

Business leaders pitching in on music conservatory project

Amidst stories of a downward economy, the group behind the new Music Conservatory of Coeur d'Alene is not discouraged.

Volunteers are excited to go inside the 112-year-old Hamilton House on Government Way and wash down walls, rip out old carpet, polish the floors, map out space, and get ready for instruments and classes. The idea of pressing forward on this Conservatory is creating energy and optimism, says Julienne Dance, the visionary behind the Conservatory.

John Swallow and Rob Johnston of Coeur d'Alene are providing advice for the work to be done on the historic Hamilton House that sits at 627 Government Way. Swallow and Johnston have had considerable experience with preserving historic buildings. Recently, they were instrumental in moving the J.C. White House for the Museum of North Idaho.

Many may remember the old 3rd Street Cantina Mexican restaurant in downtown Coeur d'Alene. Swallow and Johnston tore out everything and completely restored the building to look like the original, which was the old Northern Pacific train depot.

In looking at the Hamilton house, Swallow said, "Right now, we must be wise to preserve what is here yet determine what must be changed."

They confirmed that the house is in "beautiful shape," and though it hasn't had adequate care for a few years, the quality of the building is exceptional. Swallow, who was familiar with



John Swallow, left and Rob Johnston will be helping with the renovation construction for the future Music Conservatory of Coeur d'Alene, former Romer house.

Courtesy photo

the house, said it was constructed with the best of materials, pointing out the original window openers and the clear wood floors that have aged beautifully.

The historical research team of Cindy Nunn and Deborah Mitchell as well as the Government Way Coalition, led by Zoe Ann Thrumman, are enthusiastic about seeing the Music Conservatory in the Hamilton House (aka the Romer House). Since last summer, they have endeavored to save this house, entreating the City of Coeur d'Alene, Kootenai County Commissioners, and the State Historic Preservation Commission.

"It not only saves the house from impending demolition by the county, but it provides something that the entire community will benefit from," Mitchell said.

Professional violinist Maria Dance played her instrument in several rooms in the house. Surrounded by sturdy walls and high ceilings, she found the tones from her strings to be clear and brilliant.

A music conservatory is an incubator of talent. And with that, it's possible to look forward to the miracle of a performing arts center in Coeur d'Alene someday, Dance believes.

Brittany Ratelle said

that having this house for music education amidst our glorious lakes and mountains will be magical! She states that as parents in Coeur d'Alene we ponder how we should spend our time. What can our kids do to grow and mature? Ratelle runs a law office that specializes in providing legal help for creative entrepreneurs.

Music is not a stranger to the Hamilton House. As a teenager in the 1930s, Dean Elder prepared for his professional career as a concert pianist and international jurist within the walls of the house. Additional historic documentation credits

several other tenants with notable musical talent.

You can read more about the Music Conservatory on Facebook: www.facebook.com/pg/MusicConservatoryCdA/ and more about the history of the Hamilton house at www.facebook.com/HMEHCDA/

If you are interested in volunteering for this project to save the Hamilton house as a music conservatory, email Juliennedance@gmail.com and if you would like to support this endeavor, www.gofundme.com/f/coeur-d039alene-music-conservatory-at-hamilton-house

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