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Big plans for 'tiny' museum

By Mark Ambrogi • mark@youarecurrent.com

The first museum Elaine Mancini visited when she moved to Carmel two years ago was The Museum of Miniature Houses.

PROFILE

"I was walking down the street and I looked in the window and thought 'These are fabulous. I've got to go in.'" she said.

That was in the first two months she lived in Carmel. As fate would have it, Mancini began her job as the museum's first executive director on Nov. 3. Mancini moved to Carmel when her husband Alan Morrice took a job as medical communication director for DWA Healthcare Communications Group.

"My objective is to make everyone in Carmel and the surrounding area aware that we exist and have them all come to visit and bring a friend from out of town," Mancini said. "I want to increase awareness, increase visitation and find funding."

An estimated 75,000 people have visited the museum since it opened in 1993. The museum, 111 E. Main St., displays 30 miniature houses which rotates with another 75 or so in storage.

"We get a lot of walk-by and drive-by traffic so we're in a wonderful situation," Mancini said. "People who come in are always in awe. They are surprised there is so much in the museum. A lot of times grown men come in with women and they are the last ones to leave. They can be appreciated at a creative level and a craftsmanship level."

Starting on Jan. 28, the museum will hold a series of sessions on Wednesdays at 3:30 p.m., featuring violists and other musicians, storytellers, oral histories and singers and songwriters. Admission is free but donations are accepted.

The museum will also hold story-writing sessions, where visitors are invited to write stories inspired by anything within the museum. There will also be days for visual art works inspired by museum items. The stories and artwork will be posted on the website www.museumofminiatures.org and the museum Facebook page. The Facebook page will show what sessions will be planned for Wednesdays, and the second Wednesday of the month will be geared toward children 12 and under.

Mancini said the museum will also start participating in the Gallery Walks each month in the Carmel Arts District.

The museum was founded by miniaturists Suzie Moffett, Suzanne Landshof and the late Nancy Lesh.



Elaine Mancini inside the museum. (Photo by Mark Ambrogi)

The museum has about 20 volunteers.

"Dr. Mancini comes to us with a great deal of experience in tourism development and promotion, as well as expertise in marketing and communications," Moffett stated. "We are looking forward to benefitting from her insights and energy."

Most of the pieces have been donated by the museum and some others have been loaned. The museum hours are 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wednesdays through Saturdays and 1 to 4 p.m. on Sundays.

ELAINE MANCINI

Age: 61

Personal: married to Alan Morrice for 41 years with two children, Zachary, 22, (American University graduate, in Ecuador on Princeton Fellowship) and Fiona, 21 (at Keene State in New Hampshire). Mancini was born and raised in Chicago and spent 28 years in the New York City area. Mancini has a Ph.D in cinema studies from New York University. Mancini has a background in marketing, communications and tourism development.

Favorite things to do in Carmel: "We do the Gallery Walks frequently and we like to go to the frozen yogurt place (Huddles)."

Favorite music: "We've been going to a lot of organ concerts because my husband joined the choir at our church (All Souls Unitarian Church). I listen to everything but country and western."

Favorite movie: "I love 'Birdman' that is out there now. It's a film that is truly a film. It's not just a story with great acting and an interesting story. It uses every aspect of film making. The cinematography is totally refreshing and involved. The soundtrack is fabulous."