



NANTUCKET ATHENEUM.

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January 2022

Dear Friends of the Atheneum,

It is my pleasure to be writing to you during my first year as Chair of the Atheneum's Board of Trustees. Our family has been coming to Nantucket for over 30 years and, like so many of you, has partaken of the library's offerings in different ways and with changing interests over the course of time. I am delighted to devote my energy to this important Nantucket institution.

I'd like to take this opportunity to share some of the Atheneum's 2021 highlights and where we see ourselves heading in the coming year and beyond. The Board of Trustees and the Staff feel especially proud of last year's continued expansion of programming and services, the library's strong financial position and our recent revisions to our Mission and Value Statements which we feel more accurately define our role in the community. These factors have put us in good stead to consider our future. How can we better serve our extended community? Are we reaching the entirety of our growing island population? Can we protect the historical relevance of the Atheneum while ensuring we are providing a social and intellectual gathering place accessible to all? It is indeed very exciting to once again be thinking more strategically.

2021 Recap

Programming:

As was the case in 2020, the Atheneum's staff proved agile, creative and determined to "make lemonade out of lemons" as the pandemic's variants and summer's increased population proved troublesome again this year. A partnership with the Nantucket Community Music Center provided six wonderfully diverse concerts for all ages in the library's garden, which also served to host scores of children for the return of the beloved Nanpuppets. Technological enhancements also afforded the creation of a "Behind the Shelves" podcast, numerous webinars and over 350 online classes and programs which were shared on the Atheneum's YouTube channel. We are truly indebted to Ann Scott, Executive Director, and the entire staff, for keeping the Atheneum's programming and services accessible and meaningful during another challenging year.



Financial Results:

The continued success of our fundraising efforts, coupled with strong financial markets, allowed the Atheneum to further bolster its excellent financial condition in 2021. The Dance Festival was once again re-engineered to alleviate concerns about indoor gatherings. Tyler Angle, the Festival's Artistic Director, the Dance Festival Committee and Tyler's talented dance team worked tirelessly to stage six amazing performances over three days at Children's Beach in July. The weather cooperated and a magical weekend of dance ensued. Thanks to the generous support of our sponsors, all performances were free of charge — and old and young alike enjoyed the ability to interact more closely with the talented dance troupe.

The Atheneum's Turkey Plunge was also impacted by the lingering pandemic. However, once again, enthusiastic supporters, sponsors and "plungers" had fun creating videos of their submersions, raising \$74,000 to support the Weezie Library along the way. A debt of gratitude is owed to all of you who helped to continue this island-wide Thanksgiving tradition.

Lastly, I am pleased to announce that our 2021 Annual Giving Campaign was recently concluded and set new records with over \$660,000 raised. Your generosity is heartwarming and much appreciated during these trying times. Your growing support is also confirmation that our mission is a valued one — and will encourage the Board and Staff to be optimistic and proactive in evaluating our strategic "next steps".

Mission and Value Statements:

One of last year's highlights was the revision of the Atheneum's Mission Statement and accompanying Value Statements. The Board and staff worked closely together to define the Atheneum's community purpose and to think hard about what it is we value about our public library. Subsequently, the Marketing Task Force engaged with outside consultants to create a fresh "look" for the Atheneum, introducing a new logo and updated website.

Challenges:

Not unlike our peer non-profit organizations, the Atheneum's biggest challenge in 2021 was the growing shortage of staff housing. The library has been blessed with low employee turnover, however, the current housing "squeeze" on Nantucket has made the ability to find affordable and acceptable housing increasingly tough. Staff salaries are being reviewed to ensure that the library's pay is equitable and adequate and, as a Board, we have begun to search for ways to further ease the strain, including soliciting the donation of or option to purchase residential real estate. A further ongoing challenge remains the upkeep of our beautiful building, and 2021 saw the Atheneum's roof being completely replaced and the building repainted at a combined cost of \$140,000.

Looking Forward

We remain optimistic that 2022 will be a year of continued return to "normalcy" from an operating standpoint. We hope to expand in-person programming and offer face-to-face lectures this summer (given the popularity and reach of our virtual offerings, it is likely these will continue to be recorded and archived, as well). We will once again revisit the Dance Festival format, but pledge to make this 15th anniversary celebration a very special one.

Most importantly, the easing of the pandemic has afforded us the opportunity to think more strategically as an organization. Key considerations will be our continued commitment to reaching underserved segments of our growing island community, a long-term solution for staff housing and addressing practical issues such as sufficient office and storage space in the face of rising water levels. It is inspiring to be thinking of the longer term and we look forward to involving all of you in our planning process as we move forward.



Transitions

Atheneum Staff

The Atheneum welcomed two new staff members in 2021—Ashley Christ (Finance Manager) and Jeanne Van Etten (Youth Services Assistant), who replaced departing Kiley Fitch, Katy DeHart and Ellen Young. We also bid a fond farewell to Laura Freedman (Library Associate) and Amy Jenness (Head Adult Program Coordinator) and promoted Janet Forest to fill Amy's position. We hope you will join us in welcoming Ashley, Jeanne and Janet into their new roles and wishing those leaving the Atheneum the best of luck.

Board of Trustees

Five new Trustees joined the Board last year—Judy Belash, Jack Carter, Adriene Lombardi, Roberto Santamaria and Ann Taylor. Each of these talented people brings a unique strength to our Board and we look forward to their ongoing, enthusiastic participation.

The Board bid farewell to four outstanding Trustees in June, including Ted McCarthy, Randee Seiger, Tucker Holland and former Board Chair Joan Gulley. These individuals contributed to the Atheneum in countless ways and their presence at Committee and Board meetings is already missed. In recognition of her service as Development Committee Chair (2016-2018) and Board Chair (2018-2021), Joan was named a Chair Emeritus during June's Annual Meeting. On a more personal note, I can't thank Joan enough for her encouragement, mentorship and ongoing advice over the last two years.

Sadly, the Board of Trustees and Atheneum staff mourned the passing of Trustee Emeritus Chuck Geschke in early 2021. Chuck and his wife, Nan, served on the Atheneum's board in the early 2000s and have supported many of the island's nonprofits over the decades. In 2005 they matched a National Endowment Grant and created the Geschke Lecture Series. Sixteen years later, the Geschke lectures have become a premiere event to experience fascinating conversations centered around cutting-edge ideas.

In closing, I'd like to extend a thank you to the Board of Trustees for their valued input, generosity in terms of time and financial support and advocacy for the Atheneum. Their combined talent and dedication is of great comfort in these uncertain times.

I'd also like to thank Ann Scott once again for her strong leadership of the organization. Ann's thoughtful approach to management during the pandemic has been nothing short of exemplary. The Atheneum staff also deserves recognition for their continued commitment to excellence, despite the extraordinary circumstances. We all look forward to a time when we can interact on a more personal basis.

Lastly, I'd be remiss in not offering my heartfelt thanks to you, our generous donors and supporters. Your commitment and enthusiasm for our mission provides the underpinning for our organization. On behalf of the Board and the Atheneum Staff, I can't thank you enough.

With warm regards and best wishes for 2022,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tracy Flannery".

Tracy Flannery