L-R: Morris Arts’ Executive Director, Tom Werder with Leah Suskind, Ehlers Scholarship applications due by 5pm on Friday, January 17, 2020; applications available in large print by calling (973) 285-5115, ext. 10.

For a calendar listing of arts events in Morris County and for more information on Morris Arts’ many programming and services, visit on us at www.morrisarts.org. Like us on , follow us on .

Can’t keep a good pumpkin down: Morris Arts’ 10th annual Pumpkin Illumination draws big crowds

Heavy rains may have delayed but didn’t diminish the enthusiastic crowds at Morris Arts’ 10th annual Pumpkin Illumination event rescheduled for Monday, October 28th. Smiles, costumes and those inevitable masks (created by artist Dan Fenelon) complimented the enormously creative showcased in the inventive carved pumpkins that lined the Vail Mansion reflecting pool.

As in prior years, the event featured live jazz, art-making for kids and the luminare parade, led by Morristown Mayor Tim Dougherty (with his wife Mary) and the giant Fenelon-created skeleton.

Morris Arts gratefully acknowledges the generosity of sponsors:
In a deeply moving and personal interview, Adia Harris detailed the enormous and enduring impact that Morris Arts’ rigorous and inspiring Survival programs have had on her own life. A classroom committed suicide…her father faced major surgery…these were just some issues looming large and highly significant in her life. But, in late middle school, she found a way to cope with feeling overwhelmed, anxious and powerless by writing about her anger, fears, insecurities, and confusions. With guidance from directors Paula Davidoff and Carolyn Hart, Adia turned those feelings into something positive. Simply put, she learned to communicate.

Within a supportive, non-judgmental and encouraging atmosphere, Adia and other girls in these programs began trusting one another, sharing their inner struggles, discovering new ways to express themselves, and building meaningful relationships as they found ways to create narratives of their experiences.

You don’t speak or write perfectly? No problem. You can’t come every day? No problem. Do you want to write a play, put together a book, plan a café style entertainment? The choice is yours. This organic, ground-up approach empowered the girls and gave them a positive outlet for their problems. It instilled a sense of ownership, community purpose, a sense of belonging and sparked their growing confidence as individuals. Yes, they had lived up to serious family and societal issues complicating the already fraught preteen and teen years. The important difference was that now, through these programs, they had tools, a support group, a network to challenge specific issues, to lean on one another, to find release from tensions through dialogue and acting.

Now a self-assured, confident and poised adult, Adia Harris is not only the proud mom of two boys, ages 2 and 6, but she also owns and runs her hair salon, serves as a Commissioner of the Morris County Housing Authority on Morris County’s Town Council, and gives back to the community by providing haircuts for the homeless and for senior center residents at holiday times.

Adia’s career path has included cosmetology school, retail, corporate work, and direct care of autistic and Down syndrome individuals before establishing her own hair salon. She has also coached several drill/step teams, which stress inclusiveness, pride of accomplishment and teamwork. Responding to her high school team, she advocated for drill/step teams to have official status and support. She remains an assistant drill/step team coach at Frelinghuysen Middle School and will also be working closely with new drill team coach, second-year director of Girls Surviving, bringing the program to a new generation of students.

“Girls Surviving gave us the tools we needed to become functioning adults. We learned how to communicate our emotions without the program I don’t know if I would have been able to cope. Programs like this do a lot more than you think and I would not be where I am now if not for this program.”

Adia added: “These programs provide such valuable, lifelong lessons, enabling students who might otherwise waste their lives instead develop coping skills and the tools they need to lead more productive and satisfying lives.”

Morristown Housing Authority Commissioner Adia Harris, highlights value of Morris Arts’ Storytelling and Girls Surviving programs
In a deeply moving and personal interview, Adia Harris detailed the enormous and enduring impact Morris Arts had on her life. Harris, once a shy and lonely young girl, found a place in the community through Girls Surviving, a program that combines circus arts, vaudeville, and magic while Mentalist Eric Walton, an international award-winning comedian, raconteur and mind reader will astonish his audiences as he reads minds, identifies hidden objects, projects future events and challenges conventional ideas about the limits of human perception. Time travel back a century as the crystal-ball viewing Christine De Leon brings back the Roaring Twenties through the enigmatic songs and dances of the 1920s. Enjoy more time travel with The Mark Twain Experience, highlighting that legendary writer, humorist, author, riverboat pilot, inventor and genuine American genius. With 40 years of research and performances as “Mark Twain,” Alan Kitty brilliantly captures the wit and wisdom of this iconic figure and makes audiences wonder if the real Twain is still among us.

Harris was a child of the 1960s, when the USA was on the brink of social, political and cultural upheaval. Her parents divorced when she was 12, and she found a creative outlet in Morris Arts’ Girls Surviving program. Harris discussed her journey to becoming a multi-faceted performer and the impact of Morris Arts on her life.

Morris Arts is pleased to announce that 27 Morris County arts organizations received Local Arts Grants totaling $53,700 for Funding Year 2020. These grants help support visual arts, theatre, dance, instrumental and choral groups, museums, and broad-based community arts programs which, in turn, enable thousands of people throughout our county to experience the arts in a multitude of ways. Funding is made possible through the Local Arts Council of the New Jersey State Council on the Arts/Department of State, a Partner Agency of the National Endowment for the Arts.

This year’s awards include: Arts By The People (Morristown); Artworx Studio (Randolph); Baroque Orchestra of New Jersey (Dover); Chatham Community Players (Chatham); Corin Loco (Morristown); County College of Morris Teen Arts Festival (Chatham); Dance Innovation Performance Foundation (Chatham); Fairleigh Dickinson University – WIMFEST (Madison/Teaneck); Festival of Books through Community Foundation of NJ (Morristown); First Night Morris County (Morristown); Festival of Books through Community Foundation of NJ (Morristown); Grill Project (Morristown); Great Grief (Morristown); Hanover Wind Symphony (Whippany); Harmony Choral Society (Morristown); Huaxia Chinese Chorus ( Parsippany); Lakeland Youth Symphony (Parsippany); Lyrical Chamber Moody (Chatham Township); Masterwork Chorus (Morristown); Morris Choral Society (Morristown); Morris Music Men (Morristown); Morristown Neighborhood House (Morristown); Music at Morristown United Methodist Church (Morristown); New Jersey Jazz Society (Summit); Opera at Farmon (Covington Station); Skyknights Spooner/ Guild (Lewes/Edgwood); Visions and Pathways (Bridgewater); and Women’s Theatrical Company (Lake Hopatcong).

In addition, $2,000 will be awarded for mini-grants in 2020. Out of the box top left: The Folk Project presents Livengood Taylor (Jannen Taylor’s brother); Morristown Festival of Books 2019; Braydon’s spoken word, Pete Kravanja, and his new book, Yoga. Another: First Night Morris County presents Marco Sarronas, Mollino piano virtuoso; New Jersey Jazz Society magazine publishing upcoming jazz festival. The Chatham Community Players’ 2019 production of a Christmas Carol, Dance Innovation Performance Foundation’s First the Sweet Performance.

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“Girls Surviving gave us the tools we needed to become functioning adults. We learned how to communicate our emotions. Without the program I don’t know if I would have been able to cope. Programs like this do a lot more than you think and I would not be where I am now if not for this program.” Adia added: “These programs provide such valuable, lifelong lessons, enabling students who might otherwise waste their lives to instead develop coping skills and the tools they need to lead more productive and satisfying lives.”

Great conversations

Guests had so much fun talking with the accomplished and fascinating host conversationists at last year’s Great Conversations that no one wanted to leave sure to make April 29, 2020 on your calendars now and reserve your place as soon as invitations arrive in January. Experience a one-of-a-kind evening with the many distinguished and highly accomplished host conversationalists while helping Morris Arts continue its valuable work in the community!
December 31, 2019 marks the 28th year of New Jersey’s biggest and brightest First Night, a New Year’s Eve family-friendly, alcohol-free celebration of the arts – with more than 100 artists, 44 events in 10 venues – representing dance, theatre, music, world cultures, visual arts and children’s programs. For all 28 years, Morris Arts has been First Night Morris’ “artistic” sponsor, securing topflight talent who attract thousands from throughout the state and beyond. More than half of the program features new artists or artists returning after several years, many of whom have performed at world class venues, won international recognition, performed on national radio/TV in major films and/or collaborated with superstars of performing arts. On that night, one can experience every- thing from Korean drum dancers, a visit with “Mark Twain,” and a mind-re-ading mentalist, to award-winning jazz pianists, topflight comedians, virtuoso Chinese instrumentalists, adventures with a pirate queen and even a reptile reptile. On the Rock/R&B/Drum front, The Tones deliver that terrific blend of classic Rock, R&B “and Three Chords and the Truth,” recreating the music they love as they draw on music by the Eagles, Van Morrison, the Beatles, Rolling Stones, Tom Petty, Ray Charles and the Allman brothers. Rock your way into the new decade with this terrific band. Got rhythm? Connect with Dana McCurdy’s Community In Rhythm Drum Circle, where you can channel your inner beat with this participatory drum circle. Looking for the Perfect Gift? Celebrate the holidays and milestones with the gift that keeps giving all year long! A donation to Morris Arts is a perfect way to honor that special someone who values the joy that the Arts bring to children and families in our community. Colorful gift cards will be sent to your honoree, with a letter acknowledging your tax-deductible contribution forwarded to you. Contact Gina Moran at gomoran@morrisarts.org or at (973) 285-5115, x.13. Thanks to our generous donation funders whose support makes our work possible: Armitage St Pau Fund; The Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation; Investors Bank; Kiwanis Club of Randolph; Mondelēz Global LLC; Morgan Stanley & Co., Inc.; The Provident Bank Foundation; RB; and William E. Simon Foundation.

SAVE THE DATES: • December 31, 2019: First Night Morris County, 44 events in 16 venues Morristown, 4:00pm- midnight, visit www.firstnightmorris.com for tickets and information. • January 27, 2020: deadline for Coladarci and Ehlers Scholarship applications. • April 29, 2020: Great Conversations gala, 5-10pm, Birchwood Manor, Whippany, NJ. For a calendar listing of arts events in Morris County and for more information on Morris Arts’ many programs and services, visit us at www.morrisarts.org. Like us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter. This newsletter is available in large print by calling (973) 285-5115, ext. 10. For more information and photos, visit www.morrisarts.org and the MorrisTownGreen.com at https://en.morrisarts.org/.

Still dazzling First Night® Morris County marks its 28th season Night would not be complete without our own Morris County star, the sizzling jazz pianist, Rio Clemente (the “Bishop of Jazz”) whose inventive and technically brilliant improvisations astound and inspire all lucky enough to hear him. Folk Music is your bag, be sure to catch Lara Herscovitch, former Connecticut State Troubadour, who performed on Prairie Home Companion, MPR and tours from Maine to Miami. Informed by decades of international humanitarian work, she blends modern folk, blues, jazz and pop in songs that entertain and uplift audiences—all with a voice “like expensive liquor” (Performer Magazine). Another treat: Mike Agranoff, that category-defying folk/rock/hippopuer who’s repertoire encompasses traditional ballads, fiddle tunes, Tin Pan alley and his own witty pen. With a skilled hand on guitar and concertina, he captivates his audiences, delivering unforgettable stories, deliciously sly parodies and heart stopping spoken word pieces. First Night’s Classical offerings include the superb artistry of Harmonium Choral Society. From a Renaissance procession to the rich romanticism of Bruckner and the mysticism of Erik Eenselands, Harmonium’s richly di- verse programming and high artistic level will dazzle you. Under the inspired direction of Dr. Anne Matlack, Harmonium will also highlight gender equity, featuring gorgeous works by multiple outstanding women composers. For those more instrumentally inclined, be sure to celebrate the New Year with the award-winning Baroque Orchestra of New Jersey which explores great orchestral works from the 17th through the 21st centuries under the baton of conductor/artistic director Dr. Robert Buttts. (Continued on page 2)