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ARTBEAT STUDIO

Statement by:
The Honourable Patricia Bovey

Tuesday, March 16, 2021

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Hon. Patricia Bovey: Honourable senators, I rise today to pay tribute to a special Winnipeg arts organization, Artbeat, and to thank several individuals who have been at its centre. I congratulate Ernie and Lucille Bart and their son, Artbeat's founder Nigel Bart, for their foresight, determination and dedication.

Since 2005, this impressive program, studio and community space has provided creative inspiration and facilitated mental, spiritual and economic health for those in need. Their commitment to mental health support and recovery has been stellar.

Now retiring, board members Ernie and Lucille have since the outset volunteered and served selflessly. Ernie established a thriving studio central; Lucille also served as Executive Director. I extend a heartfelt thank you to both. Artbeat is integral to Winnipeg's creative scene. With their dedicated staff of five, Artbeat unquestionably adds to the quality of life and self-confidence of many. Practising artists contribute through their mentorship, support and passion.

Artbeat also connects with other organizations, like Arts AccessAbility Network Manitoba and Brandon University's psychiatric nursing program, ensuring a wide-ranging collective reach, benefiting people in various parts of Manitoba.

Through COVID, Artbeat inaugurated their online workshops and delivered special art kits to participants. Artbeat knows the importance of maintaining direct connections with their clients. Without that determination and contact, I hate to think what the negative effects might have been for many.

Executive Director Uyen Pham says:

We focus on building community at Artbeat studio. Being part of something that is much bigger than the world you know is going to lift your spirits and increase your quality of life.

I've seen the impact this can have on a person's mental health, and it is immeasurable. The sense of belonging, the creation of art next to another person creating art, knowing that person is also living with mental health challenges, has profoundly increased one's self-esteem and outlook on life. I imagine a world where there is an Artbeat in every city, where creative expressions can heal and empower the mental health of many.

The intersections of art and mental health are growing. I have spoken about Kingston's art programs. Recently I spoke with B.C.'s Alliance for Arts + Culture about their recent research in the field, and with leaders of Montreal's two-year-old Artruism Group, which is gaining ground and making a difference to those with mental illnesses. So, too, is the Quebec Medical Association-Le Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal partnership. I also attended a training session with proponents of the U.K.'s Social Prescribing Network.

All these organizations share the same goal: improving mental health through the arts.

I applaud those taking the risk to help folks in need. I stand with those who believe the arts are integral to mental health. I encourage communities working in creative and rewarding ways.

Colleagues, arts programs are building mental health capacities. They are important and rewarding. Thank you.
