

## **LEONES' GENEROSITY CHALLENGES WHEATONARTS & THE COMMUNITY**

**MILLVILLE, NJ** (June 5, 2017) Judy and Peter Leone have pledged \$1,000,000 to support operating and capital needs of WheatonArts, a globally renowned cultural resource located in Southern New Jersey that serves a broad base of constituents, including local residents, regional cultural tourists, and world-class artists.

The Leones' gift comes in two parts: 1) \$400,000 to help support the Center's Glass Studio core operations for the next three years. 2) \$600,000 to establish the *WheatonArts Glass Studio Challenge* focused on support for the Resident Staff and Assistant Program that provides career-building experiences for young artists, a Distinguished Artist Residency Program that fosters new works in glass by world-class contemporary artists as well as studio equipment, artist housing, and other capital needs.

The *Glass Studio Challenge* stipulates that WheatonArts broaden its outreach throughout the region, nationally, and internationally over the next 12 months in order to attract new gifts, which will be matched dollar-for-dollar by the Leones (up to \$600,000). The *Glass Studio Challenge* is stimulated by the Leones' enthusiasm for programs that include fellowships for emerging artists working with glass along with residencies and exhibitions for distinguished artists from all over the world.

"Frank Wheaton, Jr., brought to life an institution that connects the creativity of contemporary artists with South Jersey's glassmaking tradition," Mr. Leone observed. "We seek to honor this tradition by supporting current artists, seeding the future of this art form, and encouraging additional commitments to advance the sustainability of a vibrant artist community."

Mr. Leone, former CEO of Leone Industries (now the Bridgeton outpost of Ardagh Glass) has been an active leader of the WheatonArts Board since 1999 and served as Board Chairman from 2001 to 2006. Mrs. Leone, prominent Philadelphia attorney, shares her husband's commitment to WheatonArts; both recognize and value the exceptional programs that have defined WheatonArts over the past 45 years. Mr. Leone underscores the international caliber of WheatonArts' artistic excellence, "We recognize that WheatonArts is distinguished, on an international level, by its on-site dynamic artist community and the public benefit offered by the unique artist-visitor interaction."

WheatonArts CEO Susan Gogan is exceedingly appreciative of the Leones' leadership. "Peter and Judy Leone have given generously to WheatonArts over the years. This extraordinary challenge grant will provide a new, incredible opportunity for us to sustain and grow programs that will have a tremendous influence on the Glass Studio, now and in the future. I'm delighted that a number of WheatonArts Board members have already increased their financial commitment in response to the *Glass Studio Challenge*. Moreover, the Leones have opened the door for us to invite others to rise to the occasion and also make a significant impact."

The Leones are eager for their Challenge to inspire support for other aspects of the Center. Mr. Leone urges "other patrons of the arts to create initiatives to fund infrastructure needs and other WheatonArts programs such as the Museum of American Glass, the Down Jersey Folklife Program, and the Glasstown Collective Arts Education Program; programs that collectively attract tens of thousands of cultural tourists to the region each year."

### **About WheatonArts**

Wheaton Arts and Cultural Center, founded as Wheaton Village in 1968, is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization with a mission to ***engage artists and audiences in an evolving exploration of creativity. The mission will be advanced through the interpretation of collections and exhibitions; education initiatives and culturally diverse public programs; residencies and other opportunities for artists.*** With a history spanning four decades, WheatonArts has earned regional, national and international recognition for its unique collections and programs.

The *Museum of American Glass* is at the heart of the Center, housing the most comprehensive collection of glass produced in America. Located in Millville, the center of the nation's first glass industry, the *Museum* is one of only eight museums in New Jersey to be accredited by the American Alliance of Museums.

WheatonArts strives to ensure the accessibility of its exhibitions, events, and programs to all persons with disabilities. Provide two weeks' notice for additional needs. Patrons with hearing and speech disabilities may contact WheatonArts through the New Jersey Relay Service (TRS) 800-852-7899 or by dialing 711.

Funding has been made possible in part by the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, a Partner Agency of the National Endowment for the Arts, the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, and the New Jersey Cultural Trust. WheatonArts also receives general operating support from the New Jersey Historical Commission, Division of Cultural Affairs in the New Jersey Department of State and is supported in part by the New Jersey Department of State, Division of Travel and Tourism.

For more information about WheatonArts and the WheatonArts Glass Studio Challenge, contact Susan Gogan at [sgogan@wheatonarts.org](mailto:sgogan@wheatonarts.org)

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