Anonymous donor raises bar for Brandon Town Hall donations

By LEE J. KAHRS

BRANDON —One generous Brandon resident has upped the ante for the Brandon Town Hall's 150th Birthday plaque fundraiser, literally.

Dennis Marden of the Friends of the Brandon Town Hall (FBTH) said the group is offering brass nameplates in exchange for a tax-deductible donation of $150, and each nameplate will be affixed to a large commemorative plaque marking the hall's 150th birthday. The plaque will be unveiled at a special celebration on Memorial Day, May 30.

The goal is to raise the $120,000 needed to install upgraded and ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliant bathrooms in the hall.

But at the FBTH's March 17 board meeting, Marden said an anonymous donor agreed to supplement each $150 donation with an additional $100 donation up to 150 donations.

"That's $15,000!" Marden exclaimed. "We actually asked if they were sure they had done the math and realized what kind of money it might involve, and they said they were sure. I almost fell out of my chair."

In recent years, the FBTH has worked hard to raise money for much-needed renovations to the hall, built in 1861 just as the Civil War began. The group has put over $500,000 into the building so far, including the new fire suppression system, exterior painting, new marble front steps with railing and platform, new basement stairs, repointing of masonry, and installation of a handicapped lift, new stage curtains and lighting grid, a new audio visual system and a large film screen. That cost also includes $55,000 in architectural fees.

FBTH also plans to rehab all of the windows in the town hall, which have broken ropes and mechanics and new wooden dividers and paint at a cost of about $18,000.

In keeping with the Brandon Artists Guild's "Art Makes Brandon Tick" fundraising theme this year, FBTH have erected a clock-themed fundraising sign outside the hall to measure donations proclaiming, "The Time is Right." So, far, they have raised $50,000 for the bathroom project, and Marden said 11 nameplates have been purchased. Thanks to the anonymous donor, instead of raising $1,650 for those nameplates, FBTH has received an additional $1,100 for a total of $2,750 so far.

Brandon Select Board Chair and FBTH board member Richard Baker said he hopes the anonymous donor's gesture will spur the generosity of others.

"I'm excited because this is a reinvigoration of the mission of the town hall," he said. "It may prompt other donors."

All of this work is being done with the hopes to return the hall to year-round service, and restore its role as the civic and cultural center of Brandon.

"(The donor) said they'd rather do this to get other people involved rather than just give us $15,000," Marden said. "It's just another great thing about the town of Brandon."

Celebrate the Brandon Town Hall's

150 Year Anniversary!

*Donate a **tax deductible $150** and receive a **brass plate** engraved with your name/message on commemorative plaque presented to the Town Hall*

Write legibly. Inscription can be up to 40 characters including spaces.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Telephone: _____

Make Checks out to "FOTH"

Mail to: Friends of the Brandon Town Hall

P.O. BOX 181, Brandon, VT 05733