

Art: Pieces belong to property owners

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The sculptures sit at city parks, colleges and universities, the public library and downtown. Money for the art comes from a variety of sources, including in-kind donations and city, state and federal funds.

Art Spaces celebrated the non-profit milestone at its annual dinner Saturday evening at Indiana State University and is expanding its reach to educate more people about public art.

The organization is developing a Web-based and mobile app, which will point users to the nearest sculpture and link to its online and social media presence. Kramer said the app should be launched later this year.

Kramer — who joined Art Spaces in 2005 — has been instrumental in the growth of public art in Terre Haute, working with a board of directors to build the collection. But former resident Jim Eifert planted the seed.

Eifert, who now lives in Michigan, sought to use outdoor art as an economic development tool.

"He realized that there weren't a lot of great reasons for people to bring their families here," Kramer said. "Businesses that are looking to relocate or start up somewhere are looking for places where there's lots of things for people to do."

"We had some strong things going for us, for sure, here," she continued, "but I think that he realized that Terre Haute didn't have any huge natural attractions like the ocean or mountains that obviously create kind of natural playgrounds for people."

Eifert, the former president of Rose-Hulman Ventures, envisioned creating an outdoor sculpture trail throughout the city.

"We were looking at ways to enhance the attractiveness of the community for early stage companies in a place that their employees would like to live," he told the Tribune-Star before coming to town for the annual dinner.

Eifert collaborated with a group of interested citizens and began working to further develop the concept.

Their first breakthrough came thanks to Glenn Raque, who donated Flame of the Millennium to the organization. Constructed by Leonardo Nierman, the sculpture didn't fit in its planned location near the Dan Ryan Expressway in Chicago.

The 45-foot stainless steel piece has sat on the campus of Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology since 2003.

Eifert credited Kramer and the board of directors for Art Spaces success in the years since.

"It's been a major effort and a major success for a group of community individuals who are really committed to the betterment of the community," he said.

After Flame of the Millennium came Tree at Veterans Memorial Park on

the grounds of ISU's Memorial Stadium. Then came Composite House for Terre Haute in Gilbert Park, Spirit of Space in front of the Swope Art Museum and Gatekeeper at the Vigo County Public Library.

"By that time, we were starting to get some attention and people were starting to think that this thing might be for real," Kramer said. "And that really helped."

Until then, without a large collection of work to show, Art Spaces often found it difficult to secure funding.

Kramer credited a partnership with the City of Terre Haute for helping make the Tree sculpture possible. The city, which leases the stadium property from Vigo County, had earmarked money for signage and other amenities on the grounds.

Art Spaces also partnered with the city in 2006 for an arts corridor banner competition.

Chief city planner Pat Martin said it was difficult to think of another organization that has seen so much success after starting from scratch.

"The word you want to use first of all is transformative," he said, as he sat in Art Spaces office on Ohio Street helping prepare for Saturday's dinner.

Another person who helped the organization take off is Lloyd Benjamin, who served as ISU's president from 2000-2008. Early in his tenure, Benjamin started a "percent for art program," which set aside a portion of the cost of construction or major renovation projects for the acquisition of public art.

"It led to many partnerships between ISU and Art Spaces to bring sculpture to campus," Kramer said. "And for us, that's really helped us to grow. So they have also played a big role in our development."

Six of the sculptures are located on ISU's campus. The most recent, A Reading Place, sits outside Reeve Hall.

Speaking to the Tribune-Star, Benjamin praised Art Spaces for their dedica-

tion to public art.

"Mary's done a great job of leading that organization and they have had project after project after project that's been accomplished," he said.

Art Spaces does not own any of the pieces it has dedicated. The sculptures belong to the entity on whose property they sit.

Kramer said that was a smart move on the part of founding members, some of whom remain involved. Should Art Spaces one day no longer exist, she said, the collection could remain in the city.

As Art Spaces moves forward into its next decade, Kramer said she hoped it would continue to engage the community in envisioning how public spaces should be used.

Turn to the River, a comprehensive plan to reconnect downtown with the Wabash through public art and design, is an example of a deeper role in that mission, Kramer said. Art Spaces is in the fundraising stage for the plan.

"And so I'd like to see us continue to develop projects like Turn to the River for different areas of the city that really involve the community and getting [people] invested in their own areas and understanding how they can impact that," she said.

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