New WCF office creates opportunity for UNL art class

The staff of Woods Charitable Fund ushered in 2013 in its new location in Suite 1130 of the Wells Fargo Center at 1248 O St. WCF’s move also offered the foundation the opportunity to partner with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln on a project that benefited art students as well as WCF’s new home.

Early in the spring semester, Associate Professor Aaron Holz and Assistant Professor Matthew Sontheimer brought a few beginning and advanced painting students to WCF’s offices to meet with WCF President Tom Woods and discuss the class project: The students were to paint artworks inspired by WCF’s history with telecommunications in Lincoln. The students learned about Woods Charitable Fund’s work and mission and visited the Frank H. Woods Telephone Pioneer Museum before creating their pieces.

Once completed, the students returned their varied paintings, about 20 in all, to WCF, which purchased six.

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More than grants: WCF finds new ways to invest

WCF has launched two new ways it can help Lincoln’s nonprofits and community that stretch beyond grant-making.

In 2012, WCF’s board approved a new Employee Volunteer Program, which supports WCF employees’ desires to volunteer in the community and a mission of social responsibility. Employees receive up to 24-48 hours of volunteer leave to be used throughout the calendar year, and with the approval of the President, they can volunteer at 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations during regular business hours.

WCF staff members have volunteered for a variety of Lincoln nonprofits, including the Homeless Coalition, the Center for People in Need, MilkWorks, Community Action Partnership, Nebraska Mission of Mercy, Volunteer Partners and
Tabitha Meals on Wheels. WCF also has joined Volunteer Partners’ Corporate Volunteer Council to encourage a spirit of volunteerism in Lincoln.

Secondly, WCF’s new office includes a conference room (see above) that is available for use for free to Lincoln’s nonprofit organizations. Some organizations that have used the room in 2013 include Humanities Nebraska, Lincoln Community Foundation and Nebraskans for Civic Reform. The room is available during WCF’s regular business hours and includes the use of the kitchen and a phone for conference calls.

Spotlight on WCF’s former Executive Director, Pam Baker (1988-2012)

Pam Baker retired from her position as WCF’s Executive Director in February 2012, after a 23-year career with the Fund. More than $2.6 million in grants were awarded in her tenure. For her parting allotment of $15,000 in director-designated grants, Pam awarded half to Nebraska Appleseed Center for Law in the Public Interest, and half to Lincoln’s Community Learning Centers.

What have you been doing since leaving WCF? “I left WCF in February 2012 and promptly underwent knee replacement surgery. After rehabbing for a couple of months, I welcomed my daughter and grandsons for a fun summer together. Then I went to work at Community Development Resources in a part-time/temporary position administering and promoting the Alice’s Integrity Loan Fund for Alice Dittman and the Lincoln Community Foundation. I worked with the Loan Fund through May 2013. We loaned about $75,000 in about 14 loans in that time, which exceeded the money and numbers from the prior year. I also helped facilitate some changes in the program to help make it more accessible to the people Alice hoped to lend money to. I helped get word about the program to Lincoln’s nonprofit groups, including those serving immigrants and refugees.”

What’s coming up in the near future for you? “I’m trying hard not to follow my natural inclination to become busy - but rather to find spaces to relax a bit and explore new approaches to life and have fun. I still care a great deal about many community issues and am informally assisting when opportunities present themselves (when people ask!). I’m serving on two nonprofit boards -- The Sheldon Art Association and The Angels Theatre Company.”

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pieces that are now displayed in the WCF office. One piece showing two children communicating through string and tin cans in the old “telephone” game is installed in the office’s lobby. Two others are detailed closeups of a pay phone and a vintage French princess phone.

“It’s so exciting knowing that someone will see my painting every day in this building, and that there will be many new eyes who will get to see it also,” said student Andrea Maack, who created the painting of the pay phone. “Woods Charitable Fund has been generous in giving us this opportunity.”

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Asian Community & Cultural Center
Bright Lights
CASA for Lancaster County
Center for People in Need
Center for Rural Affairs
Center for Legal Immigration Assistance
City of Lincoln Police Dept.
Community CROPS
Common Cause Nebraska
Easter Seal Society of Nebraska
Educate Lincoln
El Centro de las Americas
Family Service Association of Lincoln
Family Violence Council
Food Bank of Lincoln
Flatwater Shakespeare
Friendship Home of Lincoln
Friends of Woods Tennis
Good Neighbor Community Center
Grand Island Community Foundation
Habitat for Humanity
Heartland Big Brothers-Big Sisters
Humanities Nebraska
Indian Center
Leadership Lincoln
Legal Aid of Nebraska
Lincoln Children’s Zoo
Lincoln Parks and Recreation Foundation
Lincoln Public Schools

Lux Center for the Arts
Malone Center
Mark of Honor Youth Lodge
Matt Talbot Kitchen & Outreach
The Mediation Center
Merrick Foundation
Mourning Hope
Nebraska Appleseed
Nebraska Art Association
Nebraska Association for the Education of Young Children
Nebraskans for Civic Reform
Nebraska Wesleyan University
Northeast Family Resource Center
OpenSky Policy Institute
Outlook
Planned Parenthood of the Heartland
Providers Network
Prairie Gold Homes
Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center
St. Monica’s Home
University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Dept. of Community & Regional Planning
University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Plains Humanities Alliance
Voices of Hope Lincoln
Volunteer Partners
Woods Hall Craft Shop