



ANIMATION STUDIO. The Arts Council of Muskoka's new downtown space, Six Degrees Muskoka will have a space for an animation studio for youth classes. (Photo by Karen Longwell)

New space for emerging artists opening in Bracebridge

BY KAREN LONGWELL

A historic Bracebridge building has transformed into a new arts space called Six Degrees Muskoka.

Located in the historic Queen's Hotel, at 63 Manitoba St., Six Degrees Muskoka will be a contemporary, not-for-profit, public/private venue for arts groups, emerging artists and youth to interact, exhibit, sell and promote their work, said Tamsen Tillson, co-ordinator of the Arts Council of Muskoka.

Don and Jenifer Skinner, who own the building, are donating the 3,000-square-foot space for the venue as a pilot project from May to September, said Don Skinner.

Skinner said he has a passion for historic buildings. The Queen's Hotel, built in 1885, was damaged in fires but rebuilt, he said. Parts of the building were used as a pharmacy and barbershop.

"This space has a great history," he said.

The Arts Council of Muskoka will curate rotating shows in the gallery space. The plan is for a cross-section of traditional, contemporary art and art media from throughout Muskoka, said Tillson. There could be book readings, drama performances and music in addition to gallery shows from Muskoka artists.

The purpose of the project being a street level, downtown, public contemporary gallery is to allow local non-professional artists, especially young artists, to display, promote and sell their work, she said.

The space will also house a digital animation studio, with 11 workstations for youth six to 16 years old, to enrol, at a very affordable rate, in courses in introductory animation. Michael Carter, an educator, animator and producer of animation and lecturer at Sheridan College in Oakville is partnering in the project, said Skinner.

Posters advertising admission into the program will be posted in Muskoka schools. Students will have an opportunity to enter a contest to name the animation studio, with a deadline of May 15, said Skinner.

The space will also house the personal library of the Skinner family.

The Six Degrees notion is a belief that all people, and by extension cultural assets, scientific, artistic or even economic, are closely interrelated with the interrelationship often unobserved, said Skinner.

The target opening for Six Degrees is early June. Information sessions are being held for artists, politicians and merchants in April and May.