

MCC on Main changing focus

By Joseph T. O'Leary Journal Inquirer | Posted: Thursday, July 30, 2015 11:24 am

MANCHESTER —The recent cancellation of two music events at Manchester Community College's MCC on Main isn't a sign of trouble, the school says, but the start of "revamping" programs held in the downtown facility.

A July 25 acoustic open mic night and a planned concert from local blues band The Coffee Grinders on Aug. 21 at the school's satellite site were recently canceled.

Michael Jordan-Reilly, MCC spokesman, said the change in focus would support the school's credit-free continuing education programs.

Gallery and art exhibits in MCC on Main are still in place, he added, but future programs would be geared towards education and improving entrepreneurial efforts.

"Combining enterprise, art and education efforts" is the location's new focus, said Valerie Nightingale, an educational assistant at MCC for continuing and adult education.

Specifically, the continuing education programs will have a primary focus on programming that benefits the community. The school has been looking at ways to bring more college classes and events to MCC on Main to make education a wider possibility throughout Manchester, she said.

Plans call for bringing artists, small business owners, and entrepreneurs the resources they'll need to take their efforts "to the next level" through education, she added.

The cancellation of the recent music events doesn't mean MCC on Main will end that programming, however. In the coming months, performances will return to the space, but the performers will likely be MCC students and educators.

"We have a lot of talent and want to bring it downtown," Nightingale said.

Drew Crandall, the director of Jacob's Well Coffeehouse in Vernon, which hosts quarterly events at MCC on Main, said a recent concert of theirs on July 17 occurred successfully.

And an upcoming concert by folk and bluegrass musician Gale Gardinier they've scheduled for Oct. 16 is still on, despite the changes, Crandall added.

The credit-free courses and continuing education classes and events at MCC on Main will be open to the public, officials say.

An example of the upcoming offerings includes "Entrepreneurship For The Emerging Artist," which is a class aimed at those with art backgrounds looking to take the next step and expand their business.

Business might not always be a natural skill in artists' wheelhouses, Nightingale said, and through

these classes, people in galleries and schools can be mentored toward improving and managing their own businesses, helping them sell their own art and services.

Several events are also on tap through August. These include a one-on-one “Business Counseling for Women,” course done in partnership with the University of Hartford, scheduled for Friday, Aug. 14. Program Manager Milena Erwin is scheduling appointments.

Another event will be held the following week with life and career coaching sessions on Aug. 19, hosted by Stacey Zackin.

And on Aug. 25 the Connecticut Small Business Administration District Office will host a program teaching the basics of developing business plans. Moraima Gutierrez, SBA assistant district director of economic development, will host.

Regular business-oriented “happy hours” will also be regular occurrences, the next one scheduled for Aug. 20, to help business owners, MCC community members, and local entrepreneurs come together.

The events are sponsored by MCC’s Viscogliosi Entrepreneurship Center, which was created as an effort to bolster local business acumen and ability.

A small business library will also be made available this fall at the Main Street center. Nightingale said its development is exciting as aspiring business owners will be able to research topics.

As a satellite for the school’s larger library with connections to online resources, it’s hoped it will help people meet and share resources both through the center and with each other.

Though MCC on Main is still in a “transition period” as more programs will begin in the fall, Nightingale said upcoming programs should still have great benefits.