

December 19, 2011

Hello Creations Supporters!

I've been wanting to update you on everything that has been happening with Creations. And to fill you in on what we have planned for the future.

As you probably know, for more than a year Creations has been known as the open-accessibility art studio on the Cedar Street Bridge. We've been providing a creative space and art materials to groups and anyone else who feels like sitting down for an hour or two and just letting the creativity flow. It's all done with donations, free of charge.



We currently serve over 500 families. 35 of those families involve people with disabilities who come to enjoy our services in regularly-scheduled groups. Another 200 are tourist families who discovered us while visiting Sandpoint, many of whom now come back to see us whenever they are in town.

Here's a testimonial from one of them that leads into some exciting additional news I'm just bursting to tell you about.

*We love Creations because it gives us a fun creative outlet - and it's something we can do together! As a single mother of two children it's hard to afford to take the kids (5 & 6) out to do activities like this while still keeping finances in mind. As an added bonus the kids see our 'trash' in a whole new light! The amazing things they've invented at home after getting their artistic juices flowing and being inspired is well worth the few \$\$s I put into the donation box. Such a FABULOUS place to relax, create, and bond with friends old and new. -Best Wishes!**

Wow! We keep a notebook out, asking people to leave us a note telling us why they love Creations, and that's the kind of feedback we get. Daily.

So, what's to top that? How about more of the same, but bigger, broader, and even more purposeful?

You may already know that Creations is an almost full-time preoccupation for me. Yet I have even more in mind, and it has become obvious that I need to organize and delegate. We've already got one part-time employee, courtesy of Experience Works, who is helping with such things as stocking, supervising the playspace, and running the regular classes. The blessing in that is me recovering some time and energy to

expand the vision and scope for what we can accomplish. Of course that also amplifies my need for help.

So I've brought a Managing Director on board to bring organizational support and donor development into the mix. He's a retired management consultant I met some time back who shares our vision, and he jumped at the chance to help.

In fact, that's how the next big piece of news came about. While we were discussing my long-range vision for Creations, he suggested that what I am trying to do is to fill a void he saw many times in his business and consulting career. He explained that most urban renewal and redevelopment efforts, like business reorganizations, focus heavily on commercial infrastructure and neglect the people. Too often, the hoped-for benefits never manifest. He thought I might consider that Creations' ultimate purpose is to fill the gap; to provide what he says management consultants call "the soft side" —the social and personal aspects.

Yes! Creations' broader aim is to provide the soft side of urban development. We intend to stimulate the social interactions that bind a rejuvenated local culture, and in the process, to give ground to the economic goals of redevelopment by creating the interactive "draw" that brings additional people into the area.

Sandpoint has a lot to offer. Sandpoint can become a destination in its own right. Government and redevelopment agencies are fairly good at the infrastructure part of such things. We're here to build the social aspect: the soft side. In everyday language, we plan to *keep Sandpoint personal*. All year long.



Wow... this clinches an excuse to come to Sandpoint with children in the chilly weather. M.L., CdA

And....

*We [were] here visiting for a month. Today was hot and sunny but the kids had too much sun yesterday so we wanted to keep them in. This is a great place to play together & kept both Grandma and the kids from being disappointed about having to stay inside!**

Year-around, snow or shine, we are building a climate-controlled family recreation space right in the heart of downtown Sandpoint, in the mall of the landmark Cedar Street Bridge. And stimulating return business for our neighbors. But we've only just begun.

Next we'll be building a toddler-safe locally-themed playground complete with padded flooring, action fixtures and interactive educational / stimulation panels. Along the way we'll set up a second-hand store and toy exchange.

Of course, as with the original art and crafts room, we aren't thinking only about the children. We're also hoping to help at-risk teens and displaced adults develop new careers, perhaps through an on-the-job teaching cafe and snack bar.

Then after all that, we hope to head outdoors with some very creative larger ideas to complete the task of making Sandpoint a true tourist destination right here in the downtown area. (Stay in touch and we'll keep you updated on that!)

Well, that's what we've been up to and what we hope to do.

I want you to know that we couldn't have gotten this far without your help. And also, to remind you that every next step will require even greater dedication on our part and ever more support from you and from the grant writing that our new Managing Director will be seeing to.

We are in the first of a series of transitions. We've gotten as far as we can go with the resources we have, but getting grants written and funded is going to take additional time and work. We need additional local support to make that happen. That is why right now, at this crucial stage, we are calling on you.

We've always kept costs down. And we're not about fat salaries. Yet we do have needs, both for survival and for expansion. With our natural conservatism and your additional help, we can make wonderful things continue to happen right here in beautiful downtown Sandpoint.



We need to relocate Creations farther back on the Bridge. That way, as we develop our next phase, we'll have everything in the same area. To do that requires re-plumbing that part of the building.

Then, the next phase is to build a child-safe educationally-interactive playground ("Intelliground") inside the east end of the Bridge. The soft flooring and decor will reflect the local outdoor environment. The floor padding will depict a boardwalk, Sand Creek, and the lake. Play amenities will include a sailboat on the lake, a forest, and electronic interactive teaching panels along the wall by the boardwalk. The perimeter will include cafe seating and wireless internet stations for parents, guardians, and the general public.

We need to move Creations first, and we'd like to have the Intelliground under construction by mid-January. Moving costs, initial construction costs, and operations, indicate a December fundraising goal of about \$10,000.00. We're counting on your continued support to make it happen. Won't you donate today?

Questions? Need a tour? Have a group that would like to attend a more detailed presentation? No problem! Call me, or stop by. We're in the Cedar Street Bridge, 334 N. 1st Avenue at Cedar Street, currently between the Blue Moon Cafe and The Mischievous Moose General Store.

Won't you please give me a call? I'd love to schedule a time to meet so you can conveniently contribute to Creations. Or, if you are ready to move forward, you may contribute through our website!

Thank you so much for your support, past and future!

PS: Find us on the Internet at
CreationsForSandpoint.Org

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* Unsigned testimonials on file.