

# COMMUNITY FOUNDATION SUPPORTS

## 'MARCO POLO:THE MUSICAL'

*by Jane Barry, the Greater Saint John Community Foundation*

The Greater Saint John Community Foundation announced details of a special Anniversary Grant of \$30,000 they are providing to the New Brunswick Youth Orchestra (NBYO), Saint John High School Concert Choir (SJHSCC), and the Saint John Theatre Company (SJTC) for the production of an original new musical work, "Marco Polo" last week. In addition, over \$220,000 in grants to over forty-five local charities was welcome news to ten groups from the arts/cultural sector. They are being supported with grants totaling \$52,800. Their representatives overflowed from the Foundation's boardroom as they listened to Daniel Britt, a Saint John High student and Youth Orchestra member, play the cello and admired a costumed Tim Turnell, personifying Captain "Bully" Forbes of the Marco Polo.

The Imperial Theatre's summer program for young people, InterAction Children's Theatre Company's In My School program, Saint John Art Club's summer student mentoring program, the Saint John Arts Centre's SPART summer series for youngsters, the Saint John String Quartet's Quartet in the Classroom program, the Saint John Theatre Company's community program for seniors and economically disadvantaged patrons to attend performances, Saint Mary's Band for new uniforms., the Shakespeare Society of Saint John's production of Much Ado about Nothing and Symphony New Brunswick's free children's educational and interactive musical performances welcome the support, announced by Cheryl Robertson, Board Chair. She characterized them as the Foundation's way of supporting arts and culture, Saint John's and Rothesay's 2010 community anniversaries and Saint John being named a cultural capital of Canada.

The Anniversary Grant to the unique, collaborative original production is the largest arts/cultural sector grant the since the Foundation began granting 34 years ago. It is also a tribute to the outstanding work of the NBYO, SJHSCC and SJTC, which celebrates its twentieth anniversary this year. The seventy talented young people from across New Brunswick who are part of the nationally acclaimed NBYO will join New Brunswick playwright Mark Blagrove, the SJTC and SJHSCC to stage the October world premiere of "Marco Polo: The Musical", a focal point for Saint John 225 celebrations, at Harbour Station.

The announcement is also making a link to the Community Foundation's first ever fundraiser, "Ovation", scheduled for Nov. 6 at the Marco Polo Cruise Terminal. It will feature arts and cultural highlights from the Greater Saint John area. The gala evening will feature a performance from the Marco Polo production, along with many other vignettes of music, dance, theatre and visual arts. A volunteer committee of over forty, headed by Honorary Chairman James C. Irving and Chair Penny Milligan, is hard at work planning the community celebration and grand finale to 2010 events.

The Anniversary Grant was inaugurated in 2006 to mark the Community Foundation's thirtieth anniversary. Each year, the major award of up to \$30,000 goes to a community charitable group which best addresses clearly documented priorities in Greater Saint John. The Foundation's annual Report Card on Greater Saint John's quality of life, Vital Signs, is used as a grant-making guide. It notes over 3,500 arts-related functions took place in Greater Saint John last year. The Foundation will be releasing its fifth annual Vital Signs Report Oct. 5 as a public service.

"Our Community Foundation was established in 1976 to improve the quality of life for our citizens" said Cheryl M.G. Robertson, Foundation Chair. "Often a modest grant will go a long way, but occasionally, a more substantial sum can truly make a difference. We congratulate the groups associated with "Marco Polo, The Musical", for taking the lead in this unique production" she added.

Anniversary grants can positively affect the arts, social services, health, education, the environment, heritage or recreation and have been awarded to First Steps, the Salvation Army, the Saint John YM-YWCA, ACAP Saint John and the Crescent Valley Resource Centre. Public spirited donors can contribute to the Community Foundation's Anniversary Fund, which is permanently endowed and helps support Anniversary Grants each year.

"It is very fitting for the NBYO to be involved in 225 celebrations. The NBYO was the first provincial youth orchestra in Canada, founded in Saint John almost 50 years ago under the vision and leadership of Philip Oland, the first Chairman of the GSJCF. Since then, and like the city where it was founded, the NBYO has earned a reputation for excellence and determination" stated Don Matheson, NBYO Executive Director.

"The 55 member Saint John High School Concert Choir dates back to 1805 and continues to thrive. We were invited to participate at the International Choral Festival at New York's Lincoln Centre representing Canada and New Brunswick and brought home the Silver." says Trish Gallagher, SJHS Choir Director. The SJHSCC travels to Montreal in August to compete in a national competition.

"This amazing community project is a tremendous example of why Saint John is worthy of being a Cultural Capital of Canada for 2010," says SJTC's Stephen Tobias. "With almost 200 regional actors, musicians, and choral singers, "Marco Polo: The Musical" promises to be the largest theatre event ever staged in New Brunswick by New Brunswickers" he concluded.



The Greater Saint John Community Foundation announced their Anniversary Grant of \$30,000 to the New Brunswick Youth Orchestra, Saint John High School Concert Choir and the Saint John Theatre Company for the October production and world premiere of an original new musical work, "Marco Polo". Pictured are Trish Gallagher of SJHS, Cheryl Robertson, Foundation Chair, Stephen Tobias of SJTC, NBYO's Don Matheson, and Tim Turnell portraying Captain "Bully Forbes" at the announcement.



Community Profile is a weekly column highlighting community causes and work done by non-profit organizations in the Greater Saint John area. It is contributed by Jane Barry, executive director of The Greater Saint John Community Foundation. Contact the foundation at 506-672-8880, [sjfoundation@nb.aibn.com](mailto:sjfoundation@nb.aibn.com). To view other Community Profiles go to [www.saint-john-foundation.nb.ca](http://www.saint-john-foundation.nb.ca)