

## Room for everybody

### The Arc Community Greenspace holds dedication ceremony

By Mike Crowley

MEADVILLE TRIBUNE

State and local officials and numerous Arc of Crawford County clients were among a crowd of about 70 people who gathered Friday for the official dedication of The Arc Community Greenspace.

The diverse crowd was emblematic of the goal that drove the renovation of the former Meadville Club location on Market Street between Chestnut and Arch streets, according to Mark Weindorf, executive director of The Arc. The Greenspace is adjacent to the rear of The Arc's Chestnut Street headquarters.

The goal, Weindorf told the crowd, was a "collaboration and integration of our individuals."

"People say, 'Mark, we've got Diamond Park right up the street,'" he continued. "'Why do we need this?'" Believe it or not, our folks feel more comfortable (here). Our name is on the property, we own the property and they just feel more free to join in."

Outdoor movie nights, line dancing, karaoke events and other activities have already drawn hundreds to the new bright downtown spot, Weindorf noted.

"We have nine residential group homes and we're very pleased," he said. When we have our event, those people get to come out of their houses and interact with people in the community."

For those who don't face intellectual or physical challenges, that may not seem a big deal, but building relationships with other community members can be difficult for The Arc's

clients, leaving them isolated, according to Weindorf.

Repurposing the lot that straddles a section of Mill Run — a blue ribbon painted across the Greenspace is a reminder of the stream running below — proved See GREENSPACE, Page A9



A crowd gathers for the dedication of The Arc of Crawford County's newly completed greenspace on Friday afternoon. RIGHT: Mark Weindorf, executive director of The Arc of Crawford County, speaks during the dedication ceremony.

SHANNON ROAE/Meadville Tribune photos



## Greenspace

Continued from Page A1 to be a challenge, but one that consistently won support from both state agencies, local philanthropists and numerous community stakeholders.

The Greenspace project was one of just four selected from among 105 proposals during the first round of Pennsylvania Creative Communities grants awarded in 2019, the program's director, Sarah Merritt, told the crowd Friday.

Calling it a "highly, highly competitive program," she told the attendees, "Y'all need to give yourself a round of applause."

Karl Blischke, executive director of Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, called the Greenspace a prototypical example of

Mill Run," on the rear of 940 Park Ave., the former Park Theatre that is now best known as the location of Bill Lawrence's Personal Fitness.

Geffen told the crowd that installation of the mural on the Lawrence building had been completed Thursday "at about 4 o'clock."

The black ribbon runs the length of much of the building's rear and features figures and words in white that evoke and explain the stream's centrality. At the far end, the mural begins with the names of three Indigenous nations, Haudenosaunee, Erielhonan and Lenni Lanape appearing amid the stream.

"Mill Run covers 5,543 acres and flows from Tamarack Lake to French Creek," the mural reads further downstream. "Meadville:

“strengthening communities through the arts.”

“You can see that creativity goes into making a place” like the Greenspace, he added.

Much of that creativity behind the Greenspace and three murals on adjacent buildings could be traced back to Amara Geffen, the retired Allegheny College art professor responsible for several previous public art projects connected to Mill Run, including work at Market Alley, which runs above the stream, and at Shadybrook Park.

In thanking Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, the Lang Family Foundation and other organizations that contributed to funding for the project, Weindorf directed the crowd’s attention to a sign honoring the various stakeholders responsible and singled out Geffen’s contributions.

“You won’t see her name up on the sign, but her name should be right up at the top of the sign,” he said, “because she did 90 percent of the work, wrote grants and did other things.”

Though not at the top, Geffen’s name is in fact listed first among site designers for the project. She also led design and development of the nearby murals — “Bloom Where You’re Planted,” several enormous flower designs on the side of the Snodgrass Building, 970 Park Ave., that faces the Arc parking lot adjacent to the Greenspace; “Birds on a Wire,” on the rear of the building at 964 Park Ave. that houses McClure’s Fish House & More; and the newly installed “Celebrating

Not your run of the mill community.”

Drawing the crowd’s attention from the new mural and the blue walkway of the Greenspace to the spot directly across Market Street where Mill Run emerges from underneath the downtown urban surface, Geffen stressed the importance of place in commenting on the work that culminated in the dedication ceremony Friday.

“Meadville is here because of Mill Run,” she said. “It’s why we are located where we are.”

*Mike Crowley can be reached at [\(814\) 724-6370](tel:8147246370) or by email at [mcrowley@meadvilletribune.com](mailto:mcrowley@meadvilletribune.com).*



Artist Amara Geffen addresses the crowd during the dedication ceremony of The Arc of Crawford County Greenspace on Friday.

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