

## Area news

Continued from Page 4S

### Kennedy Heights couple honored for fostering 67 children

A Kennedy Heights couple who have fostered 67 children is being honored by Beech Acres Parenting Center for a fostering career that improved the lives of children and families for parts of the last three decades.

Ann and Al Hill began serving as foster parents in 1993 and continued for 27 years until retiring from foster care in 2020.

"Ann and Al have been amazing foster parents and represent everything we do at Beech Acres to equip parents, families and communities to raise great kids," said Jessica Thompson, director of foster care and adoption, Beech Acres Parenting Center.

The Hills have specialized in fostering teenage girls, which has been particularly helpful because of the great need for foster homes for teenagers in Greater Cincinnati. Beech Acres is always seeking safe, loving and diverse foster homes that can keep children connected with their school and community. Right now there is a need for foster families in the city's urban core.

On any given day in Hamilton County, more than 1,000 children are in foster care, so foster parents serve as a critical community resource. Beech Acres has been training foster parents to meet this need for more than 40 years. Its foster service includes a unique matching program to connect families with individual children. Foster parents in the Beech Acres community receive support and guidance from peers and trained experts to help them provide safe and welcoming homes.

Beech Acres Parenting Center has information about how to become a foster parent, including a step by step guide through the process, available at beechacres.org or by calling (513) 231-6630.

*Peter Osborne*

### Mason City Council passes unanimous resolution to support MAC efforts

At the city council meeting on Dec. 14, the Mason City Council passed a unanimous resolution in support of the efforts and vision of the Mason Arts Council, forging the path for future cooperation and partnership to bring the Mason Re-



**Al and Ann Hill fostered 67 children during their career as foster parents.**

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gional Arts Facility to Mason, Ohio.

The Mason Arts Council, a non-profit organization founded in 2019 with the focus of bringing the arts community together and enhancing opportunities for all citizens to experience the arts, would raise private capital to pay for the building of the facility (no use of local taxes), and hopes to partner with the City of Mason on resources and additional opportunities for art-related events.

A collaboration between the City of Mason and MAC would bring the most comprehensive, world-class arts facility to the region, making Mason an arts and cultural destination, attracting regional and national talent. Mason tourism would increase, stimulating the growth of downtown businesses, and leading to more urban living development.

Wonderful arts opportunities would be available for all, no matter the skill level, and a heavy emphasis would be placed on those with special needs.



**MAC board members and Mason City Council members.** PROVIDED

Additionally, the Mason Arts Council is committed to partnering with Mason City Schools and other area schools to enhance their arts education programs. Not only would the arts curriculum be extensive, but this new facility would offer the latest in technological advancements.

"We are so excited our resolution was accepted by the City of Mason and we look forward to calling Mason the home for the Regional Center for the Arts," stated Thomas Huff, the President of the Mason Arts Council. "This facility would be a focal point of the city – a destination to bring more business to local restaurants and shops and stimulate additional downtown development. A place to showcase the many cultures within our community. A place for children to learn, masters to shine, and audiences to be wowed!"

The Mason Regional Center for the Arts would be built in two phases, beginning with the Center for the Performing Arts.

Welcoming patrons with an entry canopy and a large lobby, the facility would consist of a 1,000-seat theatre, ticket offices, a scene shop and workroom, a green room, a large rehearsal room, performers dressing rooms, restrooms, a beverage bar and concessions, a kitchen, and a smaller 400-seat theatre with a separate entrance.

The main theatre would accommodate large-scale productions and acts, while the smaller theatre could be utilized for corporate events and entertainment. Receiving and security offices, prop storage, board rooms, administrative offices, a music library, instrument storage, and a large community event room would also be part of phase one.

Phase two of the build would be the Center for the Visual Arts adjacent to the Center for the Performing Arts. A beautiful recreation area with outdoor sculptures would welcome visitors as they approach the building.

The main, skylit hallway would feature member paintings and photography. Other features in the Visual Arts Center would be: art and photo galleries, a large art gallery for traveling exhibitions, a dance and ballet studio, sculpture, painting and ceramics studios, a state-of-the-art production studio, a TV control room, a radio studio and control room, an actor's instruction studio, computer labs, drawing and print making studios, and general classrooms for instruction.

"We truly appreciate the dedication of the Mason City Council to our city

and their support of the arts. We hope to continue to work together to make the Mason Regional Arts Center a reality," Thomas Huff added.

Founded in 2019, the Mason Arts Council is an independent, non-profit organization with the goal of bringing the arts to people of all ages, ability levels and backgrounds. MAC works with local, regional and state arts organizations to enhance arts opportunities for the community and supports arts events throughout the year. MAC plans to design and build a state-of-the-art community arts facility funded by private donations (no local tax dollars).

To learn more, visit [masonartscouncil.org](http://masonartscouncil.org).

*Renee Collins, Mason Arts Council*

### Local female entrepreneurs come together to grow business



**Thompson**

A diverse group of female entrepreneurs in the Cincinnati area is gaining momentum online and welcoming more participation going into its fifth year.

Members of the SCORE Greater Cincinnati Women's CEO Roundtable include African-American, Asian and Indian women running businesses that range from accounting services to clothing manufacturing.

"Through this group we have come to know our value as women, as leaders and as entrepreneurs," said Deborah Thompson, creator and CEO of Pianimals Kids Club. "It's a safe place where we can spend time sharing our successes and also find support."

The women served as a sounding board when Thompson launched a new line of business, Wee Wonder Music. She started Pianimals in 2011.

The Roundtable is led by SCORE Mentor Mary Jane Good and currently includes 25 members. The women meet the third Wednesday of each month at 10 a.m. via Zoom and typically have a guest speaker who covers marketing, finance, wellness or other topics. The women also discuss their businesses and help each other overcome challenges.

"There is still room at the table," said Kelly Dehan, secretary for the SCORE Greater Cincinnati Women's CEO Roundtable. "In 2021, we want to help more female entrepreneurs succeed."

**See AREA NEWS, Page 6S**