

NEWSLETTER >

Rochester Downtown Alliance

STYLE turns 10!

We look back at 10 years of STYLE on the Plaza and talk what's new this year.
- Pages 14

Plus...

DMC Discussions (pg. 3), new programs (pgs. 5 & 7), a special 'Featured Stakeholder Series' with Fagan Studios (pg. 16), and more.

From the ED

BY JENNA BOWMAN
RDA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Greetings and happy spring! I write this to you as I reflect on the past three years I have spent as the Executive Director of the Rochester Downtown Alliance. When I moved back to Rochester in 2014, having been gone for almost a decade, it was exciting to see how much the community, specifically the downtown, had changed. By changed, I mean that it had truly become a vibrant and active area. **New businesses joined the many longstanding locally owned Rochester establishments who have been the backbone of the downtown for decades.** This type of collision has created the lively landscape that many residents and visitors know and enjoy as uniquely Rochester.

Over the past three years, strides have been made on a multitude of fronts. I wanted to use this opportunity to highlight a few of these areas:

Stakeholder Relations

With over 320 businesses within the 44-block area of the RDA Special Service District, it can be a challenge to consistently connect with businesses. This is especially true when the RDA is staffed by four people. However, there have been steps taken to ensure there is consistent and easy access to information. In the fall of 2014, the first RDA print newsletter was mailed. This quarterly publication has evolved over the past three years and is now a 20-page newsletter featuring the latest in RDA news. In December of 2016, the RDA held its first Annual Meeting. This free gathering was focused on recapping the year and providing information as to what the RDA would be focusing on in 2017. **Both items are examples of a commitment to transparency, access to information, and two-way communication about the happenings in the downtown core.**

Programming

There have been four new events added to the RDA core event portfolio. These include Ladies Night Out (2015), Dogs Downtown (2015), Fall Fest (2016) and Small Business Saturday (2014). Ladies Night Out was created to encourage women to rid themselves of cabin fever and shop, dine, and mingle in the downtown. **In 2017, it is estimated that this event created over \$30,000 in economic impact in the downtown on the evening of March 23.**

In the inaugural year, Dogs Downtown had 3,000 people and their four-legged friends in attendance. Last year, the event saw an estimated 9,000 attendees and even more dogs. A big thank you to Clements Subaru who has been the presenting partner for this event.

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DMC Discussions

DISCOVERY SQUARE: "SCIENCE ON DISPLAY"

BY DMC STAFF



The DMC vision is progressing as each of the sub-district's distinctive personalities are beginning to evolve. Heart of the City, for example, serves as the place where health care intersects with hospitality and retail; the Downtown Waterfront looks to transform the perception of Rochester from a medical campus into a vibrant destination; and St. Marys Place becomes a monumental gateway at one of the primary entry points into Rochester.

Lately though, it's Discovery Square that's making the news.

Discovery Square – the 16-block area that lies adjacent to downtown Rochester's special service district – is a keystone of the DMC economic development initiative and the new address for the future of life science, research, education, and technology innovation.

The details and location about the first life sciences research building to be built in Discovery Square were recently released. The complex, being developed by Mortenson Company, will be built

at the corner of 4th Street SW and 2nd Avenue SW.

"The DMC vision for Discovery Square is coming to life," said Lisa Clarke, executive director of the Destination Medical Center. "This vibrant life sciences hub will generate tremendous economic impact for the city, region, and



state over the next twenty-plus years."

Soon, Discovery Square will offer space where science and business comes together to transform medical innovations into improved consumer health care experience and delivery. The occupants of the modern, inviting spaces in Discovery Square will

epitomize "science on display" as they collaborate to accelerate research, improve delivery, and advance patient care.

One of many new, innovative spaces anticipated for Discovery Square, a groundbreaking will be held later this year, and the building is expected to be complete and ready for occupancy in 2019.

"The DMC vision for Discovery Square is coming to life..."



Photos provided courtesy of Destination Medical Center



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2 'FROM THE ED'

Fall Fest is the latest addition to the RDA core event portfolio. This event was added after hearing from the community that there was a strong desire to have an event geared towards kids and families. **In its first year, there was an estimated 9,000 in attendance.** Approximately 74% of attendees stated that this event made them feel more connected to the Rochester community.

While Small Business Saturday has been occurring since 2010, the RDA has been promoting it since 2014. Most recently, the RDA has provided mini grants to businesses who wish to celebrate the national day. This is a commitment to supporting our strong locally owned small business community.

Through event survey collection, the RDA was able to estimate that in 2016, through five of the ten events, over \$8.2 million dollars was generated in economic impact.

General Marketing & Promotion of Downtown

A focus over the past three years has been a commitment to increasing the amount of focus on the general marketing and

promotion of downtown. In March of 2016, the RDA launched a brand refresh after having worked with White Space, a locally owned small business who also is a downtown stakeholder. The outcome was a refreshed brand focused on people, place, and experience –

Continues on next page.





All photos featured on pages 4 and 5 are samples from the RDA media suite: a collection of high-quality and locally sourced images created by downtown Stakeholder Red Couch Stories. The RDA commissioned Red Couch Stories to create a collection of images and video that best tell the visual story of downtown Rochester through the people, the places, and the experiences that make up our downtown. All photos and videos (to be seen later) are of actual residents, visitors, and employees of downtown.

Continued from previous page.

those things that make downtown Rochester authentic and unique. This process also led the RDA with a defined, purpose, vision and values. These have been tremendously valuable in the last year.

While there are many other areas of growth and development, I leave you with these three. It has been an honor to serve as the RDA Executive Director these past three years, and I look forward to the years ahead. Thank you for your continued support and engagement – it allows for the downtown to continue to thrive and be a true place of activity and vibrancy.

“A focus over the past three years has been a commitment to increasing the amount of focus on the general marketing and promotion of downtown.”

Mid-Year Strategic Priorities Review

RDA MAKES STRIDES TOWARDS FULFILLING 2017 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

In the March newsletter, five areas of strategic priority were outlined. These five areas were selected by the Board of Directors in the fall of 2016. These priorities include:

Stakeholder Relations
Marketing & Promotion
Programming
Collaborations
Downtown Experts

Over the past five months, the RDA staff have been working diligently to meet the goals and metrics outlined in the RDA 2017 Operating Plan. As you will read in various sections of this newsletter, there are great strides being taken to realize these strategic priorities. Here are a few highlights:

Stakeholder Relations

In 2016, 88 stakeholders responded to a survey. One of those questions revealed that just over 30% of respondents felt connected to the Board of Directors. Thus, stakeholder relations rose to the top as being a critical 2017 strategic priority.

One addition that was made to the annual calendar are quarterly stakeholder sessions. These sessions are meant to provide an opportunity for education, awareness building, and two-way communication between businesses and the RDA Board of Directors and staff. As the downtown continues to grow and

add additional businesses to the current 320, there is a continued commitment to transparency, connectedness and awareness. We encourage all stakeholders to attend one of these stakeholder sessions.

Programming

Many know the RDA for the events held annually to encourage increased vibrancy and activation of the downtown core. In the past three years alone, four new events have been added to the core portfolio; Ladies Night Out, Dogs Downtown, Fall Fest, and Small Business Saturday. These four events brought an additional 19,000 people into the downtown last year. This year the RDA has partnered with a variety of organizations to bring additional programs to life. These include Move on the Plaza, Bookworm Walk, and Let's Play Rochester. The Bookworm Walk and Let's Play Rochester!

are two great examples of passive programming. This means that the public can engage with this programming at their leisure. We are excited to work with our community partners on these three programs and hope to expand the amount of passive programming in downtown in the future.

Downtown Experts

In late 2015, the RDA Board of Directors discussed the

importance of monitoring and gaging the amount of impact on investment, as most of RDA events do not see revenues generated, most realize a deficit. However, there is a strong awareness by the Board of Directors that many of these events serve a greater purpose. Over the past year and a half, the RDA staff has been focused on collecting impact data. This collection has been done through event attendee surveys. In 2016, an average of 75.38% of event attendees stated that they felt more connected to the Rochester community after attending that RDA event. This type of data is a great indication that RDA events are having a positive impact on the Rochester community.

The RDA staff will continue to work diligently in the remaining months to meet the goals and metrics set out in the RDA 2017 Operating Plan. A full recap will be provided

“These four events brought an additional 19,000 people into the downtown last year.”

in the Annual Report and at the Annual Meeting, which is set to take place in December.



Photo: left, Let's Play Rochester! Installation, bottom right, 2016 Annual Meeting

stART-up Events Coming Soon

BY KARLI MCELROY
PROGRAM MANAGER

The Downtown Cultural Initiatives (DCI) Committee was excited to begin the process of reviewing proposals for new events in 2017 to receive stART-up grant funds. Anyone was able to apply for stART-up grant funding, and applicants have the opportunity to receive up to \$3,000 in funding towards first-time events held in downtown Rochester.

The RDA will distribute up to \$10,000 to selected events this year. Applicants apply for up to \$3,000 in grant funds. The stART-up grant application window opened April 1 and remained open until May 16, 2017. Grant awards and the events will be announced in early June.

In 2016, the Rochester City Jazz Festival - a family-friendly event - received a \$3,000 grant and an additional \$3,000 in 2017 with the addition of event mentorship. This event is organized by John Sievers and features local, regional, and nationally recognized jazz performers.

"I am extremely grateful the RDA took the effort to support local grass roots artists in an attempt to help

Photo: Top, Linda Ronstadt tribute concert

nurture a diverse cultural experience in the heart of our city," said Sievers on receiving his 2016 grant.

The RDA recognizes the value of supporting programming and events from others in the community and is proud to support events like the Rochester City Jazz Festival because new and diverse events help create a more vibrant downtown for all to enjoy.

Through the stART-up Grant, the RDA hopes to see the development of more successful and sustainable events in the years to come.

2017 Grant Recipients

Event Name	Grant Amt.
Burgers for Babies	\$1,500
Maker's Space at the Women & Spirituality Conference	\$2,000
My Town My Music	\$3,000
Poetry Downtown	\$2,000
World Breastfeeding Week	
2017 Celebration	\$1,000



BY JOHN SIEVERS
JAZZ FEST ORGANIZER

The 2nd Annual Rochester City Jazz Festival will take place on Sunday, August 13 from 1-8 pm at the Rochester Civic Theatre. The festival is expanding this year to include more acts while also keeping some of the successful elements from its debut like the Jazz Jam, which allows local jazz heads to sit in with The D'Sievers' jazz rhythm section and perform for their fans. This year, the festival will feature three bands including instrumental and vocal jazz: The John Paulson Group, The Jana Nyberg 5, and The Illicit Sextet.

The John Paulson Group features Paulson on sax. A professor emeritus at Saint Mary's University where he taught jazz for more than 30 years, Paulson has recorded six albums including his 2006 "Way Out Blues" and a collection of his works for big band on the 2013 John Paulson Big Band Project CD. His music includes everything from hard hitting swing to gentle bossa novas.

The Jana Nyberg 5 features Nyberg's vocal jazz. Nyberg is a vocalist and flautist from Minneapolis who appeared on season ten of American Idol. Nyberg's fourth full-length album will be released

in 2017. Her small ensemble plays both well-loved standards and tunes that are sometimes overlooked. The Jana Nyberg 5 has a modern edge, but Nyberg's vocals are soulful and expressive.

The headliner for the festival will be The Illicit Sextet. The band got its start in 1987 as a "composer's collective," and it is still making its mark in the Minnesota jazz scene. WCCO CBS included The Illicit Sextet in its list of Minnesota's four best jazz bands in 2015, and in 2016, the group released a new album entitled Addendum. The sextet also won "Best Instrumental Group" at the Minnesota Music Awards. The post-bop group consists of Steve Kenny (flumpet), Paul Harper (sax), David Roos (guitar), Chris Lomheim (piano), Tom Pieper (bass), and Nathan Norman (drums).

The 2nd Annual Rochester City Jazz Fest is sponsored by the Rochester Downtown Alliance, The Rochester Civic Theatre, 507 Magazine, and Northern Sun Productions. For more information about the festival go to:

[facebook.com/
rochestercityjazzfestival](https://facebook.com/rochestercityjazzfestival)

Photo: 1st Annual Rochester City Jazz Festival at Rochester Civic Theatre

Moms Who Lunch

BY **KARLI MCELROY**
PROGRAM MANAGER

Moms Who Lunch is a partnership between the Rochester Downtown Alliance (RDA), the Rochester MN Moms Blog (RMMB), and four downtown restaurants:

These lunch events are free to attend, open to all moms, and provide an opportunity to meet other moms and enjoy a delicious, reduced-price meal at select downtown restaurants! Each mom that attends also receives exclusive swag items from downtown businesses and is entered to win some great giveaways!

On Thursday, March 16 the RDA and RMMB were excited to host the first lunch at Victoria's Ristorante and Wine Bar. Thirty

Victoria's Ristorante and Wine Bar
Salute! Wine Bar
Bleu Duck Kitchen
Terza Ristorante



moms filled the restaurant and used their lunch hour to get to know one another, trade stories, advice, and enjoy the opportunity to make connections to other moms in the city. Each mom selected a delicious meal

prepared by Victoria's helpful staff, had the opportunity to win RMMB branded coffee mugs, a RMMB t-shirt, and two \$25 gift cards to a downtown business of the winners' choosing. However, no mom left empty handed as FireFly barre | fitness provided each mom with a certificate for two free classes of their choosing.

The second lunch was scheduled for Thursday, May 18 at Salute! Wine Bar from 11:30am - 1:00pm. During this lunch, one lucky winner won a free one-night stay provided by our friends at the Hilton Garden Inn, and the featured swag item for each mom at the event was a 50% off session fee from Fagan Studios in downtown Rochester!

These lunches show an intentional partnership meant to support vibrancy. In addition, this partnership drives traffic to downtown establishments, which helps raise awareness of offerings.

More information about the events when you can register can be found at:

DowntownRochesterMN.com
or:
RochesterMN.CityMomsBlog.com

Upcoming Lunch Events:

- Thursday, August 17 at Bleu Duck Kitchen from 11:30am - 1:00pm
- Thursday, October 19 at Terza Ristorante from 11:30am - 1:00pm

Images right to left: Sample menu, photo from first Moms Who Lunch event

BOD Member Feature

WITH MIA GRIMME OF COUNTERPOINT AND JAMIE RADKE OF TITAN DEVELOPMENT

Part of a diverse and eclectic group, RDA Board Members Mia Grimme and Jamie Radke share their point of view into the RDA's values, mission, and strategic priorities for 2017.

Which of the RDA values resonates the most with you and why?

Mia Grimme: The value that resonates most with me is "Be Passionate". Just as the stakeholders are passionate about their own individual businesses, it's important for the RDA staff, board members, and volunteers to be passionate about current/future programming and possibilities, future improvements and changes to downtown, and having downtown be a vibrant and prosperous place for all.

Jamie Radke: What I like most about the RDA is the focus on offering unique events that bring an energy to downtown Rochester that at one point did not exist. It wasn't that long ago that our downtown was desolate after 5pm and on weekends. The RDA has contributed to changing that atmosphere in downtown Rochester.



Photo: Jamie Radke, Titan Development

Which strategic priority is most important to you and why?

MG: Stakeholder relations is most important to me. Creating an open line of communication between the RDA and the downtown stakeholders can ensure that ideas about events and future programming can be heard and considered. Increased stakeholder relations will also, in my opinion, increase participation in event programming, which is a benefit for all involved.

Why do you feel it's important for the RDA to provide benefits, opportunities, and support for downtown Rochester?

JM: Rochester is a very unique market with world renowned medical facilities. As such, it brings thousands of visitors to our downtown each year. There is also a growing demand for downtown housing for those that want to live and work downtown. Organizations like the RDA are important to create opportunities for the wide variety of traffic we see downtown. At the same time, they play an important part in advocating for those businesses within the Special Services District. Being able to bring community and business

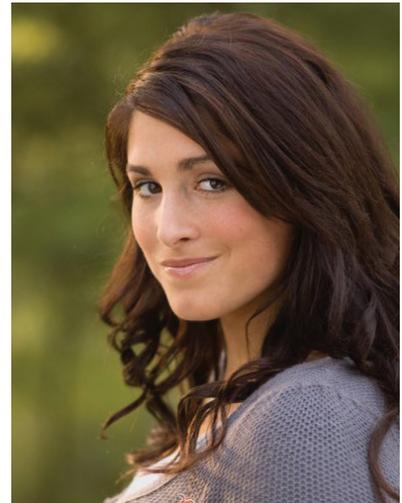


Photo: Mia Grimme, Counterpoint

together is a must and the RDA is critical to that process.

Why do you feel a vibrant downtown is important?

MG: A downtown that is vibrant with shopping, dining, hotel accommodations, and personal services is a place where visitors and local people alike want to be: for work and for play! Showcasing it's unique experiences are what keep people coming back time and time again!

JM: Having fun, vibrant events entice people to come downtown whether you work here, live here, or are just visiting. In turn, those events are opportunities for people to see the variety of small businesses that call downtown Rochester home.

From the Chair

BY **BERN O'BRIEN**
BOARD CHAIR



“These new events and the timeless favorites will continue to showcase the people and places that make-up our fantastic Downtown community.”

new programs provide great opportunities for residents and visitors of all ages to engage and participate in fun and unique activities. These new events and the timeless favorites will continue to showcase the people and places that make-up our fantastic Downtown community. Please visit DowntownRochesterMn.com to view more details and event schedules.

Park & Recreation Department. These types of partnerships are essential to the ever-evolving dynamic of Rochester.

I would like to thank the RDA staff, the RDA board, our stakeholders, and our strategic partners that continually strive to come up with new and innovative ways to show how great of a Downtown community we have.

Greetings, and welcome to spring! As we shrug off the winter blues and set our sights on spring and summer, we are able to take inventory of where we've been and where we're going. Tolstoy said, "Spring is the time of plans and projects," and that couldn't be more accurate for the RDA.

Recently, the RDA Board was presented with the following slate of new programs: The Bookworm Walk, Let's Play Rochester!, and Move on The Plaza. Each of these

One of the pillars of the RDA is programming that creates a vibrant Downtown, benefiting stakeholders, residents, and visitors alike. To fully achieve that goal, it is essential to engage and collaborate with our partners within the community. The introduction of the new programs listed above, could not be accomplished, nor have the amount of impact without the help from groups like the Rochester Public Library, Minnesota Children's Museum Rochester, and the Rochester

From the Chair is a recurring article within the RDA Newsletter where the sitting Board Chair reflects on the past quarter and speaks to the next quarter.



Ladies Night Out 2017

BY ABBY SLICK
EVENTS SPECIALIST

April showers came early this year, but it didn't stop ladies from coming downtown to shop, dine, and mingle. In its second year, Ladies Night Out featured more businesses, exclusive deals for attendees, and two kick off locations – Shops at University Square and in the subway outside Associated Bank. This year, 26 downtown businesses participated and 15 of those businesses received a \$75 mini grant. The first 500 attendees received a purse hook, plus many businesses provided deals or a gift with purchase.

New this year – for every \$10 spent at participating businesses, attendees would receive an entry slip for the Grand Prize drawing. The Grand Prize was an assortment of gift cards and merchandise from all of the participating businesses, valued at \$600. In addition, 25 other winners were drawn and each received a \$25 gift card to a participating business. There were over 500 estimated participants this year.

Julie Jones from iHeart Media and Jorrie Johnson from Rochester Women's Magazine made a special appearance during the night and enjoyed the Ladies Night Out festivities amongst everyone.

Based on the attendee survey this year, 97% would recommend Ladies Night Out to friend and 81% agreed this event has motivated them to shop, dine, or use services in downtown Rochester.

Along with the attendee survey – there was a merchant survey for participating businesses. 80% saw an increase in foot traffic compared to a typical Thursday evening. One merchant said, "Not only does it create such a positive and fun atmosphere for both locals and visitors, but it also unites downtown businesses." Save the date for next year: March 8, 2018 (subject to change).



Photos: 2017 Ladies Night Out

Bookworm Walk

BY **KARLI MCELROY**
PROGRAM MANAGER

The Rochester Downtown Alliance (RDA), the Rochester Public Library (RPL), and Rochester Parks & Recreation are excited to partner on a children’s reading walk entitled, “Bookworm Walk,” which will feature two children’s books, “Muncha! Muncha! Muncha!” by, Candance Fleming and “Planting a Rainbow” by, Lois Ehlert. The project will feature a mapped walking route beginning at RPL and ending at the Rochester Riverfront Mural across the river from the Government Center.

The Bookworm Walk runs June 13 - September 11, 2017

The Bookworm Walk will kick-off with a press event on Tuesday, June 13, 2017 at the Rochester Public Library. Both children and adults are invited to the kick-off event and will be encouraged to follow the Bookworm Walk along the river. The RDA and RPL will also invite the community to participate in the festivities and have representatives on-site to discuss the project and speak with the media. The event is free to attend and open to the public.

The goal of the Bookworm Walk is to encourage the development of reading skills and provide a family-friendly activity in a unique setting along the river walk downtown.

“The Bookworm Walk not only provides an opportunity for families to read together, but it is an activity that stimulates the senses and turns reading into a memorable experience for children,”

said RDA Program Manager Karli McElroy.

Karen Lemke RPL’s head of marketing and community engagement says, “We’re excited to partner with the RDA on the new Bookworm Walk near the library. This [project] provides residents and visitors a chance to explore downtown Rochester in a unique way.”

The RDA and RPL both recognize the value of supporting programming and events which inspire the public to think creatively and contribute to a more vibrant downtown community. More information about the Bookworm Walk and the route can be found online at DowntownRochesterMN.com or along with other fun activities hosted by the Rochester Public Library in their Summer Playlist Series (rochesterpubliclibrary.org/my-rpl/summer-playlist)

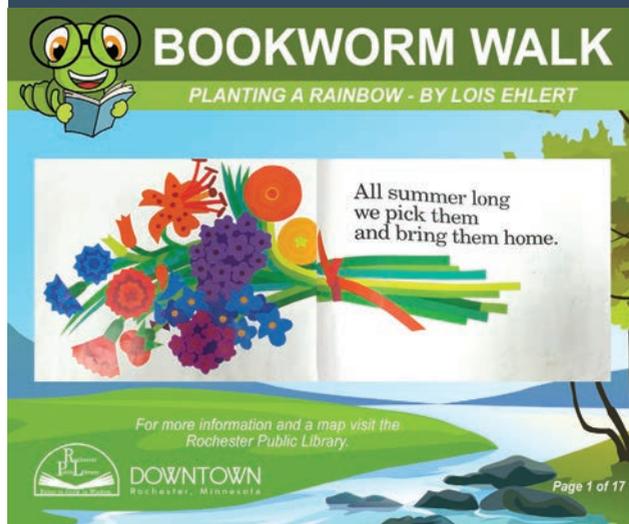


Image: Page 1 of 17 of the Bookworm Walk

In partnership with:



10 Years of 'STYLE'

BY **JENNA BOWMAN**
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



On September 28, 2017, the Rochester Downtown Alliance will present the 10th STYLE event. In honor of this momentous milestone, we wanted to provide a recap of the exciting 10-year history of the event. Of course, this event would not have been possible without the creativity, support, involvement, and leadership of those who have been involved over the past decade.

The first show was held in 2008 on what was then, the brand-new Peace Plaza. The show took place over the lunch hour and was open to any who stopped by. In 2009, the show took on a Bryant Park Fashion Week feel, with the show taking place under a tent. This was the kick-off to the event being ticketed. Starting in 2010,

STYLE on the Plaza embraced a yearly theme. These included, Fall into Fashion, Four Corners of the Earth, Fashion Beats, The Art of Fashion, and the Experience. Over these five years, the event saw the inclusion of a 3-course dinner, pre-show entertainment, a look book, and the inclusion of emerging designers.

In 2014, longtime STYLE on the Plaza Fashion Coordinator and Rochester fashion guru Nood Reynolds, retired from the show. Nood had provided tremendous leadership, vision, passion, and many volunteer hours over the seven years she was involved with the show. Without her, the show would not have been possible.



STYLE 2017 is October 19

In 2015, STYLE on the Plaza kept the name and theme to simply that, STYLE on the Plaza. However, for the first time in eight years, the event experienced inclement weather, which moved the show inside to Shops at University Square. While seating was limited, the entire second floor of Shops was filled with event attendees. It was also the inaugural year of Lauren Smith taking the reins of Fashion Coordinator, having been mentored by Nood Reynolds. In 2016 the event was yet again plagued by rain, this time resulting in the full cancellation of the show.

In the 10th year of the event, it will make a move into the Kahler and embrace the name STYLE. The change to an indoor venue will ensure the show will go on regardless of the weather outside and provide a unique opportunity for event attendees to be located even closer to some of the participating merchant shops.

While STYLE offers an exciting night downtown for event attendees, it serves a greater purpose and that is to really shine a light on the retail community that resides in downtown Rochester.

10 years, STYLE has become a premier night of fashion, fun with friends, and shopping."

A big thank you to all the stores and business owners for their support and involvement over



STYLE by the Numbers

Each year:

33 Volunteers

45 community member models

350 STYLE Tickets

\$28,000 investment

Bruce Dahlstrom with Hers commented, "STYLE lets us showcase cutting edge fashion that we have curated from our market trips across the country. It has raised awareness for our store, that there is a lot of great fashion available right here in Downtown Rochester! Over the last

the years. The downtown retail community makes this event the special experience that it is.

In closing, Fashion Coordinator, Lauren Smith commented, "This year marks the 10th Anniversary of STYLE. A lot might have changed in the fashion world during the last decade, but there is one thing that will remain the same forever- the excitement and fun of the fashion world." Here's to celebrating 10 years of this exciting downtown event!

Photos: left to right, top to bottom, STYLE on the Plaza 2015, Reynolds directing models (2015), Reynolds and James Wilcox of KAAL ABC6 (2016), STYLE on the Plaza 2011.



Featured Stakeholder Series

with Shawn & Michelle Fagan of Fagan Studios

BY ENDER GÖÇMEN
MARKETING MANAGER

It's been 10 years since Fagan Studios Co-Owners Shawn and Michelle Fagan first opened their doors in downtown Rochester. To help them celebrate the past 10 years and looking into the next 10 (or 20!), we asked them to share their journey, perspective, and insight into their future and of downtown Rochester.

It's been 10 years. Why did both of you start Fagan Studios?

Shawn Fagan: Shel (Michelle) and I were both working for newspapers after college in SD, UT and IA, feeling it was a piece of God's plan for us to open our own business some day. We loved to tell stories with our photography (hence the photojournalism) and loved to do the same with portrait work. We loved creating beautiful modern portraits that brought out who our subjects are. We've been inspired from the beautiful sports portraits by Walter Looss Jr. of Sports Illustrated fame to the incredible portrait artist Rod Evans in Sioux Falls, SD.

What is your favorite thing about Rochester?

SF: I love the community of Rochester - we have incredible

friends through business, church, soccer, volunteer activities...so that's great... I love how we have four seasons....to the extreme! I love how Rochester has grown, incorporating so many great locally owned restaurants and businesses.

So our plan was to move around from photojournalism job to photojournalism job until we found a community we wanted to live in, and then slowly open up our own business. We were in IA for just under two years, about to have our first son, so we thought, "Let's jump!" And took that leap of faith (after much research and planning!) and chose Rochester to move to start our business. With \$500 in our checking account saved, we left our full time jobs and benefits, moved into my in-laws basement and

started up Fagan Studios!

What's been your most memorable moment since going into business?

SF: Several years ago I started doing video work as I've always been very intrigued by film, telling stories with, instead of a still photograph, a moving image! That rolled into Laurie Archbold and I launching Red



Photos courtesy of Fagan Studios

Couch Stories three years ago to create film content for commercial and non-profit clients out of the Fagan Studios building. We then had the opportunity to travel around the globe telling stories for Cargill out of the Cities. To travel and shoot in foreign countries is a dream for most photographers, so that was an incredible experience to see different parts of our world and tell its stories!

You just celebrated 10 years. When was the exact date, and why was this a milestone for you? How did you celebrate?

SF: March 30th marked the 10th year of us owning our building on Broadway! We moved to Rochester just over 13 years ago to start Fagan Studios, which we did out of Michelle's dad and step-mom's basement! After 9-months, we moved into our NW home and ran the business out of there for three years before purchasing our dream building. Shel and I both studied photojournalism at South Dakota State University, knowing that we wanted to someday open our own studio in an old brick building with wood floors (our building is one of the oldest remaining buildings in town, built in 1873!). 10 years ago we landed that dream.

Why is it important to you to be operating from downtown Rochester?

SF: The dream of owning an old brick building alone puts us in a downtown environment. With those "old building areas" comes usually other great things, like restaurants, coffee shops, delis, art, walkability, energy, unique shops. To be located within walking distance of some of the best restaurants and pubs in town is fantastic. It's also centrally located so we're able to leave the studio and get anywhere in town in less than 15 minutes.

There's also a life and vibrancy that comes with being located downtown, a vibrancy that is completely different than anywhere else in town. We love being a piece of that and having the vibrancy affect the experience of our work and the experience our clients have when coming to the studio.

What has operating downtown done for your business?

If we introduce ourselves to someone we haven't meant before, they'll have often times have known or seen our building on Broadway. It's great to have visual brand recognition with that! It's also a unique experience for our clients to have as compared to if we ran our studio out of a strip mall or some other location.

What unique perspective do you have as a photography studio in downtown Rochester?

SF: Running a small business in downtown Rochester is not always roses. There are incredible challenges that come with running any business :: cough :: property taxes ::cough:: . So it's interesting to see how things work at a very ground level of business development, city development, community development. As an artist, I like to see myself as a problem solver. How can I communicate an idea, a personality, a story through the visual medium? To take those skills and analyze the life of development, it's fascinating being a piece of the conversation.

On the literal level of "unique perspective" on being a photographer, it's fun getting access to areas and places just because I ask and have a camera!

What do you think is the best kept secret about downtown?

SM: For the best cup of coffee in SE MN, you have to try the Cortadito at Francisco's Cuban Café - easily the best kept secret in downtown Rochester!

What do you think the biggest change will be to downtown in the next 20 years?

SF: To think about what downtown will look like in 20 years....dang, I'm excited. I'm excited for new amenities downtown, for even more restaurants serving a variety of foods. I'm excited for the vibrancy of downtown to continue to grow as more people



Fagans supporting the Ronald McDonald House while on vacation in Yellowstone.

live closer to downtown and want to come downtown. I'm excited for downtown better serving alternative modes of transportation - seeing our city become more bike friendly, more bus transportation or rail. Downtown's growing. We need more efficient ways to get people down here besides every person taking up a parking spot.

A Word From Our Staff



Cassandra Linkenmeyer, Community Engagement Manager

It's only been a few weeks since I joined the staff here at the Rochester Downtown Alliance, but what a trip it's been so far. Coming from a vibrant business, arts, and culture scene in Minneapolis, I was unsure of what to expect from Rochester and the downtown community, and like many "outsiders," I was hesitant to think I'd be able to find the same level of entertainment, shopping, and community here. Almost instantly, that uncertainty disappeared and, needless to say, I couldn't be more thrilled. As I've settled into my role at the RDA, I've gotten to know the

people and businesses that make this community so great. Unlike anywhere else, there is a vibrancy and enthusiasm for what's here and for what's to come in downtown Rochester, and I'm excited to be a part of it. From Thursdays on First to Movies in the Park to Dogs Downtown, here's to a summer of great events in this great city!

Karli McElroy, Program Manager

It's official, we've reached peak summer! That seems like a strange statement (as it is only June), but in the world of event planning once the weather gets nice, things start to get busy! We kicked off the month of May with Let's Play Rochester!, a collaboration between the RDA and the Minnesota Children's Museum Rochester, which features three uniquely designed, large-scale sidewalk decals throughout downtown now through September 17. These decals are interactive pieces of art, and will encourage play in both kids and adults.



Move on the Plaza - summer dance and fitness series - features weekly classes teaching West Coast Swing, Argentine Tango - with special performances by Minnesota's top dancers in both styles - Zumba, Barre, Pound, and Yoga on the Peace Plaza June 2 through August 28, 2017. Partners include Dahl Dance Studio, FireFly barre | fitness, and Zumba Fitness. Lastly, the Bookworm Walk, a partnership between the Rochester Public Library which will feature a mapped children's book walk starting at the library and following the river walk will kick-off June 13 at the library. Be sure to check out these great programs this summer, and feel free to say "hi" if you see me running around outside!



Abby Slick, Events Specialist

Although in a new position, I'm no stranger to the RDA's summer events after being an events intern last year. I am excited and ready for our summer events to begin. Returning this summer to Thursdays on First & 3rd is Themed Thursdays on Historic 3rd Street. Check the website for dates, themes, and times! This summer will definitely be a great one! Keep up-to-date with the participating groups and activities by following the Thursdays on First & 3rd Facebook page. We'll have weekly updates, events, and surprises throughout the whole summer.

Meet Our Summer Event Interns

EVERY SUMMER, THE RDA HIRES TWO EVENT INTERNS TO HELP WITH OUR BUSY SUMMER EVENTS PORTFOLIO.



Name: Elizabeth Grodahl
Hometown: Rochester, MN
College/University: Bethel University
Year in school: Senior

What caught your eye about the RDA internship?
I saw this internship in my hometown, and I knew I had to apply. I've been attending these events for years and saw this as a great opportunity to experience a different side of these events.

What are you hoping to gain experience in?
I hope this internship will give me hands on experience working with customers, performers, and vendors beyond what is taught in the classroom. My future career goal is to become an event planner.

What do you find exciting about downtown Rochester?
Downtown Rochester is my home. It's a community filled with wonderful people and places to visit. I've spent countless hours downtown, and I can't wait to spend even more.



Name: Amelia Hicken
Hometown: Rochester, MN
College/University: Point Park University
Year in school: Sophomore

What caught your eye about the RDA internship?
The RDA internship offers an excellent opportunity to work with a great team of people to plan, market, and implement events for downtown Rochester.

What are you hoping to gain experience in?
Since I am majoring in arts and entertainment management, this experience will provide me the opportunity to gain knowledge in my field of interest.

What do you find exciting about downtown Rochester?
I love how downtown Rochester is thriving and offers so many different events to bring the community together, along with our extended community with all of the people who travel to visit the Mayo Clinic. We have a wonderful farmer's market, Thursdays on First, along with many cultural and art events to celebrate Rochester and the people who make up our community.

DOWNTOWN

Rochester, Minnesota

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