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A Hidden Treasure: Arts Youniverse

Two years ago, Arts Youniverse made the Mary Stegmaier Mansion on South Franklin Street its home. The art studio and museum is open to the general public seven days a week and offers many art courses to individuals and groups. The studio is also home to more than a dozen artists whose work can be seen inside the mansion. The dazzling paintings and works invite visitors throughout the maze-like mansion.

“This place feels like it is hidden because not many people know about it, but it is certainly treasured,” said acrylic painter Tobi Grossman. College students rarely hear about these hidden places, especially in Wilkes-Barre and it’s a shame. “Unless you read the local newspapers everyday, you will not know much about this place, I am sure many college students don’t read them either,” she said.

When the club is boring, the same old house parties are dreary, or the movies are too expensive, students often complain that there is nothing to do here in Wilkes-Barre, but places like these can give students a new look on their college experience. It can vary up the repetitive lifestyle college students often get used to, which consists of going to class, sleep, eating, and last but not least, drinking.

“There was an artist here in the past and she taught a class here that counted towards college credits, back then we had a major influence on students especially those who took the course here, said Tobi Grossman. It is time that college students start exploring this studio once again and revive the spirit of this treasured place.

“We try to appeal to the community by displaying our work throughout the city,” Executive Director Kathleen Godwin claimed. The mural outside by Katana Restaurant is our collective work along with other various sculptures around the downtown area,” she said. This in effect is the advertising campaign in the community Arts Youniverse displays.

There is always something going on at the studio. “Students are always welcome here, in fact we encourage more and more students to be involved with the arts and be creative,” said Tobi Grossman.

The studio offers the following courses and activities: art classes, music, poetry, dance, stained glass production and acting. Along with these features, every second Saturday of the month is “Mansion Madness” night. This night, the mansion fills up with visitors. Skits, plays, comedy, musicians, and poetry are performed in almost every room of the mansion.

“Mansion Madness night is by far everyone’s favorite night to show up here, there tons of things to do and you won’t leave here unhappy afterwards,” said Kathleen Godwin. These types of nights can attract students who complain about their boring nights here on the campus.

“Here at Arts Youniverse, on every third Friday of the month, we display an exhibition of our work, it also attracts many people from the area,” said Tobi Grossman. Third Fridays are less hectic than “Madness Mansion” nights.

Of course not everyone appreciates art and it is tough to attract these types of people. “We make everybody’s experience here as relative as possible to what they are

interested in whether it is music, poetry, dance, nature, or theatre,” said Kathleen Godwin.

The studio may be moving closer to King’s. The Masonic Jewish Temple on South Franklin Street is only a half a block away from the King’s College campus. “The funding for our move is still in progress but we plan on moving and settling in the Masonic Temple by this time next year,” said Tobi Grossman. This is great for the King’s community because of the location of where the new studio and museum will be.

“I can’t recall the last time a student from King’s walked in here and checked out our works,” says Grossman. These students are missing out on an opportunity to view great works by great artists.

Speaking of great artists, John Pacorsky creator of the “Absente” vodka logo and paintings calls Arts Youniverse his home studio. It is a fun fact to know that the creator of this world-renowned drink logo and paintings resides locally here in Wilkes-Barre. “I love this place, it’s like heaven for us here, we (artists) have the greatest time with each other here and it reflects in our works and we hope it rubs off on our guests,” John says.

The next time someone says there is nothing to do in this town, explore more of the town. It is the places like Arts Youniverse that can change a student’s aspect on college life in Wilkes-Barre. This hidden treasured place welcomes everybody and encourages its visitors to be involved with the arts.

“Whenever we are open, there will always be a happy face here to greet you and we appreciate when visitors come,” Tobi Grossman said.