

Firehouse Theater Fundraising Launched

Written by Steve Frank

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The direction of Ensemble Stage and their desire to turn the old Blowing Rock Firehouse into the Firehouse Theater is taking a somewhat new path—a path that follows the available money to make the new theater a reality. Ensemble Stage VP Bryan Summers announced Tuesday afternoon that the fundraising for the renovations of the old fire station have been launched, with major gifts sought to name the overall building—a half-million dollars for that—a quarter million to name the theater inside, \$125,000 to name the lobby and other levels. But Summers told the gathering that the key to making the theater a reality is private-public partnerships, “There is more money for private-public partnerships than there is for Ensemble Stage,” and he explained that the new direction of fundraising is structured to meet requirements of available grants. Summers explained that, after September, renovations on the Blowing Rock School auditorium will close that auditorium as an availability, and the stage company is facing some dire realities, “One of the things we found out last year is we really needed was a home, and we have been searching for a home for some time for Ensemble Stage and the opportunity came up to work with the Fire House in Blowing Rock.” when Another reality is that other communities would like to have Ensemble Stage move to their communities, “Ensemble Stage has become very marketable,” saying that the stage company, now in its sixth season, is eligible for grants, “And we’re having other communities trying to steal Ensemble Stage from us, offering cash, offering locations,” and he said, “If we do not have a home for the theater, how can we grow, and while Ensemble Stage is debt-free, they cannot survive a season without theater. So the time is now.” The fund-raising is now underway, with hopes of having the theater opened and functioning in May next spring.