, which the Board approved in November 2021.

Thanks to Executive Director Doug Mock and the Membership Team chaired by Julie Austin, a new membership program was launched in February with great success. This program now offers 6 membership options offering benefits for most levels. The levels include: Friend - \$50, Partner - \$120, Patron - \$250, Envoy - \$500 and Ambassador - \$1000. Our program offers two special memberships, Student and Teacher at \$25 and FREE membership for local art teachers. As of the end of 2021, this restructuring has resulted in membership income of \$26,600, a significant gain from the previous year. Currently RAL has 323 members. We conducted two very successful New Member Orientation programs with more planned for 2022.

The Communications and Marketing Team continued to expand RAL Art Center outreach to the community through the enhanced ARTLINE managed by CarolAnne Taylor and Sarah Elliott. The distribution of ARTLINE has increased to include gallery visitors who sign-up, website visitors and class attendees. A TriFold brochure, created by Sarah Elliott, will be completed in the 1st quarter, and distributed to the Chamber of Commerce and our tourist locations in the Northern Neck and Middle Peninsula.

Nine new Co-op Exhibiting Artists have joined our co-op Gallery since the beginning of 2021, which now total 55. We now have a waiting list. In addition to our co-op Gallery, monthly Exhibit Room Shows, Windows displays of featured artists, we also have additional exhibits on our new mobile units. November featured a Photography Exhibit simultaneous with the Holiday Shop. We also hosted a Lancaster County High School art student show in October.

Other notable achievements of 2021 included special exhibits that took place in addition to our regular monthly All-Member Exhibits. These were The Regional Virginia Watercolor Society Exhibit which was co-ordinated with our two sister arts organizations, Bay School in Matthews and Arts on Main in Gloucester. A second very successful initiative was the Art in Transit Exhibit and Competition which was conceived and conducted between Bay Transit (a subsidiary of Bay Aging), Gander Design and RAL Art Center. That initiative was organized by our Executive Director, Doug Mock and the Director of Bay Transit, Mike Stevens. The winner of the art competition was Brenda Sylvia whose work appears on a Bay Transit bus. Art in Transit will continue in April/May 2022.

We also took part in the Lancaster by The Bay Chamber of Commerce's annual Christmas Parade for the first time ever. Our float was designed and built by member artist/instructor Don Presnell. He and many energetic volunteers created a masterpiece which won the Spirit of Christmas Award!

The Town of Kilmarnock, through a Federal Program, offered matching grants to Main Street businesses to improve their storefront appearances. RAL Art Center qualified and our proposal was approved. Expect to see brand new bright red awnings in early 2022. Other facility improvements include a new locking system which keeps close track of who has legitimate access to RAL Art Center. We installed an Air Knight ultraviolet air purification system which continuously filters the gallery air and kills viruses as it filters.

As a final note on our significant 2021 achievements, under the leadership of Vice-President Julie Austin and her team, a strategic plan was developed that will guide the direction of RAL Art Center activities for the next several years. The plan includes short and longer term initiatives as well as desired outcomes. We thank those contributing members of our Board of Directors for aiding in this important initiative and all members who carefully appraised and approved the 2021 Strategic Plan.

We are pleased to announce that new Directors have joined the 2022 Board of Directors to fill the two open spaces. They are Alice Cooper and Ian Cheyne. Our slate of Directors is now complete. Additional directors can be added as needed.

Board of Directors for 2022:

**President: Barbara Kershner
Vice-President: Julie Austin
Secretary: CarolAnne Taylor
Treasurer: Deirdra McLaughlin
Cheryl Mihills
Karen Williams
Carol Clark
Alfie Butts
Alice Cooper
Ian Cheyne**

2022 Initiatives

- 1. A major initiative for 2022 will be our Youth Education Program which is being named “SMART - Classes for young artists”. RAL artist/member Barb Brecher is in charge of branding this initiative. Some funds are already available and more will be applied for through granting agencies. Executive Director, Doug Mock, and Youth Program Coordinator, Karen Williams, will work closely together to identify opportunities for youth classes both onsite along with outreach opportunities. RAL intends to identify experienced art teachers to assist with organizing and running the program which is intended to reach all children in our community.**
- 2. RAL will continue to expand its service offerings via our website under the direction of Board member and technology expert, Carol Clark. Our website will soon have a “donate” button and individuals will be able to register and pay for classes online.**
- 3. RAL will start a Visiting Artist program under the direction of artist/member Cate Kauffman. This program is intended to attract local, regional or nationally acclaimed teaching artists to offer classes/work-**

shops at RAL. We have booked one artist from Tennessee for early June who will conduct a 3-day workshop.

4. RAL Art Center will begin the process of assessing a Point of Sale (POS) system with the assistance of Carol Clark. The goals for a POS system are many; make the job of Day Manager easier, minimize the amount of paperwork at the front desk, and improve the flow of information across the organization, especially to our bookkeeper.

RAL Art Center's very successful 2021 was due in large part to the efforts, talents and enthusiasm of our amazing, dedicated volunteers, our extraordinary artists, many of whom are also volunteers, and our experienced, professional staff. Our many visitors throughout the year could not help but be impressed as their comments and art purchases made clear.

Thank you to everyone who devoted themselves to making RAL Art Center the premier Arts organization that it is, and to you, our Members, for supporting us so faithfully.

Barbara A. Kershner
President, RAL Art Center Board of Directors