



For immediate release — Thursday, April 22, 2021

## Looking backwards, and forwards, at 20 years of supporting the fine arts

Conga lines and sing-alongs, chefs and serenades, performances, pottery, prints and more. Join the University of Lethbridge as it dances down memory lane, celebrating 20 years of Abbondanza!

Over the course of 20 years there have been: 19 memorable parties, supported by 87 sponsors; 463 unique artworks auctioned; over 400 student, alumni and faculty performers; and most proudly, \$1,754,753 in Endowment funds creating 155 scholarships to date.



“Impact begins with an idea,” says Dr. Mary Ingraham, dean of the Faculty of Fine Arts.

“Two local restaurateurs, Tony Rose and Rocco Suriano of Coco Pazzo Italian Café, saw how they could support fine arts students pursuing their education, bringing the idea of a fundraising dinner to then associate dean, Carl Granzow. Thanks to their passion and drive, the Abbondanza Endowment will continue to provide [over 30 scholarships annually](#) to students studying art, drama, music and new media.”

The Faculty of Fine Arts’ annual student scholarship fundraiser would have hosted the 20th event in 2021, a momentous milestone befitting a grand celebration. While pandemic regulations prevent the in-person celebration of this 20-year anniversary, the Faculty doesn’t want to miss the chance to highlight this momentous milestone. On Thursday, April 22, patrons are invited to participate online throughout the day as the U of L looks back at 20 phenomenal years of community support.

“There are so many good memories – there were conga lines! And the cone-fetti that we scattered across the restaurant. I think they were still finding it years later,” laughs Douglas MacArthur, associate dean of the Faculty of Fine Arts, and a 20-year committee member who has helped plan and host the event. “But most memorably, it’s the people. The students who are so excited to perform for these important community supporters, and the sponsors, many who join us year after year. It built this community of people who support the arts.”

So many memories also means so many people to thank.

“First of all, I’d like to thank Rocco, Tony and Carl for working together to create this event. I want to thank 87 sponsors and hundreds of attendees who are touching the lives of our students in a wonderful and profound way. And thank you to the more than 500 students, alumni and faculty who have supported the event by sharing their talents.”

Watch online and on social media for videos, memorable photos throughout the years, thank you messages from students impacted by the awards, and information about what comes next.

“We definitely miss hosting an event and seeing our friends and supporters in person, but the change to our routine has allowed us to look backwards as well as ahead to the future,” says Ingraham. “Over the past 20 years our community has helped create a self-sustaining, multi-million-dollar endowment to support student scholarships. Imagine what we can do next.”

Scholarships support students in accessing affordable education. The next step is helping them find their path to career success by supporting opportunities that help students apply and expand their skills, network with potential employers, and explore career options. To this end, the Faculty is launching the [Fine Arts Experience Enrichment Fund](#) to support student career advancement.

“We invite our supporters and the arts community to learn more about the Fine Arts Experience Enrichment Fund, a new fund created to support experiential learning; learning that will help our students enhance the professional skills they’re already receiving in their programs and bring them out into the community to build new networks, try out career options and serve their community by adding their expertise to local and regional organizations,” says Ingraham.

“There are many ways our supporters can help us. One, of course, is through donations, to help us build this fund from the ground up. They can also share their passion for fine arts with their friends, encourage them to support the arts in their community, perhaps by creating opportunities for experiential learning. And we invite them to come, to show up and share in the joy and passion of making art in the fine arts.”

To join the anniversary celebration, and learn more about the Experience Enrichment Fund, visit [go.uleth.ca/support-fine-arts](http://go.uleth.ca/support-fine-arts) or find the [Faculty of Fine Arts on Facebook](#).

To view online: <https://www.uleth.ca/unews/article/looking-backwards-and-forwards-20-years-supporting-fine-arts>

**Attached photos:** Cone-fetti emerged as part of the Abbondanza celebrations, by Jaime Vedres Photography; Chef's Trio was always a popular performance, by Jaime Vedres Photography.

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