

Arts & Entertainment

ArtBeat



By Michael Gurney

Petals with mettle

The first-ever Art Throwdown organized by the Coastal Art Gallery at Sunnycrest Mall in Gibsons blossomed on March 18. Nearly a dozen artists dedicated two hours to depict a floral arrangement, which gleamed iridescent under a ceiling skylight.

Each of the resulting works is available to bidders through a silent auction that will conclude on

Sunday, March 26 at 4 p.m.

Half of the proceeds will be donated to the Salvation Army, 30 per cent to contributing artists, and 20 per cent will benefit the Coastal Art Gallery to cover its expenses.

Participating painters are Julia Neale, Lorena Rut, Doris Biddle, Jan Poynter, Kevin Hennessy, Sandra Sharkey, Tina Komandat, Carol Anne Almquist, Bette Chadwick, Roseann Janzen and Jude Pelletier.

Kids' lit guru shares write stuff

At an upcoming workshop at the Gibsons and District Public Library, author and editor Kallie George will explore the craft of writing a children's book and getting it published in the world of children's literature.

The workshop, geared for adults, takes place on Saturday, March 25 from 2 to 4 p.m.

Participants will engage in a writing activity to begin a children's book or develop one already in progress.

George's book *The Secret Fawn* was reviewed by the *Coast Reporter* upon being shortlisted last year for the Christie Harris Illustrated Children's Literature Prize. She holds a Master's Degree in Children's Literature from the University of British Columbia, and is the editorial director of Greystone Kids Books.

The in-person workshop is free but space is limited. Register via the library's website at gibsons.bc.libraries.coop or call 604 886-2130.

Sechelt summons all artists

The District of Sechelt has announced two unique opportunities for artists on the Sunshine Coast to share their work.

The 2023 Artist Roster is an opportunity best-suited to illustrators, designers and photographers (but visual artists working in two dimensions can also apply).

Applicants to the roster join a pre-qualified list of artists that are selected for community art projects as they come up throughout the year.

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LIVE MUSIC

Post-COVID, venue struggles to reignite dreams

MICHAEL GURNEY

Arts & Culture Writer

A live performance venue in Gibsons is experiencing a post-COVID pinch so severe that its regular concert program may be suspended as early as this spring.

High Beam Dreams was founded in 2018 by Vineet Miglani and Nidhi Kamboj, who purchased and converted the former Gibsons United Church building on Glassford Road.

"We really wanted to bring great music to the Coast," said Miglani, "and we had big plans for 2023."

For two years prior to the COVID shutdown, Miglani and Kamboj recruited high-profile musicians and established a reputation for community service through fundraisers and benefit events.

In 2020, the husband and wife were recognized by Sunshine Coast Chambers of Commerce with awards for Business Excellence and Best Community Impact. Small Business BC also named them as Best Immigrant Entrepreneur.

When COVID restrictions hit, audiences disappeared from in-person venues. Both facilities backed by non-profit organizations and commercial locations — like High Beam Dreams — went dark. Undeterred, Miglani and Kamboj took the precautions mandated by health authorities.

"We were the first to implement best-in-class safety upgrades," recalled Miglani. "Time and time again we were prepared to open safely." Successive restrictions required them to shutter their operation repeatedly, cancelling and rescheduling shows.

"Things have not returned to normal since before COVID came crashing down," said Kamboj. "We thought COVID would be tough, but this has been even tougher."

The couple was initially reluctant to seek emergency grants. Their upbringing had taught them to rely on hard work and business acumen.

In 2022, to stay afloat, the situation became critical. Miglani and Kamboj received an injection of funds through



MICHAEL GURNEY PHOTO

High Beam Dreams owners Nidhi Kamboj and Vineet Miglani reflect outside their facility in Lower Gibsons.

the Live Music initiative of Amplify BC, an independent body that delivers provincial funding for the creative sector.

As a result, last year's season included such luminaries as bluesman Jim Byrnes and singer-songwriter Shari Ulrich, both Juno award winners. Only a fraction of the venue's 150 seats sold. Miglani and Kamboj set a strict policy: they would use ticket proceeds and grant money to pay artists and technicians first. But afterward, almost nothing remained.

"We don't make any money off liquor sales either," noted Kamboj, "because we don't want to support people [drinking excessively], and our liquor license is paid for on an event-by-event basis."

This year, the duo sunk their own savings into technical upgrades for the facility that include new sound, lighting and video equipment.

Immediately afterward, their grant renewal application was denied without explanation. There are few other funding sources available to so-called for-profit venues.

"The Gibsons mayor, Silas White, has been supportive from the beginning," said Miglani. "He wrote to our MP and MLA to ask for support. And our neighbours have been amazing. They all like what we are doing."

Miglani and Kamboj are producing a handful of shows before deciding whether to pull the plug on live music. Forro Do Cana performs on April 1 and 2023 Juno award winner The Florian Hoefner Trio appears on April 14.

"We've tried our best to smile through the challenges," said Kamboj. "And we're still not crying."

Event listings for High Beam Dreams can be found online at highbeamdreams.com.

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