

“Ovation” to Feature Artist at Work

By Jane Barry, The Greater Saint John Community Foundation

Saint John West artist Peggy Smith is preparing for a very special birthday gift for her community to mark her 75th birthday. She is lending her talents to a charitable cause and "Ovation", a gala celebration of arts and culture, as a way to say Happy Birthday to herself, Saint John and Rothesay in their anniversary years. Over a long-established and recognized career, she has acquired a fine reputation for her ability to capture the spirit of live musicians and performing artists and is a well-known feature of many concerts, as she works from a viewing point at the back of the Imperial Theatre or concert hall.

The Greater Saint John Community Foundation is organizing the evening reception featuring visual, performing and creative artists who enrich our community's quality of life. The fundraiser will feature vignettes of dance, drama, music, photography and visual art combined with exceptional refreshments in one of our newest and most dramatically located buildings, the Marco Polo Cruise Terminal. The Saint John Port Authority has agreed to be the venue sponsor, as their way of contributing to the anniversary year.

Volunteer Chair Penny Milligan has dubbed the event “Ovation” as a way to invite local talent from one of Canada’s Cultural Capitals to take a bow and be recognized. “We think it will be the climax of this year’s 225th and 150th celebrations” she states. As an admirer of artists who can create works spontaneously as they are inspired by their surroundings, she conceived of the plan to invite a “live” or “resident” artist to capture the evening in a work of art. She recently visited the artist in her studio, filled to the brim with her works, many painted on a vintage easel once owned by Canadian artist and friend of the Group of Seven, Sir Wyly Grier. Peggy Smith has generously agreed to step up as the gala's "artist in residence", literally, as she will view and paint performers and the anticipated crowd of 750 from a vantage point high atop the Marco Polo Terminal’s main hall.

As guests arrive, they will be invited to add a special mark, doodle, signature or creation to a wide mat which will eventually surround the framed artwork on completion, mid-way through the evening. Materials and framing, provided by Amy’s Framing, will complete the masterpiece, a unique souvenir of the anniversary and event. It will then be up to Tim Isaac, who has kindly provided his expertise as an appraiser and auctioneer for the event, to invite bids on the finished work, signed not only by Smith but by hundreds of attendees, including their Honours, Lieutenant Governor and Mrs. Graydon Nicholas, along with Mayors of all our region’s municipalities and Honorary Chairman James Irving.

With close to fifty volunteers organizing and planning the fundraiser for the Community Foundation, Ovation should prove to be a memorable and unique evening. Generous sponsors are stepping up to help make it an experience to remember. The community-minded Delta Brunswick Hotel, a key Ovation sponsor, is pleased their new chef, Brian Ramsay, is making his community debut, so to speak. He will be offering a delectable assortment of refreshments of exceptional creativity in an artistic setting, to do justice to the event. Wayne Smith of W. Smith and Company, Fine Jewellers is set to unveil details of a spectacular prize he is donating, for which attendees may take a chance and receive an immediate Ovation gift. Katherine Bacon, one of real estate's Top 1% of Producers in North America, will be the sponsor of a Heads and Tails Game which will award a trip to Paris, one of the world’s artistic and cultural capitals, to two lucky winners.

The Saint John Art Club, which marked its 100th anniversary in 2008, will take part in Ovation with a show and sale by members who painted scenes of the “Secret Gardens of Saint John”. Emma May Weisseneider, past President of the Club, is coordinating the twenty participating artists. She also was a driving force behind a summer program, which was part of Saint John 225, whereby the public was invited to learn to paint under the guidance of Art Club members for a week-long series of free workshops. Another arts-related element, of many that night, is a display and sale of visual art by thirty-three Greater Saint John professional artists, specifically conceived for "Ovation", by fellow local artists, known as "The Tea Towel Team". Both groups of artists will be donating half of the proceeds to the Foundation and plan to maximize sales by keeping prices as affordable as possible.



Photo: The Greater Saint John Community Foundation is making plans for a community artistic and cultural gala, “Ovation”, in November, timed to celebrate Saint John’s 225th and Rothesay’s 150th birthdays and the designation of Saint John as one of Canada’s “Cultural Capitals”. One feature will be live, on-site painting and the auction of an artwork, specifically created for "Ovation" by artist Peggy Smith, pictured in her studio with Ovation volunteer Chair, Penny Milligan, standing. The Saint John Art Club, which marked its 100th anniversary in 2008, will take part in Ovation with a show and sale.



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. To view other Community Profiles go to www.saint-john-foundation.nb.ca