

EVENT Gallery

MARCH

- 2 - Book Club
- 7 - Story Time
- 15 - Family Art Fun!
- 21 - Cedarhurst Concert Series: Konrad Paszkudzki Trio
- 29 - Gather @ the Galleries for new exhibits!

Art Classes | details at cedarhurst.org

APRIL

- 2 - Art, Coffee & Conversation
- 4 - Story Time
- 5 - The Happening presents: Trivia Night!
- 12 - Family Day with WSIU
- 13 - Cedarhurst Concert Series: Li-Cohen Duo
- 23 - Administrative Professionals Day Spring Luncheon

Art Classes | details at cedarhurst.org

MAY

- 2 - Story Time
- 7 - Book Club
- 10 - Sip N Paint event
- 29 - Thursday Night Live kickoff!

Art Classes | details at cedarhurst.org

JUNE

- 4 - Art, Coffee, and Conversation
- 5, 12, 19, 26 - Thursday Night Live!
- 6 - Story Time
- 21 - Edible Exhibition
- 21 - Family Art Fun
- 28 - Gather @ the Galleries for new exhibits

JULY

- 2 - Book Club
- 3, 10, 17, 24, 31 - Thursday Night Live!
- 4 - Story Time

Summer Art Camp for Kids | details at cedarhurst.org

AUGUST

- 1 - Story Time
- 6 - Art, Coffee, and Conversation
- 7, 14, 21, 28 - Thursday Night Live!
- 9 - Family Art Fun
- 23 - Blues & Brews

Art Classes | details at cedarhurst.org

VISIT: Cedarhurst.org
 CALL: 618.242.1236
 EMAIL: MitchellMuseum@cedarhurst.org
 HOURS: Tuesday-Saturday 10am - 5pm
 Sunday 1pm - 5pm
 Open Thursdays until 8pm
 Memorial Day through Labor Day



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An activity of the John R. and Eleanor R. Mitchell Foundation

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CEDARHURST CENTER FOR THE ARTS *Insider*

Golden celebration

Cedarhurst toasts 50 years of art, culture, and community

It was a year-long, golden celebration for Cedarhurst's 50th anniversary!

Special programs actually kicked off in fall 2023, but staff and volunteers built steady momentum throughout 2024, launching audio tours for the Permanent Collection in January and then weaving the 50th anniversary theme into various programs throughout the year, including the SAVAGE Fashion Show - drippin' with gold, a school residency with artist Franz Spohn, and an Edible Exhibition that debuted a new art acquisition purchased to commemorate the milestone. The painting is titled *Lyric* and painted by Ashcan School artist Ernest Lawson.

It all led up to a celebratory Champagne Buffet that took place in September 2024. Inspired by the original



A champagne hostess greeted guests at the 50th Anniversary Champagne Buffet event on September 21, 2024.

Mitchell Museum Members party, the evening paid homage to the early days of the museum while a special champagne hostess

added a modern flair. Elaborate decorations included the 8-foot-diameter chandelier **see GOLDEN, Page 4**

In pursuit of reaccreditation

**By Hillary Esser
 Executive Director**

What a difference a year can make!

We are delayed in writing and publishing this newsletter, but only because the past year has been such a dazzling whirlwind. We are

thrilled to mark the many accomplishments of our 50th anniversary year within the pages of this *Arts Insider*, to celebrate the continued growth and success of The Lights, and to share our plans as we look toward the future.

see ESSER, Page 6



Mitchell House undergoes renovation **P4-5**



Cedarhurst invests in solar panels **P2**



Barry Joy joins museum staff **P6**

2025 | Winter - Spring



cedarhurst.org

OBSERVATION Gallery

"The museum's 50th was a culmination beyond all expectations! It was so fun bringing back many fond memories of the past. The (Champagne Buffet) was a grand evening."

Judy Myers, of Mt. Vernon

"Such a beautiful place. The grounds were well maintained and filled with wonderful trails and sculptures. The museum was magnificent. Most of it is free with a small fee for one section. I highly recommend spending some time here."

Saint Rube, via Google Reviews

"Thank you for showing our class around Cedarhurst. I really liked the Native American dance. It was beautiful, and I can't wait to come back!"

*Milea Allison,
5th Grade Student at J. L. Buford*

"Great little museum! The permanent collection, though small, has several big names, and the rotating exhibit on our visit had a really nice show print display."

Angela Compton, via Google Reviews



The cranes arrived in June 2024 to lift solar panels onto the roof of the original Mitchell Museum building. The new system includes 283 panels and should generate roughly 40% of the museum's energy usage.

Museum installs solar panels

Bring on the sunshine! Cedarhurst is excited to announce that we are expanding our energy sources in an effort to increase efficiency and focus on sustainability.

Last summer more than 250 solar panels were lifted to the rooftop of the original museum building. Professionals spent months installing and wiring the system, and in January 2025 the system was approved and activated by Ameren. It should produce 210,000kWh of electricity and provide multiple benefits to Cedarhurst.

From an operating perspective the museum will alleviate some of its highest annual expenses - utility bills. The 30,000-square-foot Mitchell Museum expansion boasts large, beautiful windows that highlight the natural surroundings and draw attention to the sculpture park. This - combined with the high ceilings and open gallery spaces - requires a lot to adequately heat and cool.

It will take several years to pay for the system, but after taking advantage of numerous rebates and incentives, it is projected the system will produce enough to offset approximately 40 percent



of the museum's annual cost, meaning Cedarhurst would see a return on investment as early as 2030.

This project boasts other benefits, as well. Cedarhurst contracted with local businesses to execute the work, and in general this project will reduce the museum's carbon footprint.

"I am grateful to our Board of Trustees, and our partners at AGE and SunVolt Solar for helping us navigate the intricacies of this project in order to bring it to fruition," said Executive Director Hillary Esser.

"The use of solar energy has been under consideration for many years as Cedarhurst waited for legislation that would expand solar incentives so that general nonprofits could benefit. Our patience and persistence has paid off."



Student winners at the inaugural Cedarhurst High School Art Competition exhibition opening were thrilled to receive cash prizes. Families and friends traveled from throughout the region to congratulate those selected for exhibition.

A showcase of student work

Cedarhurst debuts new High School Art Competition

This year turns another page in Cedarhurst's 50 years of service to our region's high schools and middle schools exhibiting their art.

In 1975, less than two years after the Mitchell Museum opened, Cedarhurst's Administrative Counselors registered the museum to become the regional affiliate for the Scholastic Art Awards. Each year since, the museum has facilitated a juried competition and exhibition for regional students, offering an opportunity to showcase their artwork in a professional gallery setting.

This year marks a new chapter for Cedarhurst, as we facilitated our very own Cedarhurst High School Art Competition in an effort to streamline participation, increase engagement, and offer more tangible awards to participating students. More than 180 works and 14 portfolios were submitted.

We congratulate the ten schools represented in this year's exhibition: Anna-Jonesboro High School, Carbondale Community High School, Christopher High School, Flora High School, Harrisburg High School, Massac County High School, Mt. Vernon Township High School, Nashville Community High School, New



Athens High School, and Patoka High School.

This year Cedarhurst unveiled a new awards program for participating students - 27 cash awards were handed out opening night while their friends, family members, and museum patrons cheered their success. Natalia Schmitt, of Mt. Vernon, won Best of Show. In addition to these, Cedarhurst's longstanding Administrative Counselors Scholarship for the Best Senior Portfolio was awarded to Hazel Vanderlinden, of Mt. Vernon.

Education is the heart of Cedarhurst's mission, and we are proud to embark on this new chapter in highlighting the artistic endeavors of southern Illinois students. This program and others combine to make Cedarhurst a valuable resource, impacting nearly 15,000 students annually.

SPONSOR Gallery

Cedarhurst is grateful to those who bestow major gifts, sponsor programs, and offer membership support. This listing reflects gifts made in 2024.



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Access our Biennial Report and complete donor list at cedarhurst.org

Barry Joy joins Cedarhurst team as Director of Operations

The Board of Trustees of Cedarhurst Center for the Arts has announced the appointment of Barry Joy as the museum's new Director of Operations and Maintenance.

"We are thrilled to have Barry joining our team," said Executive Director Hillary Esser. "We have a lot to care for here at Cedarhurst, and overseeing the many projects on our campus can be intimidating, at times. Barry's work experience with building

systems and managing large-scale projects will undoubtedly be an asset."

Joy, a native of southern Illinois, has previously worked as a commercial maintenance technician for EMCOR Facilities Services, and as a project manager at Lundius Heating & Cooling.



Barry Joy

"I am excited to come onboard and help care for the beautiful facilities at Cedarhurst and to maintain this great resource for our region," Joy said of his new position. "The staff here have greeted me with such a warm welcome - I am excited to be a

part of Cedarhurst and can't wait to get started." Joy grew up in Jefferson

County. He graduated from Waltonville High School and attended Rend Lake College.

Barry's wife Angela works at Community First Bank in Mt. Vernon and he has two daughters, Alex (Brandon) Mandrell, and Caitlin Joy, as well as five grandchildren. He enjoys fishing and spending time outdoors, among other hobbies.

Joy replaces Eric Gockel, who held the position since 2016.

ESSER, from Page 1

This year already feels different, as our focus turns inward and we work toward reaccreditation through the American Alliance of Museums. While not as intense as our initial accreditation process undertaken in 2015-16, museums must go through the reaccreditation process every 10 years. It is centered on self-study and peer review and takes 8-16 months to complete.

It's not as visible as the golden celebrations of the past year, but this work is vitally important as it reaffirms our commitment to the standards of excellence set forth by AAM.

We pride ourselves on the quality of programs we present and the impact we make, but we must make sure that our internal structures and procedures are properly in place. That's why we are taking time to review policies and facilitate discussion about our community role and how we can continue to increase the impact of the arts for our southern Illinois region. We are also taking time to reflect and benchmark the progress made in recent years. And believe me, there is much to be applauded.

A recent review of our Strategic Plan shows the thoughtful and guided accomplishment of major objectives:

- Development and promotion of a planned giving program.
- Major capital projects, such as replacing the marble facade of the original Mitchell Museum, replacement of the museum's wooden Courtyards, renovation of the historic Mitchell House, and more.
- Installation and use of solar energy.



- Improvements to the sculpture park, including extension of and refresh of gravel walking trails, the addition of aesthetic lighting for sculpture in the South Lawn, and the addition of electrical infrastructure to expand programming.
- Design and installation of new campus signage, including an artful landmark sign at the southwest corner of campus, gate signage, building markers, campus way finding, and educational monument signs and nature markers.

These are merely some highlights. Of course, these things are not possible without our many supporters - those who give time, talents, and treasure to bring the Cedarhurst mission to life. Membership and the annual program fund remain strong, with The Lights providing new sponsorship opportunities.

Even more exciting is the growth we have seen in our endowment funds. We are grateful to Bill and Barbara Beck, Hunt and Donna Bonan, and Susan Hughey for their support of the Friends of the Beck Family Center Fund. We thank the Bernard and Naomi L. Podolsky Charitable Trust for their continued support as Friends of the Performing Arts. Likewise, we thank George and Paula (Mace) Kuhn for their continued support

as Friends of Education.

Cedarhurst is honored by those who want to memorialize their loved ones on campus, and we were proud to accept a gift from William Holland to name the Front Porch of Shrode Art Center in memory of his sister and longtime member Rosemary Buffat.

We were thankful to add new members to our Legacy Society and humbled to receive a significant bequest from Frank Kuenz, much of which will be invested into our main endowment that was established by museum founders John and Eleanor Mitchell. We are grateful when these unknown gifts surface, but we prefer to know about such intentions so that we can thank our donors and ensure their wishes are honored. If you plan to leave a gift to Cedarhurst, or if you would like more information on doing so, please contact me.

Finally, I must acknowledge those who stepped forward with major gifts for our special projects, most notably the Mitchell House renovation. We are grateful to longtime supporters David and Karen Bayer, Bill and Sylvia Howard, and Carol Wilkinson for investing in this significant and sentimental project.

Our Trustees continue to steward our finances well, and this year we plan to pay off the remaining loan balance from the Arts for All campaign, which funded the major renovation and museum expansion completed in 2008.

We want to ensure the arts are alive and available to all in southern Illinois, now and for generations to come, and we thank all of you who are helping us on this mission.

Docents play vital role at Cedarhurst

The role of museum docent is recognized and appreciated around the world - and right here at Cedarhurst where a group of 16 volunteers meets regularly to emphasize and facilitate education through the arts.

"Since the museum opened in 1973, we have relied on the Docents to help keep education at the heart of Cedarhurst programming," said Executive Director Hillary Esser. "We are glad to see this group growing and for the many ways they continue to assist our staff and serve our southern Illinois audiences."

In 2024 Cedarhurst docents logged nearly 700 hours to plan and facilitate tours and hands-on art projects for more than 800 museum visitors. For years they have coordinated special events like the popular 5th Grade Fun Day for area schools, and they have pursued their own education with group outings to other museums and artist studios.

Led by longtime Chair Carol Wilkinson, the Docents have also recently taken on extra projects in developing new tours and assisting with educational endeavors

beyond the classroom.

Now that the Mitchell House has been renovated and much of the original decor and personality kept in tact, Docents will work with museum staff to develop a tour of the house. This special offering will detail the history and unique design features of the home, interwoven with stories and insights about museum founders John and Eleanor Mitchell.

Beyond that, the Docents are focusing outdoors. Helping with a grant project funded in part by the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Docents Greg Gibbs and Steve Modert have identified more than 25 species of trees in the sculpture park. Tree tags were ordered last fall and installed in January to better highlight the nature on campus and emphasize the beauty of art and nature. (The grant also helped fund the purchase of new gate signage and building markers, and the addition of lighting to approximately 10 sculptures in the South Lawn of the sculpture park.)



Fan mail received by the Cedarhurst Docents after hosting students from J.L. Buford for a day of tours and activities.

Docents are also working alongside museum Counselors to establish a new Beautification Committee, a subset of which will remain focused on plantings, lighting, and other enhancements to the park. Many of these efforts have been kick-started in recent years with grant funding.

"This is truly an inspiring group and we are grateful to Carol (Wilkinson) and to all of the docents for helping us continue to grow the impact of our educational programs," said Director of Education Jennifer Sarver.



The Lights are the perfect place to make and capture precious family moments. This year's Ride the Lights opportunities were well received by visitors.

The Lights make happy holiday memories

Shortly after the final fanfare for the museum's 50th anniversary, staff and volunteers kicked off Year 3 of The Lights: An Exhibition of Holiday Magic at Cedarhurst. The year 2024 brought notable growth in holiday rentals and drew continued praise for the impressive, mile-long light display.

"We continue to see a lot of first-time visitors to Cedarhurst and Mt. Vernon, which is a major goal of this program," said Courtney Kabat, Director of Visitor Engagement. "Return visitors are also making note of how different it is from year to year, and we are glad they notice. We want our local families to make this an annual tradition and to know it will be different each time."

Cedarhurst welcomed six new light features in its third year and repositioned an additional six along the route.

"It really is a completely new exhibit and experience each year," Kabat said.

One of the new features in 2024 was

the Journey of Lights, the designated community-sponsored light feature that included the names of those who contribute financially to the Lights.

"Community buy-in has been a major component of this program," said Executive Director Hillary Esser. "We're grateful for our many sponsors who help bring this program to light."

Esser said attendance in 2024 held steady with the previous year, and 25% of visitors were first-time visitors to Cedarhurst. The Family Nights continue to be an asset, and the new opportunity to Ride the Lights was a welcome addition.

"We continue to find new ways to serve our audiences and increase accessibility," Esser said. "What matters most to us is the visitor feedback. Our average visitor satisfaction rating was 9.2, and we heard over and over again how impressed people are by our program and how thankful they are to have something of this caliber in southern Illinois. It doesn't get much better than that."

New era for Mitchell House



The kitchen cabinetry and hardware, brick flooring, and copper accents were all restored. Trustee Susan Hughey stands with the Mitchell House Committee: Executive Director Hillary Esser, volunteers Linda Woodrome, Alicia Woodward, Mindy Meyers, Larry Sidwell, and Mike Woodward, and then Director of Operations Eric Gockel.

The historic home of museum founders gets face lift in honor of 50th anniversary

The complete renovation of the historic Mitchell House, home of museum founders John and Eleanor Mitchell, was perhaps the biggest undertaking of the museum's 50th anniversary year.

"We have talked about renovating the Mitchell House for nearly a decade, and to do it in conjunction with Cedarhurst's 50th anniversary just felt right," said Executive Director Hillary Esser. "We put together a stellar committee to drive this project, and we really strived to honor the Mitchells and their legacy through the renovation process."

Esser made note of the extra steps taken to preserve much of the original home, which was designed by Eleanor Mitchell's father and built in 1936.

Cedarhurst enlisted the help of Strothkamp Construction, from St. Louis, to execute most of the work. Selected because of their experience in renovating historic homes and structures, the Strothkamps brought a rolodex of

contacts and decades of experience that proved invaluable during the renovation process.

Many of the original light fixtures were professionally restored and reinstalled, almost all of the original hardware - including the mermaid faucet handles in the first-floor bathroom - were polished and restored, the marble flooring and bathroom surfaces were polished to bring back their original shine, and the wormy chestnut wood paneling the Mitchells selected for the purpose of hanging (and re-hanging) their art was kept and refinished, much like the original kitchen cabinetry. These are just a handful of highlights that show the care, and character, that were preserved within the house.

"We really tried to think about what the home would look like and feel like if the Mitchells were still living here today," said volunteer Alicia Woodward, who helped establish the vision and define how the renovated home should look and feel. "We are so happy with the end result - a beautifully curated space that is a warm, sophisticated, and artful."

Many of the artifacts collected by John and Eleanor are on display in the home, adding to the ambiance and character.



Likewise, much of the Mitchells' furniture is still in use, combined with antique pieces purchased from St. Louis resale shops and donated by museum friends.

Cedarhurst also relied on many local businesses to bring the project to fruition, and committee members made note of the special care given to this project.

"Our local businesses shined throughout this entire project, and it was such a joy to work with so many community vendors to restore the character and charm of this house," said volunteer Linda Woodrome, who spearheaded the kitchen renovation. "Ultimately, we want this home to be used. The Mitchells were known for their parties



Major renovations were done on the home's exterior and interiors.

A ribbon cutting was held with the Jefferson County Chamber of Commerce on May 30, prior to the Thursday Night Live summer kickoff. Staff and volunteers then hosted guided tours for the public.

and entertaining, you might say that's what this house was made for."

Esser echoed her sentiments: "We plan to utilize the house more for Cedarhurst meetings and programs, and we want the community to rent this space for their own celebrations and events. It's truly a unique venue unlike anything else in our area."



Attendees at the February 2024 Edible Exhibition got the first look at Cedarhurst's 50th anniversary art acquisition titled *Lyric*. The painting is by Ernest Lawson and represents No. 7 of "The Great Eight" Ashcan School artists now represented in the museum's Permanent Collection.

GOLDEN, from Page 1

that hung in the Main Gallery when the Museum opened in 1973, silver pieces from the collection of founders John and Eleanor Mitchell, and golden accents as far as the eye could see. Executive Director Hillary Esser and former Executive Director Sharon Bradham delivered a program about the museum's 50-year history, brought to life with stories collected from longtime members and former staff.

"It was fascinating to dive so deeply into our museum's history - how the Mitchell Museum came to be and how it has evolved into Cedarhurst Center for the Arts," Esser said.

Four weeks later, Cedarhurst opened new exhibitions tied to the 50th anniversary. *The Making of a Museum* gave insight into the lives of the Mitchells, their business ventures, elaborate travels, and foray into art collecting; while *Golden* detailed the museum's growth and 50-year commitment to art, culture, and community.



"What an exciting year to be part of the Counselors. The Champagne Buffet was merely the cherry on top," said Administrative Counselor President Mary Beth Mezo. "Everyone stepped up for the 50th - with special committees and programs, the Mitchell House renovations, and watching the staff come together in planning the exhibits - this is truly a year to be remembered and celebrated for years to come."



The 50th anniversary was woven into nearly every program area, including special events like SAVAGE: The Upcycled Fashion Challenge, gallery exhibitions, school programs, and of course the 50th Anniversary Champagne Buffet.