Cricket and Jim Lockhart Champion the Bruce Museum

New Bruce supporters Jim and Cricket Lockhart are championing the Bruce Museum's giant step in expansion.

BY ANNE W. SEMMES

At the Bruce Museum, Cricket and Jim Lockhart are often cited as one of the Museum’s “first families.” Their love for the Bruce is shared by their Greenwich children and grandchildren. On a recent visit, their oldest grandson, age seven, was fascinated by the Museum’s annual iCreate exhibition of work by high school artists. "He was looking at each painting, analyzing each, picking out his favorite, and wanting to know how old the artist was," notes Grandfather Jim. Treated to a requested pad and colored pencils from the Museum store, "He was drawing in the car going home."

Museum-going is a Lockhart legacy. Cricket had grandparents living near the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. Every trip to see them brought a tour of the Met. When visiting his Westchester-based grandparents, Jim was taken to the Bruce. "It’s in the blood," he notes. "We’ve lived in a lot of different places, and we’ve always gone to museums."

Today, Jim serves as the Chair of the Museum’s Board of Trustees, while Cricket serves on the Campaign for the New Bruce Committee and is one of the Co-Chairs of the Campaign launch event, Bruce ConstTRUCKS on Sunday, September 8, a community-wide celebration of the Museum’s transformative renovation and construction project. They are both championing the giant step the Bruce is taking in its expansion.

"It’s the aesthetics," says Cricket. "You’re going to have it looking out toward the Sound – the entrance, with a big sculpture pathway."

"We’re going to have much larger permanent art galleries – in fact, four of them," adds Jim, "and one big giant changing gallery so we’ll be able to do larger-scale exhibitions. We’ll be able to fill that up with the many great art collections in Town that are being promised. Expanding the science wing will be extremely important as well."

"It is very rare to have a combination science and art museum," cites Cricket. "We’re fortunate to have a dual mission like that, with all the educational elements combined."

"The core of the Museum is education," notes Jim, "because that’s where we’re really helping the community, not just Greenwich, but Westchester, all of Fairfield County, and New York City, too. We have about 25,000 kids come through a year. We’re hoping to double that with a much expanded education area."

“We are going to have a whole new program called Engineering Tomorrow, an incredible engineering program for high school students," says Cricket, "It’s a first of its kind."

"But there are also programs for children as young as age two; programs for people of all abilities, people with memory loss and their caretakers. So, it’s a very comprehensive program that the Bruce has, and they’re going to enhance it tremendously. Then we have the Brucemobile program that goes out to schools and also the Bruce’s Seaside Center at Greenwich Point Park, which is absolutely amazing."

Meanwhile, the Lockhart’s daughter, Grace Djuranovic, is cultivating a younger generation of Museum members, the Bruce Contemporaries. "It’s growing by leaps and bounds," says Cricket. "They already have 85 members. They tour people’s collections, they do crawls of different galleries on Greenwich Avenue and in Stamford, and support the Seaside Center’s science and natural history programs with 'Sips on the Sound,' a wonderful event each summer."

"I’ve always loved the science," says Jim. "Our Science Curator, Dr. Daniel Ksepka, has done a great job, and his plans for the new science galleries are going to be really good."

"He’s doing an installation from the Ice Age in the new permanent science gallery," notes Cricket, "What this area looked like, going back in time. They’ll have dioramas – very student- and child-friendly. It’s going to be tremendously interactive."

"It gets kids away from their little iPads. It’s not only history and science. It’s civilization. Things that are new and contemporary," says Cricket. "We’re even going to have a feathered dinosaur," adds Jim.

"If you wander through here in the morning, you see these kids listening to someone explain the painting, or something in science, the shark exhibition at the moment, and the kids really love it. That’s the next generation. That’s what a lot of our donors are looking at, the idea of an expanded education opportunity here."
First Selectman Peter J. Tesei has presided over the Town of Greenwich, its governing, its 62,000 residents, and its special partnership with the Bruce Museum and its collection for the past 12 years.

As a fifth generation resident, Tesei has deep roots in Greenwich – he knows the historic imprint that generous individuals have had on the Town. “It was Robert Bruce who left his mansion to the Town,” he tells, “Also, Robert Bruce and his sister built the old Town Hall, on Greenwich Avenue, which now houses the Greenwich Arts Council and other nonprofit groups.”

Looking back on that Gilded Age, Tesei sees how “very successful affluent residents making gifts to the Town were transforming it from a more rural, agricultural community to a suburban community.” Today, he cites William L. Richter, with his $15 million donation to the soon-to-be New Bruce, as a “twenty-first century Robert Bruce.”

It was Tesei who introduced Richter to the Bruce Museum and to Peter C. Sutton, the longtime Executive Director now serving as Director Emeritus. “In this role as the Town’s chief elected official,” Tesei says, “you have to be a champion for all of its people and for its institutions.” So, when the call came from resident Richter, with his desire to gift the Town, Tesei saw a “natural synergy in timing” with the expansion plans of the Bruce.

The Bruce receives some 10 to 15 percent of its annual budget from the Town. Tesei lists the Town’s contributions for the fiscal year 2019-2020 as $875,000 for ongoing operations and $824,000 for capital improvements to the existing Museum building.

“The expansion of the Bruce with its exquisite collection,” says Tesei, “is further reinforcing Greenwich as a world-class community, a global destination. Being in close proximity to our Harbor and Downtown, and located within Bruce Park and near to Roger Sherman Baldwin Park, which has become the event venue for our town, the New Bruce is an attraction that will spur cultural enrichment and economic activity.”

“The proposed design lends itself to the topography of the site. It incorporates the natural elements and provides natural light into the building. There’s a certain elegance to it, and it’s inviting because it has this public space that you can come into, where we can say ‘let’s go look at this wonderful program or exhibition and then let’s go have a cup of coffee.’”

“It’s very beneficial as we look to attract people to our Town that this amenity is here for our children – not every child has the opportunity to go into New York to the wonderful institutions that are there. And this treasure of the Bruce affords them that ability through their schools or through their parents being able to take them because it’s very accessible.”

Tesei sees the Bruce Museum as providing, “a unique and special way to support this cultural enrichment. So, Bill Richter has really set the standard that others, I believe, are going to follow because they see the same value that this Museum has for the broader community. It’s really a tremendous legacy for those who have the ability to contribute to make the New Bruce a reality.”
William L. Richter loves his community of Greenwich. It’s where he built his dream house, thanks to his entrepreneurial success in the financial world. He’s also a fan of what he calls house museums, like the Frick Museum in New York, like those he’s visited in Europe. When the impulse came to give back to his community, he found a fit in Greenwich – Robert M. Bruce’s “house museum,” known as the Bruce, off Steamboat Road.

Richter is gifting the Bruce Museum $15 million toward the planned art wing of the expanding New Bruce.

“Peter Sutton sparked my interest immediately,” says Richter of the recently retired director of the Bruce, now Director Emeritus, who had shared with him the plans for the Museum’s ambitious renovation and construction project. “The location is unique – right in the heart of downtown Greenwich. It’s a beautiful setting.”

The new art wing will be a substantial addition to the Bruce. More than 40,000 square feet in all, with five galleries for art – four permanent and one changing gallery. “So many more people will see the art every year,” Richter shares, “I love art and hope it stimulates other people.”

Perhaps a more profound stimulus for Richter is the legacy that he feels comes with his gift.

“My father, Joseph Richter, had an antiques business here in Greenwich in the 1920s when he was a very young man,” Richter says. “He would see the antique, buy it, create a visual design, and make it into a lighting fixture and sell it to decorators only.” A mutual love there, at the very least, of the decorative arts. And in Manhattan, a similar enterprise, Joseph Richter, Inc., carries on the family name, 50 years after the father’s death. “He was very well known in the business,” notes Richter, “and that’s why the brand name still exists.”

So, there’s acceptance that Richter’s father would not live to see his son’s William L. Richter art wing of the New Bruce, to rise in 2020, following renovations to the existing building. There are also expectations. “It will be a wonderful place to go and have lunch outside on a nice day, and to take a walk around the grounds. The innovative way they’re doing it, to enter the Museum at the park level, is much more user friendly.”

Above all, Richter hopes his generous gift will be “a stimulant to others, a catalyst to set off a chain reaction. I would really like to see them giving art. There are so many people here who have collections, some grand, some smaller. But in the aggregate, it’s an amazing trove!”

“This is a chance to put the Bruce Museum on the map,” says Richter. “Mr. Bruce, who lived here a hundred and more years ago, didn’t envision this New Bruce himself. But, the Museum is being true to him. The name of the new art wing will not change the name of the Museum. It’s still going to be the Bruce.”

Construction of the New Bruce Museum’s William L. Richter art wing is scheduled for spring-summer of 2020.
New Bruce Sparkles with Robert R. Wiener Gallery

By Anne W. Semmes

Robert R. Wiener is fascinated by “the beauty, the structure, the colors, and the rarity” of minerals. That lifelong passion has built one of the world’s great collections of minerals, of which some 100 of the finest specimens will be on permanent display in the Robert R. Wiener Gallery to debut with the redoubling of the Bruce Museum.

“I’ve given the Museum some spectacular pieces – and I’ve made a half-million-dollar commitment to the Campaign for the New Bruce to ensure that the new mineral gallery excites everybody who visits,” says Wiener, chairman of MAXX Properties, a fourth-generation, family-owned real estate company based in Harrison, N.Y. “It’s a new day for the Bruce Museum and for the Town of Greenwich, and we should all celebrate that there are enough people who care to help create a new center of life and light.”

Wiener cites the design of the New Bruce addition as “marrying the landscape with the new building, and the rising and falling of the sun with the shadows they’ll create and the light they’ll bring in.” He sees the original building. “I’m looking forward to seeing my minerals on display with the right lighting.”

“People ask me where these minerals come from – most of them come from caves and have to be cut out with diamond-studded saws,” Wiener explains. “To me they represent an amazing form of beauty – the author, the creator, the inventor, the sculptor has to be a higher power. And many people believe that when you get close to certain minerals, there’s a force that gets inside you and brings you good luck.”

“I hope the minerals will sparkle in children’s eyes,” he continues, “and create an enthusiasm for learning more about geology, and all the other wonderful things that will come to them as they did to me by getting into the science of the earth. And that makes me very happy to think that will happen.”

Supporting the Campaign for the New Bruce and serving as Honorary Bruce Trustee has brought to Wiener “a sense of contribution to the community. Our giving will expand the horizons of many children and adults. The Bruce will have a much greater capacity to handle many more people and draw them from many more areas.”

“My passion is for the people who are creating the New Bruce,” notes Wiener, “and for their excitement about creating a cultural institution at a much higher level than it’s been. I’m excited for it, and having met the new Executive Director, Robert Wolterstorff, I think the sky’s the limit.”

A pair of amethyst ‘wings’ - on view in the Museum’s science gallery - gifted by Robert R. Wiener.
Heidi Brake Smith is much invested in her community of Greenwich. She’s brought her personal interest in public spaces – “how they function, how people react in public spaces,” to the Bruce Museum. She had a vision for developing downtown Greenwich into a cultural center in her work with the Greenwich Center for the Arts, thus was drawn to realizing “the transformative project” of the New Bruce. She Co-Chairs the Campaign for the New Bruce Committee, along with fellow Trustee John Ippolito and Museum Council Co-Chair Susan Mahoney.

“Museums have the ability to bring people together,” Smith says, “of all ages, all backgrounds, all interests into a public space that brings joy, or understanding of the science, or exploration, or artistic endeavors under one roof. The New Bruce will make a very big difference to downtown Greenwich as a whole, and also the region.”

“This new Museum ties to the existing Bruce Park and the downtown area coming off of Steamboat Road. People who are on lower Greenwich Avenue will realize that the Bruce is very close. It’s a visual link on what is a continuous street that has been bifurcated by the railroad and the highway that feels like two sections. The New Bruce has this ability of joining those areas.”

Smith shows a downtown schematic of how the Bruce sits in the center of a circle of surrounding streets. What the New Bruce brings, she says, “is that it’s walkable. It’s reachable. The New Bruce building project re-orients the entrance toward Bruce Park and creates a much more accessible Museum.

“Visitors will enter straight into the Museum’s public spaces from this new, ‘park level.’ They can then either take the elevator or the stairs to the galleries, which will open up a lot of opportunities for people who struggle in the physical format of the Museum today. From a functionality point of view, this takes the Museum to where it should be as a public institution.”

Wherever Smith travels, she visits public spaces. “They are the front door to a community,” she says. “You begin to understand what people are interested in in those communities, what they value.” What amazed her on a recent museum visit in her travels was seeing “multi-generations on a Saturday morning getting excited about an exhibition. Most people play sports on a Saturday morning, and it was teeming with little kids in strollers and parents. Those kids want to go every week. And when you see that kind of excitement, you’re like - those are special places.”

“A museum fits lots of people at different points in time,” says Smith. Her two grown children, she shares, had much benefited from the Bruce. “There are times in your life that you’re very active in your local community, and times when your kids are little and you go to Tod’s Point. Then they’re older, and you’re at the sports field.” But as she viewed recently at the Bruce, “on a super-hot, or rainy day – guess what? They’re at the Bruce!”

Smith believes, “As a community member it is important to support our greatest assets. We have seen this time and time again that Greenwich stands on its beach, Tod’s Point, on the Byram Park and Pool, the Greenwich Hospital. When you have those key institutions that are strong, that are resilient, that keep up with state-of-the-art technology, that are ready for the next 50 to 100 years in their programming, those institutions, those intangibles, benefit everybody. It’s a sense of pride for someone to say, ‘I live in Greenwich,’ and, someone else says, ‘Oh, I hear you have a really beautiful Museum!’”

For more information, visit NewBruce.org