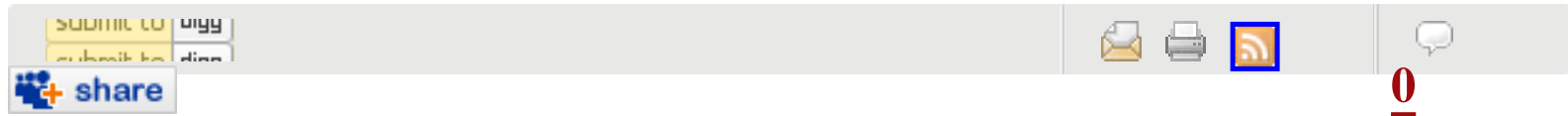


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\$1.6 million capital campaign planned for interior renovations to Universal Preservation Hall

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By MAREESA NICOSIA, The Saratogian



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SARATOGA SPRINGS — The Universal Preservation Hall’s head caretaker says work on the historic structure’s exterior is nearly complete and plans are being made to launch a \$1.6 million capital campaign to fund remaining renovations inside the building.

“We have been updating our action plan to move forward (with fundraising),” said Teddy Foster, president of the hall’s all-volunteer board of directors. “We’re looking for strategic partners in the community, whether they’re businesses or organizations like the Downtown Business Association.”

One new local partner is Scallions Restaurant, at 44 Lake Ave., which will host a benefit event from 5 to 9 p.m. Monday. Restaurant owner Michelle Morris will donate 20 percent of all checks, including bar tabs, to the Universal Preservation Hall. For reservations, call

584-0192.

Since 2000, when longtime UPH president Thomas S. Lewis began leading the charge to save the condemned building on Washington Street, more than \$2.4 million has been raised and invested to make it structurally sound.

Foster, who has been acting as president since Lewis stepped down in April, said her primary concern right now is building a new board to carry out the next phase of work on the hall.

Ultimately, she said, her vision is to sustain the hall as a 600- to 700-seat performance arts and events venue that would host weddings, opera, dance and music year-round.

“I really believe we can do it, and my board believes we can do it too,” Foster said. “We’re already doing that, but on a very small scale,” she added, noting that Nacre Dance Co. of Albany has recently signed on to be the hall’s resident dance company.

Foster said the \$1.6 million capital campaign is expected to kick off before the year's end. The fundraising will include matching a state grant worth \$224,000. Money would be used to install an elevator, a sprinkler system and a central air system, which would provide heat to the second floor of the building so it can be used year-round, Foster said.

This year, the hall's front steps have been completely redone. Funding is already in place for other outside details such as lighting, railings, paint on the doors and repairs to the stained glass windows, which are expected to be completed soon.

For more information about the project, call 584-2627 or go to www.universalpreservationhall.org.