

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: October 25, 2023
Media Contact: Brian Goodman, Secretary – 443-604-1400



GRAW ALLEY ART PARK OPENS IN DOWNTOWN HAVRE DE GRACE ***Grand Opening Celebrated with Ribbon-Cutting, Statue Unveiling, Block Party***

(Havre de Grace, MD) - - Graw Alley, the interactive art park component of Harmer's Town Art Center, officially opened to the public in downtown Havre de Grace last week, almost a year to the day after a groundbreaking ceremony kicked off its construction.

Hundreds of supporters lined the street on the afternoon of Friday, October 20 in anticipation of strolling through the park they've watched come to life over the last year. What awaited them was a grand opening reception, ribbon-cutting ceremony, public art unveiling, and youth art gallery installation - culminating with that long-awaited invitation to enter and enjoy Graw Alley. The festivities continued on Saturday with a day-long block party featuring live music and entertainers, art demonstrations, and food vendors, in a demonstration of the types of events and activities the community can expect the creative park space to host.

"We know that arts create community," said Maryland State Comptroller Brooke Lierman, who, during her time as a state delegate, worked on creating a similar art space out of a dilapidated structure in Baltimore. "I know that the ribbon-cutting today, it's not the end. This is a new beginning for this piece of property, for this community. But also a new phase in what's going to continue to grow and build and educate so many people, not just from Havre de Grace, but from the entire state."

Comptroller Lierman was the keynote speaker on a program that also included remarks from Harford County Executive Robert G. Cassilly, State Sen. Mary-Dulany James, Del. Steven C. Johnson, Del. Andre V. Johnson, Jr., Harford County Council President Patrick S. Vincenti, and Havre de Grace Mayor William T. Martin.

The one-acre space, a private alley donated to Harmer's Town Art Center, Inc. and named in recognition of the former horse racing track that operated in the city for over 40 years until the early 1950's, was transformed over the last year from an underused alley into a park with landscaped pathways, artistic sculptures, outdoor seating, and a series of vivid murals leading visitors on a tour through Havre de Grace history.

"The outdoor murals that adorn its walls are not just strokes of paint, but visual narratives that tell the story of Havre de Grace. They are a reflection of our shared past, our forgotten treasures, and the moments that have defined our community," said Mayor Martin.

"This project is not just about creating art; it's about creating connections. It's about making visitors into artists and artists into visitors, fostering a sense of belonging and community through art," he added.

In addition to the reception and ribbon-cutting, the Graw Alley grand opening celebration also included the unveiling of a life-size sculpture of the racehorse 'Havre de Grace,' created by award-winning artist Aaron Paskins of Delaware. The statue is on display within a section of Graw Alley called 'The Winner's Circle,' and will soon be joined by several other life-sized racehorses that each have a connection to the city's former racetrack.



The festivities also provided an opportunity to showcase and open to the public the Alley Art Youth Art Challenge - a pop-up gallery inside the future Harmer's Town Art Center building featuring the creative efforts of more than 400 local Havre de Grace area school students. These pieces were created from materials donated by local businesses, sponsored by the Maryland State Arts Council and supported by the Morris A. Mechanic Foundation.

Graw Alley is funded by private donors and grants provided by state and local governments to Harmer's Town Art Center, Inc., a federally-recognized 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.

Graw Alley is just the initial phase in the development of Harmer's Town Art Center - a first-of-its-kind regional art facility, art incubator, and economic driver to be constructed in an adjacent 34,000-sq-ft space, which will bring together the arts, history, and community of Havre de Grace in a centralized location within the heart of the city's vibrant arts district.

Within the visionary complex, artists will be able to work in studio space visible and accessible to the public, which offers them the opportunity to engage with guests, hold lessons, and sell their work directly to visitors. Multi-purpose areas will be used for teaching larger classes, holding special events, or art therapy opportunities. Makerspace workshops will offer artists and hobbyists alike access to specialized equipment for woodworking, ceramics, and other fabrication crafts. Harmer's Town Art Center will also house several galleries to showcase art exhibits, a museum of historic Havre de Grace artifacts, and a shop in which visitors can purchase artwork and souvenirs and where artists can stock up on supplies - all within eyeshot of historic downtown Havre de Grace and the top of Chesapeake Bay waterfront.

For more information about this project or to contribute to the effort, contact Harmer's Town Art Center at info@harmerstown.org or visit our website at <http://www.harmerstown.org>.

-###-

Photo 1: Harmer's Town Art Center, Inc. president Allen Fair cuts the ribbon along with the help of elected officials and other dignitaries on Friday evening during the Graw Alley grand opening ceremony in Havre de Grace. (photo credit – Malgorzata Baker/Malgorzata Baker Photography)

Photo 2: A statue of the racehorse 'Havre de Grace' was unveiled on Friday evening during the Graw Alley grand opening ceremony in Havre de Grace. (photo credit – Pat Venturino/Venture Photos)

Photo 3: Visitors enjoy the new art park on Friday evening during the Graw Alley grand opening ceremony in Havre de Grace. (photo credit – Donna Harding/Donna Harding Photography)

Photo 4: A selfie station frames the murals on Friday evening during the Graw Alley grand opening ceremony in Havre de Grace. (photo credit – Donna Harding/Donna Harding Photography)





DREAM RACE
AT THE
GRAY

THE
WHITE
CHAPEL
GANG

HOTEL DAYOU

Commissioned by Allen Fair
Model by Ezra Berger
Sculpted by
Ezra Berger
Leland Bobbe
Mike Rika
Karee Balogh, Tony Saffel

THE
DREAM
RACE
AT THE
GRAY



Greetings from...



Harmer's Town Art Center
Graw Alley
Havre de Grace, Maryland

