

Letter from the President

Dear Friends of the Blue Sage,

This is a special time for the Blue Sage and important to its future. We just completed the purchase of the Old Bank Building. This will give us more space for bigger and better programming, an art gallery, lobby space, and a large back room full of potential. This spring, we will celebrate the purchase with an elegant evening of music and refreshments thanking our Old Bank Building Capital Campaign donors.

Our dear friend and Executive Director, Thomas Smith, resigned on Dec. 31 with a New Year's Eve and Black

Eyed Pea Jubilee going away party. I hope you all had a chance to wish him well. He wants to spend more time with his family, and travel to some exotic beaches. We will miss you, Thomas!

The board has undertaken the challenge of hiring a new Director, Lorelei Sells. She has great ideas for educational programs and wants to hear what you would like to see happening at the Blue Sage. If you haven't met her yet, stop in to say hi. Her hours are 12-5 on Tues/Wed/Thurs.

Our Board of Directors has been amazing in its ability to meet the challenges presented this past year. As most non-profit organizations, we are faced with less grant funding available to keep

things running. So, again, we turn to you, friends of the Blue Sage. This is a time when your financial support would be very much appreciated. We generate roughly 1/3 of our operating costs from our membership. If you are not a member, please become one. If your membership has expired, please renew. Also, automatic monthly withdrawals are an easy way to support the arts in the North Fork. Call today to renew or join.

Your ideas are valuable to us. Let us know how we can better serve you and the broader North Fork community.

With Gratitude,
Lynn Wetherell, *Board President*

The Blue Sage Community Completes Purchase of the Old Bank

Excerpted from an article by Kathy Browning, staff writer for The Delta County Independent

The "Old Bank Building" is now officially part of the Blue Sage Center for the Arts in downtown Paonia. Members of the Blue Sage bank building committee — Marion Stewart, Lynn Wetherell and Steve Harper — sat down recently to look back at the history of the acquisition.

Negotiations began in 2003 to purchase the bank building from former Paonia residents, Mose and Maren Oppenheimer, founding members of the Blue Sage board. Stewart remembers the Board of Directors was split on whether to attempt the huge undertaking. The majority of the board decided the benefits for the community in owning a second historic building next door to the Curtis Building Blue Sage was a worthy effort.



On May 16, 2003, the board entered into a one-year contract to purchase the building from the Oppenheimers for \$158,000.

Marion Stewart and Lynn Wetherell put on a variety of evening dinners. Their efforts brought in the \$10,000 needed as earnest money. The remainder of the purchase price was to be raised within one year. The Blue Sage Board set about having fund raisers including selling bricks for a patio and walkway behind the two buildings, benefit concerts by the Mientkas and others, and more dinners including a multicultural dinner hosted by Jo and Ron Edmondson. By May 19, 2004, they were able to pay the debt down to \$100,000, but not to close the deal.

Then nothing short of a miracle happened. A local couple in Paonia, described

by Steve Harper as "angels," became anonymous benefactors. They purchased the bank building and entered into an agreement allowing the Blue Sage to buy the bank building from them over five years, with \$20,000 due each year, at zero interest. The couple saved the bank building. "We couldn't have done it without [our benefactors]," Stewart said. For their part, the Oppenheimers generously lowered the purchase price by \$10,000.

The benefactors allowed the Blue Sage to use the bank building as though they already owned it. An archway was opened up between the buildings creating a gallery and lobby in the bank building. "There was a lot of trust and respect," Stewart said from their benefactors. "It really made us feel as if we made a right decision. It's been great fun to use the gallery." Over 100 local artists have displayed their work.

The Blue Sage received the last of the necessary funding in December, 2006. They closed their agreement with the "angels" by paying the last \$60,000 on Feb 13th.

Actors Age 4 to 18 Unite on Theater Project

Peek in the front window of The Blue Sage on Monday or Wednesday from 3:45 to 4:45 and you are likely to catch a glimpse of young actors in class preparing for their roles in an upcoming performance of *The Lion The Witch and The Wardrobe*. The young cast of thirty, under Direction of Carl Smith and Lisa Howden, is well on their way to creating the magical world of Narnia.



The Blue Sage and the Vision Home and Community Program have collaborated to make the class available for all students in the Paonia area. The students' training in a range of theater techniques will culminate in the production, to be held at the Blue Sage Easter weekend.

"The experience of live theatre is a true gift to these kids and to our community

as a whole" explains Lisa. "No matter where you go, or what you become in your life, the opportunity to both appreciate and participate in the arts will help you on your journey."

Lisa's own transition from a shy child with low self esteem, to an actress performing the role of Hester Prynne at New York's Lincoln Center serves much of her inspiration to teach theatre to children. Lisa has seen miraculous transitions in these young actors over the last six years in Paonia, "it is my driving force," she says.

Thrilled to have found a partner in Carl Smith, a life-long Paonian who has been active in local theater and holds a degree in the subject from Fort Lewis College,

Lisa comments, "It is a

huge inspiration to find someone as passionate about theatre as I am."

Carl Smith is great at getting them to think outside the box by playing games that encourage their imagination and use of body, skills that will serve them in many arenas in their lives. Vision and The Blue Sage hope to make this an ongoing opportunity holding several

classes throughout the year, with a goal of reaching the widest community possible.

When asked what kind of dark characters they could think of for the Witch's army, some of the younger kids suggested "a one eyed bat!" and "a huge worm." Just as Lisa and Carl were struggling to envision creating those costumes another child jumped from his seat and exclaimed "how about a giant squid!" On that note, any volunteers interested in helping with the costumes or the set are encouraged to call the Blue Sage. Regardless of whether you have time to help or not, make sure to come and see the young actors "hatch" in this magical production.

Performances will be held at the Blue Sage Center for the Arts on:

Thursday, April 5th at 6:30pm

Friday, April 6th at 6:30pm

Saturday, April 7th at 2:30pm.

Tickets sales go to support the program and are available at the Blue Sage. Ticket prices are:

Adults	\$8
Blue Sage Members	\$5
Children 5-12	\$3
Children under 5	are free.

Purchase of Old Bank, continued from cover

Among the many national, state and local foundations who put the Blue Sage over the top were the Gates and Boettcher Foundations and an anonymous local foundation. Other funding came from the Bacon Family Foundation, DMEA Charitable Trust, the Peace Awareness Foundation, the Goodwin Foundation, the Cocker Kids Foundation, the Kerr Foundation, El Pomar and the Duncan Charitable Trust. The Blue Sage raised matching funds to secure the grants.

The Blue Sage Center's area has now nearly doubled. The committee moves on to plan how to effectively use the back area of the bank building and to prioritize renovations.

The Colorado Historical Society has given money to renovate the Curtis

Building and to plan renovation of the bank building. After the closing, the Blue Sage can apply for renovation grants from the Historical Society for the bank building. Any renovations will preserve the historical status and integrity of the building.

"This is a great asset for the North Fork Valley and in particular, Paonia," Stewart said. "Two buildings which are historic will remain historic right on the main street in Paonia."

The committee wants to look at how to utilize renewable energy in the renovation. The bathroom in the bank building will become handicapped accessible. Stewart is looking into ways to have an elevator in the bank building, providing access to the upper floor.

The response from the community was great. "This was a huge effort and it has been supported widely," Steve Harper said. "We are very grateful for all the assistance."

Local contractors and volunteers donated their skills and time. Fred Bishop and Roger Bissel led a group of contractors who provided in kind services. Among those who helped were Don Foster, Greg Caufield, Paul Douglas, architect Bob McHugh, Skylar Bissel, Lynn Wetherell, Joe Inman and many others. The committee also recognized the contribution of the grant writers, Illene Roggensack of Grand Junction and Kate Zachman.

A celebration for Blue Sage members is planned in the spring to celebrate the purchase of the bank building.

The 'Lorelei Sells Era' Begins at the Blue Sage

Adapted from an article by Kathy Browning, staff writer for The Delta County Independent

Revelers at the Blue Sage New Year's Eve Ball were present for more than just a great evening of dancing to New Orleans funk music. They also witnessed the beginning of a new era for the Blue Sage. Thomas Smith, who in his seven brilliant years as Executive Director helped the Sage become the vital community center that it is today, handed over the keys to 'Baby New Year', Lorelei Sells, who formally began her duties as Blue Sage Executive Director in January.

The board of directors couldn't be happier with the selection. "The whole process of getting to know Lorelei, and her getting to know us and Thomas and the Sage, seems like another of the synchronistic miracles that have made the Blue Sage take off from the very beginning." said board member Angus Stocking. Sells came to Paonia several months ago, and wasn't planning to stay long. She was just looking for a place to hang out for a few weeks before resuming a sailboat cruise with her mother. She met Smith at another Paonia institution, Louie's Pizzeria, and their conversation moved her to attend the next board

meeting and offer her services as a volunteer. "The board was impressed," says board member Steve Harper. "Lorelei has a master's degree in anthropology and museum studies, and has worked at several non-profits – she was, to say the least, highly qualified. And it was refreshing to meet a person who saw volunteering as a good way to get to know a community."

Sells was also impressed, with Paonia in general and the Blue Sage in particular. "I had never been to a town this size that has the art community here, the performing arts and visual arts, the spirit, the tenacity, the blood, sweat and tears to keep the important organizations here going, like KVNF, WSERC, and the Blue Sage."

Sells got right to work, in the Blue Sage office and at events, and did a world of good as a volunteer, while also getting to know the board of directors and Smith. And then lightning struck; within a few days of Smith's announcement that he was resigning as Executive Director, Sells decided to stay in Paonia full time. Suddenly, her plans – and the future of the Blue Sage – were up in the air. The board began a search for a new director, and Lorelei decided to apply. "We were blessed with a lot of

excellent, qualified candidates," says Stocking. But Lorelei's training and career history, together with the comfort level that had developed over several weeks, moved her to the top of the list."

Sells has hit the ground running, and has big plans for the Blue Sage. "Now is really a time to step it up a notch to the wishes of the community." Sells is working with the board members to identify future directions and to build a state of



the art non-profit board and volunteer infrastructure. In January, she met with representatives of the State Historical Society for guidance on proper refurbishment of the Blue Sage's two historic buildings. And she's also been very busy

working with volunteers, improving communications with members, and meeting with heads of other area non-profits.

Under Thomas Smith's direction, and with countless hours and dollars from volunteers and donors, the Blue Sage has grown from nothing to become a vibrant arts and community center. With Lorelei Sells' talent and energy brought to bear, the Sage will continue to fulfill its promise, and serve the community well for decades to come.

Family member?

By Marion Stewart

Family member, poker club member, WSERC member, Audubon member, church member, political party member?

Maybe, and good for you. But, are you a member of the Blue Sage Center for the Arts? And if not, why not?

True, you can go to the dances, the classes, story-telling night, the improv night, the open mikes, Old Bank Gallery openings, without being a member. You can even enroll your child in ballet and theater classes, can partake of New Year's Eve festivities, and can rent the upstairs

of the Blue Sage for your own festivity – all without being a member.

You'll notice that we've been approaching your social, personal development, and fun-loving side with all these facts about what the Blue Sage offers everyone in the community.

But, we know you have another side: Your generous, fair-minded, community-minded, arts-loving, and conscientious side. So, we'd like to say, too, that by being a member of the Blue Sage (at one of several dues levels) you're helping the Blue Sage Center survive. Yep. Memberships, your investment at the level you deem appropriate, are a major source

of funding for all good, fun, and spirit enhancing things the Blue Sage offers.

And, too, your membership gives you discounts on all Blue Sage sponsored events. (With that, you could conceivably get your membership cost back over a year).

And, besides that, dear friends, you get to be part of the daylong membership party each year where great food and drink and music and camaraderie are all there for you in the back patio of the newly acquired Old Bank Building.

We'd like that event all the better if you were there!



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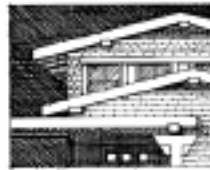
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