

Fall River arts nonprofit expands into Rhode Island

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Reporter assisted by AI

Creative Arts Network launches in Rhode Island

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Creative Arts Network Inc. (CAN), a nonprofit based in Fall River, Massachusetts, is expanding into Rhode Island with plans to launch new cultural initiatives, according to a community announcement.

The organization, known for its arts, culture and tourism programming, was recently approved to operate in the Ocean State. CAN is expected to focus on building partnerships and sponsoring creative projects in Rhode Island communities. “Our commitment to Fall River and our work there remain unchanged, but we’re really proud and excited about starting this parallel effort,” Sandra Dennis, executive director, said in the announcement.

Founded in 2014 and led by Sandra Dennis and David Dennis, CAN was the first organization in Fall River dedicated to arts, culture and tourism. It played a central role in establishing the Fall River Waterfront Cultural District and has managed the district since 2020, according to the announcement.

The group is known for hosting a wide range of events, including festivals, art exhibits, concerts, walking tours, fashion shows, cooking demonstrations and lectures. “We try to offer events that are entertaining, engaging and different,” Sandra Dennis said. “We love

weaving in unexpected elements, such as period costumes, and our attendees tell us they love them too.”

CAN is especially focused on historical tourism and multicultural programming that gives artists a platform to showcase their work. Past events have included “Breakfast at Tiffany’s,” a marketplace for artisan jewelry and crafts, and a reading of Frederick Douglass’s anti-slavery speech that featured music, a film about the Underground Railroad and live portrayals of Civil War-era figures such as Elizabeth Buffum Chase.

The organization, formerly known as AHA Fall River, recently celebrated its 10th anniversary. It has collaborated with partners including Bristol Community College, the City of Fall River, DCR Fall River Heritage State Park, Lafayette Durfee House, MassDOT, Mass Coastal Rail and People Inc., according to the announcement. In 2018, CAN launched “The Hydrangea Project,” a beautification initiative that has resulted in hundreds of plantings in downtown Fall River and along the city’s waterfront.

“CAN has always had a local focus and a regional strategy, and this expansion supports our long-term mission,” David Dennis said in the announcement.

The couple splits their time between Fall River and Narragansett. Sandra Dennis said their time in southern Rhode Island has helped them build relationships that will support the group’s new efforts.

To learn more about Creative Arts Network Inc., visit <https://creativeartsnetworks.org>.

This story was created by David DeMille, ddemille@gannett.com, with the assistance of Artificial Intelligence (AI). Journalists were involved in every step of the information gathering, review, editing and publishing process. Learn more at cm.usatoday.com/ethical-conduct