



## **RIVER ARTS OF MORRISVILLE PROJECT**

### **Project Description:**

River Arts was founded as an intergenerational community arts center in Morrisville. This group grew out of a 1999 Orton Family forum organized by our Town Selectboard. They hired a coordinator to support the four community groups that grew out of the Forum.

The River Arts Center became part of the downtown revitalization plan.

**RA Mission:** *Enriching the community through the arts*

### **Timeline:**

November 1999 - Community forum took place and the arts group formed.

Summer 2000 – Began our arts programs using donated town spaces.

2001 – Received our 501c3 status. Sent our first annual fundraising letter.

2002 - Hired our first employee, a half time program director.

2005 - Hired our first executive director.

2005 - Purchased the Lamoille County Grange building, with help of PTV and VHCB.

2005 - Began renovation planning.

2005 – Began planning capital campaign for \$550,000 (later increased to \$988,000). Made the first ask in May 2006.

March 2008 - Moved our office into the renovated space and began offering programs there. Launched the year-round Lamoille Valley Farmers Artisan Market. Had over 10,000 visits to the building for classes and events in the first 9 months.

2009 - Had over 13,000 visits to the building for classes, meetings and events.

March 2010 - Have raised \$963,000 toward our capital campaign goal of \$988,000.

August 2010 - Plan to complete the capital campaign goal.

**Project Partners:**

Town of Morristown  
Village of Morrisville  
Lamoille County Grange  
Morrisville Alliance for Culture and Commerce  
Preservation Trust of VT  
VT Housing and Conservation Board  
VT Arts Council  
Peoples Academy Alumni

**Benefits to the Community:**

- RA has created a center for people of all ages and incomes to explore the visual, performing, literary and culinary arts through classes, exhibits and events.
- The RA Center is a gathering place for family, other non-profit and community events.
- The year-round Lamoille Valley Farmers Artisan Market takes place at the RA Center in our downtown.
- River Arts has stimulated the development of other arts related businesses in the area and supports the community of artists living in this region.
- This restored historic building has become a source of community pride and accomplishment.
- RA provides a public wi-fi site.

**Lessons Learned:**

- Renovation budgets on historic buildings are often revised upward. Ours doubled by the end of the renovation due to materials cost increases and newly discovered work that was needed as we went along in the renovation.
- Having a visible center attracts many more people to become involved in community activities. Our participation rates tripled in the first year after we moved into the building.
- It was important to have a broad base of support focused on all arts and genres--visual, music, theater, literary & culinary--to meet needs of all ages and interests and larger community partners.
- It was helpful to identify the different groups who would be interested in supporting the renovation of this particular building: past Grange Members, the Peoples Academy Alumni, those interested in community development, those interested in historic preservation and, of course, those interested in bringing more arts opportunities to the area. Once these groups were identified we could address their interests in our case statement and in our process of outreach, grantwriting and fundraising.