



gallery & community art center

Message from the executive director

After 20 years of service to Artwell as founder, executive director, and board member, Stewart Wilson has resigned from his position as board president to be able to devote more time to his lovely partner Linda Donald as well as his own artwork.

Stewart's vision, energy, and personality helped make Artwell the foundation upon which all of Torrington's visual art scene has been built, as well as a grassroots organization that has inspired many other such institutions in the region and beyond.

Hats off to Stewart Wilson! Note: Stewart will remain a member of Artwell and serve on our Advisory Board where his wisdom will be greatly appreciated.

In the past four years, Artwell has weathered many internal and external challenges. As many of you are aware, we have moved our location from 19 & 21 Water Street to 45 Main Street, and most recently to 42 Main Street & 65 Water Street. These moves were motivated by a desire to give Artwell a presence on Main Street, find suitable space for not only our gallery, but education programs, and administrative office, as well as partner with other for profit and/or not-for-profits in order to better advance our mission and participation in the community.

As we look ahead to our long-term needs, it is evident that to serve our members and the Litchfield County community Artwell needs paid staff, and a first-class facility where all our operations can take place. To our credit, over the past two decades we have done much on a shoe-string budget due, in no small part, to the generosity of volunteers. Although this "less is more-from the bottom up" philosophy is truly laudable, ultimately it can't sustain an organization with a mission as important and programming as needed as ours.

Moving Artwell forward will take people, planning, and funding. Our bottom line must be "do it right, or don't do it at all." As executive director I have recommended to the board that Artwell enter into a planning period for at least one year. To this end, and in keeping with a renewed commitment to fiscal prudence, the Board of Director's voted to move forward by making the following changes:

- Move out of Morrison's by September 1. Our presence there was an experiment in collaboration with "Create Here Now." Many aspects of our year in Morrison's have been very positive indeed, however the owner of the building wants to raise

the rent by 350 percent for the coming year and heating costs in our space there have been high. This simply does not work for us!

- Maintain our collaboration with the Warner Theatre by managing the Atrium Gallery space.
- Vacate the gallery space at 42 Main Street in August 2014. This space has been generously provided to us by Robert Rovezzi and the other owners of the Allen Building. Mr Rovezzi would like to find a tenant that can pay the going rate for the space. At this point, Artwell's budget can't absorb rent on this space which would need to be renovated to make it into a first-class gallery space capable of exhibiting larger, wall hanging artworks.
- Concentrate our resources on our successful education programs by developing and implementing an after-school arts enrichment program in the Torrington Middle and High schools incorporating S.T.E.A.M. (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math) education principles. A \$10,000 Arts Leadership Grant has been awarded to us by the Connecticut Commission on the Arts for this project.
- Aggressively seek funding for paid staff and programming.

As Nancy and I will be working at the Torrington Middle School and the Gilbert School this coming academic year, our time for volunteer activities will be limited to helping to develop a long-term plan for Artwell. Thus, we will be counting on our members and supporters to manage many of Artwell's day-to-day needs.

I look forward to seeing you at the members' meeting on Saturday, July 26 at 5 p.m. at Morrison's, 65 Water Street, second floor. At the meeting I will present the concept of S.T.E.A.M. education, members will discuss Artwell's future plans, and vote in new members to the board. Of course I would be happy to talk to anyone concerning Artwell's plans for the coming year before the meeting.

Sincerely,



Michael Yurgeles, Executive Director
July 16, 2014

“ART FOR ALL!”