

## PRESS RELEASE

### Thorne Building Community Center

May 14, 2018

Millbrook, New York

Website: <http://thornebuilding.org>



### Two Visits: Millerton and Great Barrington

Having been urged by Carole Martin, our consultant, to visit other organizations that seek to provide programs and services to their communities, the Planning Committee made two such visits. The first was to the North East Community Center in Millerton. The second was to St. James Place in Great Barrington. Both visits were organized by Sarah Stack. And both proved informative and stimulating.

The mission of the North East Community Center is “to strengthen our community through social service, educational, cultural and recreational programs for toddlers through seniors.” We met with Jennifer Dowling, the acting Director, and her chief program officer. Together they described the five different programs that they offer to toddlers, playgroups, primary and high school students—and to their parents.

They also described the transportation program that seniors in Northeast as well as in Pine Plains, Dover Plains and Millbrook use. They summarized the counseling services related to financial problems, bill paying, and health referrals they offer to members of the community in crisis.

They spoke of four different programs that they offer to provide food to the poor and struggling.

And they told us of three different partnerships that they have with other organizations devoted to social services.

Their annual budget is \$ 1.2 MM. Their two greatest challenges relate to the need to raise most of this money from private donations each year and the desire for a larger space.

Those of us who were present at this meeting were very impressed by the leadership of the Community Center and by the many different ways it improves the quality of life in Millerton.

\*\*\*\*\*

St. James Place is a former Episcopal Church in Great Barrington which was saved from demolition by Sally and Fred Harris and was then restored elegantly with the help of John Waite. (Mr. Waite has already been retained by the Board of the Thorne Building Community Center to help restore the Thorne Building,) It has become a

public space of 17,000 square feet, a fine facility for the performing arts with three different performance spaces. They offer theatrical and musical programs, often given by well-known groups such as The Curtis Institute in Philadelphia.

It has devoted its second floor of 3200 square feet to office space that it rents out to local nonprofit organizations. It is operated as a 501c3 entity.

Sally and Fred bought the church for \$300,000 and undertook a restoration-cum-renovation that cost \$10MM. They have since raised \$10MM from a combination of private and public sources, from the Massachusetts Cultural Facilities Fund, the Town of Great Barrington, several foundations and state and federal tax credits.

They did a feasibility study of the community and also a study of their spaces. Their decision about the programs they would offer derived from the three large spaces within the renovated church.

They have also created a “People’s Pantry, a food pantry,” with its own dedicated space and accessible entrance. There is also a “catering” kitchen” for this activity and for social events held on site.

The current operating budget is \$200,000 a year, which they have been able to keep low by taking no salary themselves as co-directors and by hiring a small staff of 3 full-time people.

Their revenues derive from three sources: rentals from office spaces; weddings and other social events; and the box office.

Those who participated in this visit were impressed by the quality of the restoration and renovation as well as by the programs St. James Place offers in the performing arts.

\*\*\*\*\*

### **Stay Connected with The Thorne Building:**

Website: <http://thornebuilding.org>

### **The Thorne Building Website**

He added: “All those who wish to remain informed about the current status of this project may view our new website at any time:

["https://thornebuilding.org/"](https://thornebuilding.org/)

He informed us that future communications of the status of the project will always be posted on the website in the News & Events and Press sections, in addition to other distribution methods like email.

### **Subscribe to Email Updates**

He said for those that wish to stay informed by email, Project Updates will be emailed to all subscribers of our MailChimp list periodically.

"We encourage all interested people to visit the website and in the upper right corner there is a subscribe link. Click on that and enter your email address, you will then receive an email from MailChimp that will ask you if you really want to be subscribed to our list. Answer affirmatively and you will automatically receive email communication from us, when we send out updates."

### **Send Us a Message on the Website**

Why not visit our website's "contact page" where you can send communications directly to us and subscribe to the email list all in one step?

["https://thornebuilding.org/contact-us/"](https://thornebuilding.org/contact-us/)

### **Contact person:**

Charles E. Pierce, Jr.  
charlespiercejr@gmail.com

845-266-3505