

PRESIDENT'S REPORT – ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2023

We're back in person! Due to the pandemic, our Annual General Meeting (AGM) has been held virtually the past three years. Sadly it's not quite over yet. Covid is still out there, and in fact our Friend, Warren, is joining us virtually this evening due to covid. Fortunately he's doing well but is kindly quarantining for our wellbeing.

One of the positives from the pandemic is that our society has become very adept at coming together more seamlessly with technology. This year the FRIENDS were very pleased to donate to the Museum the OWL video and audio equipment that we're able to use for hybrid in person and virtual meetings of the FRIENDS but will more importantly allow the Museum to use it for rentals, events, and staff meetings as well.

This year we were fortunate again to maintain a full slate of officers. Our board has representation from Kitchener, Waterloo, Cambridge, and the townships, this year 8 women and 5 men, a mix of retirees, working professionals, young parents and a Youth Board Member. Some of our families have been here for generations and some are newer to our community. It's been wonderful to work with such a skilled and energized group.

Going forward we will say goodbye to Serenity Revoy, a young Museum volunteer who joined our board to learn about governance and leadership and to offer her youthful perspective at our table these past 2 years. She suffered the personal loss of her father this year and now is off to university. She broadened our horizons and now will broaden her own and goes with our very best wishes for much success.

Our AGM provides an annual opportunity to highlight what we've achieved over the past year:

- Donated almost \$10k to the Museum--\$3,582 for the OWL video/audio equipment, \$5k for Costuming and \$500 for Halloween programming in the Village
- This year we were thrilled to again host our primary event, Starry Night, for the first time since 2019. We weren't sure if the community would be ready to come back, but we sold out again! We raised \$16,583 over two nights and hosted 1,006 ticketholders for holiday treats and traditions. The highlight of the evenings was Mark Kerr and his wife Carol, who delighted families as Santa and Mrs. Claus, along with their Elf Pam Hutchings, and Christmas caroling in the church, led by Shalagh Cassidy and musical guests. The staff and volunteers all came together to provide families with magical evenings.
- We were very grateful to receive a Silver-Level Sponsorship from Dillon Consulting's Kitchener Office to partner with us on Starry Nights. Their generous gift sponsored horse-drawn wagon rides in the Village so people could experience .
- We transitioned back to in-person meetings but with a virtual option as well. We've been very grateful that Tuncer was able to secure a Zoom subscription sponsor for us, Harrington Housing, who have sponsored us for three years in a row of Bronze-level sponsorship.

- In other fundraising, we raised over \$5k in interest income and Gift Shop sales, our Plant Sale, and other Donations.
- We produced and launched a FRIENDS Video this year, which can be found on the FRIENDS webpage on the Museum's website. The video provides the community, potential donors and sponsors, and staff and volunteers with an overview of the history and work of the FRIENDS, as well as highlighting the site and our region as a world-class place to visit.
- Our Volunteer Recognition Award Committee launched the first ever FRIENDS of WRM Volunteer Recognition Award, recognizing Kali Parsons for 2020 and Lori Bowes for 2021. We're excited to be announcing the 2022 recipient later this month at the Volunteer Appreciation Event. This room is the home of the recognition plaque.
- This year we've continued to work on developing a "membership program" specific to the FRIENDS and also to ensure that our Constitution & By-laws and Letters Patent are in compliance with the new Ontario Not For Profit Corporations Act, with a deadline of October 18, 2024.
- As always, we are grateful for the support of all the staff and volunteers. We know that this has been another very challenging year for the staff and we're so proud of the positive way they've risen to the challenges, including budget and staffing challenges, and especially re-opening with slow and steady pandemic safety in mind. Julian Kingston joined the staff in early 2023 as the new Manager of the WRMs and we're off to a great start in building our relationship. This Region is positioned to be a cultural powerhouse in Southern Ontario. As we move out of the pandemic and see so much potential, we look forward to adding our fundraising innovation and creativity to the mix.

I'd like to introduce Karen Ball-Pyatt, our speaker for this evening. Karen is a Kitchener native, who was raised in Montreal, Toronto, and Oakville. She holds an Honours Bachelor of Arts in History from Queen's University in Kingston and a Master of Library and Information Science degree from the Western University in London, Ontario. Recently, she completed a Certificate in Canadian Copyright Law from the Centre for Canadian Copyright Law and Copyrightlaws.com.

Karen is currently the Manager, of the Grace Schmidt Room of Local History at the Kitchener Public Library and the Archivist for the Waterloo Historical Society.

When not at work, Karen sews, embroiders, and searches for long lost Devon and Welsh ancestors, (and she has generously helped me and so many others search for our own family history as well). She also enjoys relaxing at home with her husband and two cats.

Welcome, Karen, and thank you for joining us.