Frer House Pulses with Music, Art and Drama

– by William Colburn
Director, Frer House Project

Art, music and song filled the Exhibition Gallery (also known as Hoobler Lounge) of Charles Lang Frer’s historic home as friends gathered in support of plans to restore the adjacent former Whistler Gallery. A consummate art collector, Frer built his first private gallery in a major addition to his home in 1906, filling it with natural light and dozens of his prized Whistler paintings. Since the 1950s however, the gallery has suffered several alterations to convert it into office space, changes that negatively affected its historic design and character. At one time, it was home to the Kresge Historical Library with dozens of book stacks lining the floor.

The Friends of the Frer House and MPSI have launched a fund-raising campaign to restore this room to its original design. The cube-like office and drop ceilings would be removed and the room returned to its open plan as a space for meetings, conferences and exhibits. The Friends announced this exciting project with the March benefit, while Detroit’s Scarab Club Ensemble played music carefully selected to accompany each work of art. Special guest tenor Damien Top from Paris sang. Personal letters between Frer and Whistler were dramatized by two talented actors from the WSU Theater Department. The blending of art, music and theater won rave reviews from the rapt audience and raised more than $2,000 toward the cost of a professional plan needed to guide future restoration and fund-raising.

2011

Whistler Gallery as it currently exists as office space divided into small rooms and cubicles.

1906

Whistler Gallery circa 1906 with original art hanging.

If you would like to donate to this important project, please make out your check to FOFH/WSU and mail to Rose Foster, Frer House Restoration, 71 E. Ferry Street, Detroit, MI 48202. We appreciate all levels of support. To learn about other ways to donate or to be notified about future Friends of the Freer House events, please email Rose at rmfoster@wayne.edu.

Helping Children Find Their Voice

MPSI welcomed a new neighbor to Ferry Street with the arrival of the Kids-TALK Child Advocacy Center in February. Kids-TALK is a child-friendly environment where children in suspected cases of sexual abuse can be interviewed by highly-trained, experienced and caring professionals. The center also offers trauma-focused treatment at no cost to these children. Dr. Valerie Simon, a MPSI faculty member, belonged to the Wayne County Task Force that spearheaded the expansion of the center and its new location in Detroit. In January she received special recognition from Wayne County for her outstanding service to the task force.

Dr. Simon is partnering with Kids-TALK on two lines of research: one that seeks to understand the emergence of sexual risk behavior in adolescent girls with histories of child sexual abuse, and another that seeks to enhance the use of mental health services by youth and families attending the center.

To learn more about The Charles Lang Frer House visit www.mpsi.edu/about/friends-frer.php