

CREATIVITY CONNECTION

Making Arts & Innovation Happen

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Editor's Note

As Jim Baker, President of the ECA&IC, explained in a letter to our community, we have responded to the current Covid Crisis by following Pennsylvania's mandate that all non-essential businesses remain closed to the public. As we move into the "yellow" phase, we'll send updates when our building tours resume.

However, in part because technology and creativity are at the core of our mission, we continue to find ways to meet, engage and work toward building the center we envision. Toward that end, we decided to devote the bulk of this update showing you what has been going on in our virtual efforts. We hope you enjoy this issue and we can't wait to see you soon!

What Have You Made Lately? ECA&IC Creates Virtual Space for Sharing

Have you been making Music, Paintings, Videos, Food, Inventions during this Covid-19 Crisis? To celebrate creativity in all forms, we've started a new group on Facebook, "Emmaus Creates," where you can share what you've made in your corner of the universe.

"We noticed a huge uptick in musicians hosting concerts for their followers after their concerts were cancelled," explains Shea Zukowski, a board member who helped launch the initiative. "We've been



looking for a way to foster creativity locally – despite the fact that our physical facilities have yet to be built. This seemed like a very organic way to make that happen," she adds.

In the first few weeks, the group has grown steadily and a variety of mediums – from original music to painting, digital art, and photograph – are represented. Please join us!



"Self-Series," first in a series of self portraits by Payton Shaffer shared on "Emmaus Creates" on Facebook.

Artist Profile: PAYTON SHAFFER

"I believe the artist has an important responsibility to help shape the future," explains local artist Payton Shaffer. Originally from Bethlehem and now a second year art history student at Kutztown University, Shaffer is committed to creating work that reflects her community and passion for social justice.

"After high school I spent a year helping create an art curriculum for kids through my volunteer work with the Boys and Girls Club in Bethlehem," she explains. Ultimately, the goal of the program is to show other young people the impact that art can have on all types of communities while helping them discover their passion, whether

that is in the art realm or elsewhere.

"Helping kids reflect their view of the world through the power of their imagination – that's how you change the world!"

Payton is one of several emerging artists to share her work through the newly created Facebook group "Emmaus Creates." To see more, visit today.



Building the Case for Support: ECA&IC Commissions Feasibility Study

At the recommendation of the National Endowment for the Arts, the ECA&IC has contracted with Brian Friedman of Plan F Solutions, a nationally recognized firm, to develop a comprehensive feasibility study for the center. Mr. Friedman brings broad experience in creative placemaking, nonprofit management, real estate development and arts and culture to the task.

In February, Mr. Friedman visited Emmaus to collect information

necessary for the completion of his analysis. He toured the site, met with the ECA&IC board and visited comparable projects in the Lehigh Valley. Mr. Friedman has provided the board with a draft copy of his analysis. It is expected that the study will be completed in May.

The Plan F Solutions feasibility study was commissioned to evaluate the need and likelihood of success for every functional area of

the center. It is expected that upon completion, this study will be helpful to attract major donors and to secure funding from foundations.

“The completion of this feasibility study is an important step in ensuring the viability of the innovation center,” says, board member, Julie Thomases, who was a strong advocate for the having the study done.

Life Beyond Zoom: A Glimpse into the Future

These extraordinary times have left us yearning for authentic and deep human connection. Phone calls and video chats are helpful and encouraging but still lacking in natural presence and emotion bonding.

There is no full replacement for people being able to connect on a physical level, however technology is providing us some new solutions which try to bridge this gap, so we asked board member John Oetting, a consultant in the computer industry, to share his insights on the latest trends.

“There are now dozens of different virtual reality venues tailored for business and consumer uses ranging

from education to engineering and design to entertainment,” explains Oetting. “In these worlds participants create avatars of themselves to provide embodiment inside the venue which they can use to move themselves about the venue and interact with other participants.”

WHAT'S AHEAD:

“Expect this all to become part of our new normal.”

Private conversation, chance encounters, ad hoc breakouts and all possible

within these environments. The participants head, body and hand gestures are captured by the VR gear and then mirrored by the avatar. Most of these new venues can also be accessed by 2D video interfaces from computers or mobile devices.

“In the last two months we have seen two major industry conferences each having over 2,000 participants from around the globe. Within the next couple of years we should see further advances in avatar creation, transmission and manipulation through high resolution digital twins which vividly personify their owners,” says Oetting.

Creative Entrepreneurs Lunch Bunch Group Continues to Meet During Pandemic

With a goal of supporting creative entrepreneurs in overcoming business obstacles, the group that had met weekly at the 10th Street center stopped meeting physically and started meeting on Zoom every Wednesday at noon.

Joyce Marin, who hosts the gatherings says, “as everyone pivots their

business into the digital sphere, this group provides a friendly environment where people find mentors who help them remain visible and relevant to customers during the pandemic.

If you're interested in joining this free group, contact Joyce at 917-288-3936 to receive an invitation.

