

Something to Chair-ish fundraiser is a community effort.

The process of rehabilitating the iconic Norwalk Theater since Norwalk Arts Center (NAC) purchased it in 2019 has always been a team effort. This is also true about the “Something to Chair-ish” fundraiser. Volunteers from NAC, along with members of the community, have been working to refurbish the original 1941 theater seats to sell to the public. The long-term plan is to convert the original seating of the main floor into a multiform design, and removing the original theater seating is the first step in that process.

The original theater seats, which were covered with blue paint and vinyl at some point in the theater’s history, were removed from the theater by a group of community volunteers. Around 300 seats were sent to a community center being built in Nuevo Progreso, Mexico, as part of the Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church. Another group of seats went to a small theater in the Cleveland area. The NAC Executive Board didn’t want to see the remaining seats go to the garbage, so offering them to the public to raise funds for the rehabilitation of the building was the perfect solution.

The seats had to be removed from the cement floor, which proved to be tedious with the rusted, decades-old bolts. Once removed, the seats were completely disassembled and sorted by size. Through trial and a lot of error, it was discovered that there were three to four different chair widths as well as three to four different chair heights. This was likely to fit the seats to the various angles of the floor and auditorium side wall spacing.



The metal frames are then coated with Rust Arrestor to suspend the rusting process of the raw steel. The cream-colored liquid coating is applied with a brush when rust is present, and the chemical reaction turns the metal black. The vintage raw frames are completely black within one minute or less. **(Continued page 2, Effort)**



The task of transforming the vintage 80-year-old seats has been labor-intensive, but volunteers say it has been rewarding to see the finished products and the smiles of the buyers. “We want the people in our community to have a piece of a historical landmark,” said Dina Lukasko, NAC Board President. Moreover, it aligns with the NAC motto, “Creating Art. Building Community.”

Community support for this fundraiser has been paramount, with its success due to the many people involved. Once the seats are disassembled, the chair frames are sent to Custom Metal Works to be sandblasted, thanks to a donation of the service from Brad Skinn. The metal seat bottoms and backs and the wooded arm rests are sanded by NAC volunteers.

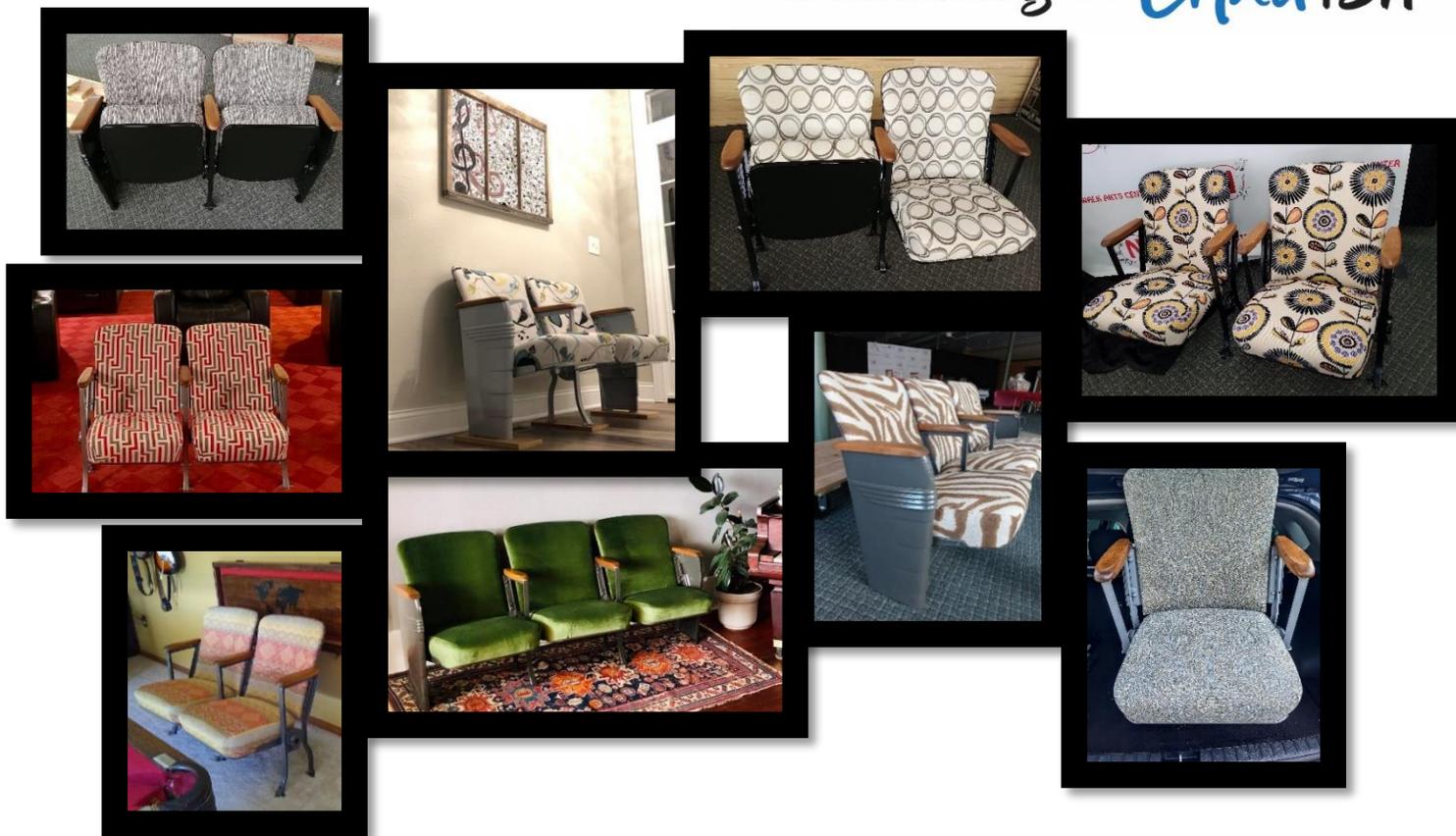


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The next step in the process is priming all metal pieces with an acetone-based primer. The buyer is offered one of three colors for their finished seats-- bronze, black or pewter. The frames are then finished with two coats of brushed-on, oil-based paint. The cushions are reupholstered by Lesch Upholstery with fabric chosen from the Norwalk Fabric Outlet by the purchaser. Special thanks go to Al Lesch for generously donating his service and the cost of each fabric.

NAC volunteers reassemble the seats by hand. Final touch-ups are done on the screws and bolts to match the painted finish. Overall, the refurbishing project takes around six hours per seat to complete. As the volunteers work in their spare time to complete the seat transformation and the paint needs time to cure, the seats are usually ready for pick up about three to four weeks after the purchaser picks their fabric. "It is worth the time and effort when you see the excitement and gratitude of the customers," Lukasko added. Below are some of the finished chairs that have found new homes in the area. If you would like to own a piece of history order your own set at NorwalkArtsCenter.org/Events under the **Something to Chair-ish** tab.

Something to Chair-ish



Volunteer Corner

Norwalk Arts Center would not function without the dedication and support of our many volunteers. This month we would like to highlight the work of Chloe Smith. She is the daughter of Scot and Kelly Smith and is a 9th grader at St. Paul High School. During the summer months, she worked on cleaning and painting the original steel marquee letters from Norwalk Theater. Thank you, Chloe, for your diligence in making them look amazing!



WASHED-PRIMED-PAINTED



Norwalk Arts Center future home at the Norwalk Theater.

The “Something to Chair-ish” fundraiser is becoming popular for lovers of nostalgia in the area, and the sale of these fully- restored vintage seats is helping to support the efforts of the Norwalk Theater rehabilitation. “We thought this would be a great way to not only raise some money for the theater, but also give the community an opportunity to own a piece of history,” said Kathleen Sigsworth, Restoration Committee Co-Chair. “To get the theater ready for the first stage of rehabilitation, the seats needed to be removed to get the necessary equipment in the house of the theater.”

The balcony seats will remain and will be restored, but the plan for the main floor is a progressive one. The Norwalk Arts Center hopes to transform the main floor to include flexible seating. This configuration allows for a multi-use facility. “So many theaters struggle if they limit themselves to only stage productions. This new form has proven successful in many other communities,” said Vanessa Cook, NAC Co-founder and Restoration Co-chair.

By transforming the main seating area, the theater will truly become an arts center. “With this type of layout, we can host community dances, gallery art shows, live music, movies, and stage productions. We are truly only limited by our imagination,” said Cook. The restoration committee has been working with several local contractors, designers and engineers.

Retired designer Robb Harst has assisted in creating renderings for the project. Sigsworth said, “With his drawings, we are able to show our vision a little more clearly. It’s otherwise hard for our supporters to really envision what we have planned.” The goal is to offer the community space that can use for different types of gatherings. “The theater space could serve as a venue for weddings and private parties, for pageants, farmer’s markets, as well as for traditional arts programming. We want it to be a space for everyone,” said Cook.



Renderings provided by Robb Harst

Upcoming Events:

Miller’s Rib Fest: Sept 5, 2020 from 11 am to 5 pm

Board members and special guests of law enforcement, Sheriff Corbin, Sheriff Sigsworth and Chief Conney, will be grilling and serving up ribs to support the Norwalk Arts Center. Full slab \$14.99/half slab \$7.50, with sides available. Let us cook for you! All proceeds go toward the restoration of the Norwalk Theater. Visit Miller’s Market, 117 Whittlesey Avenue, Norwalk.

Under the Marquee Night: Sept 25, 2020 from 7-8:30pm

The marquee will be lit, and the doors will be open for your chance to take a sneak peek of the progress of the restoration of the Norwalk Theater. Take a step into the lobby and reminisce with vintage finds. There will be Winner’s Choice ticket sales, NAC swag, door prizes, Winner’s Choice CHANCE raffle, and light refreshments. We hope to see you there and encourage you to wear masks and social distance during your visit.

Winner’s Choice Raffle: October 3, 2020 (more details to come)

Tickets on sale now! Your chance to win your choice of a vacation to Nashville, Key West or New Orleans on us! Only 250 tickets will be sold, so your odds of winning are good. All proceeds go directly to the “Setting the Stage” Capital Campaign for the renovation of the Norwalk Theater. Winner need not be present, must be 21 to enter. The Norwalk Arts Center Raffle winner must use their selected trip no later than 12/31/2021. Buy tickets: NorwalkArtsCenter.org/events Raffle sponsored by Tonia Maxwell, Dilger-Maxwell Allstate Agency and Dina Lukasko, Ewell & Associates Realtor.

Did you know?

The Norwalk Arts Center is a **501c3 non-profit** organization. Everyone involved with the running of NAC from co-founders to board members are **VOLUNTEERS**. Would you like to join us in our mission to bring the Norwalk Theater back to life? Contact us!

Picture it!

Many people remember when Towne & Country Players filled the stage of the Norwalk Theater. We caught up to a couple who met there and have been together ever since, Ric and Jane Hills.

Ric moved to Ohio in January 1973 and saw a production of *1776* by T&C when they were still housed in Flat Rock. "I was impressed with the talent on stage and decided to join," said Hills. He was running spot light for *Oliver* when he met Jane, who was running the light board. After two years of getting to know each other, they married in 1978.

They have stayed active in theatre, helping with high school and local productions, church dinner theatre, and a local ballet academy. The couple has designed and built sets, hung lights, sewed costumes, gathered props, directed and acted on stage. "When theatre gets in your blood, it stays," Ric said. They are looking forward to the reopening of the Norwalk Theater and seeing the talent here yet to be discovered. "A city of this size should have an active community theater," Ric emphasized.

We'd love to hear from you!

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Norwalk Arts Center

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NAC Mission

It is the mission of Norwalk Arts Center to celebrate and increase advocacy for the arts in the communities of Norwalk and greater Huron County.

Creating Art. Building Community.