



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Pete Harckham

Harckham Checks out Putnam Arts Center's New Elevator Funded by a \$50,000 State Grant

PETE HARCKHAM February 27, 2023

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Mahopac, NY – New York State Senator Pete Harckham visited the Putnam Arts Council (PAC) recently to check out the new elevator that was being installed in the Belle Levine Center, as well as the center's new HVAC unit, two infrastructure upgrades funded through a \$50,000 state grant he secured in March 2022.

“The new elevator and HVAC unit at the Putnam Arts Center will benefit the many students who come here for instruction, including seniors and those with unique abilities,” said Harckham. “I am pleased to be able to help provide state grant funding for this very busy organization and alleviate some of the burden

that the project's costs would have created.”

The Putnam Arts Council has its operations housed here on Kennicut Hill Road at the Belle Levine Center, a renovated 1800's barn that was used as a studio by *Chicago Tribune* cartoonist Bud Fisher, who created the comic strip *Mutt and Jeff*. The two-story structure today consists of an art gallery, vestibule, classroom / workspace, artist's residency space, pottery studio, printmaking studio, storage space and two accessible restrooms.

The new elevator, costing about \$43,000, will provide universal access to both floors of the Levine Center, which will also make it easier to transport heavy supplies and materials around the facility for art projects. Meanwhile, the new HVAC system will provide climate control to the pottery studio, one of the Putnam Arts Council's most popular and in-demand spaces. The grant includes about \$1,000 for a security system upgrade as well.

The Putnam Arts Council, a nonprofit arts organization, was chartered in 1963 for museum and educational services. PAC supports the work of individual artists and provides technical and developmental support to other arts organizations and cultural presenters throughout Putnam County. At the Belle Arts center, PAC offers arts programs for all ages, interests and abilities, while providing job opportunities for teaching artists.

“We are excited to add an elevator to our home, the Belle Levine Art Center, that will provide universal access to the entire building,” said Joyce Picone, executive director of the Putnam Arts Council. “Over a decade ago, when we renovated the Arts Center, we planned on installing an elevator and included a shaft for when we were able to do so. A mere 13 years later, our plans have been realized and we are ready to celebrate the completion of this project.”

Picone added, “We are also upgrading climate control in our busy pottery studio. This HVAC project makes both our dedicated potters as well as our board and staff pleased to have a greener and more efficient energy source in the Arts Center.”

The awarded grant funding was secured within the State and Municipal Facilities Program (SAM), which is among the grant programs administered by the Dormitory Authority of the State of New York (DASNY) to support community and economic development. Harckham delivered more than \$5,000,000 of state grant funding to municipalities and nonprofits in SD40 last year.