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Maine Arts Academy unveils conversion of former veterans' home in Augusta



COURTESY / MAINE ARTS ACADEMY

The Maine Arts Academy, with Head of Schools Heather King holding the scissors, cut the ribbon on its Augusta campus last week.

By Laurie Schreiber

The Maine Arts Academy, a charter school for the arts, unveiled its larger space in a ceremony on Oct. 11.

The building, a former Maine Veterans' Homes site, is about six times larger than the academy's previous location in Sidney. The school bought 310 Cony Road for \$3.25 million in a deal that closed early this year.

Financing for the purchase and renovation of the new campus was helped by a loan of \$1.7 million and a loan guarantee of the same amount from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development. Additional financing was provided by Kennebec Savings Bank.

The Maine Arts Academy is a public charter school for grades 9 through 12. It offers studies in dance, music, theater, visual arts and film, as well as English, math, science, social studies and world languages. Charter schools in Maine are publicly funded schools through the state, but do not receive local tax support. They rely on state money, grants and donations.

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With the larger space, the school will be able to offer more programs and increase enrollment from 245 to 400.

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Festivities at the ribbon-cutting included student performances.

Maine Arts Academy has grown in enrollment every year it has been open, the academy's head of schools, Heather King, previously told MaineBiz.

Up until this year, Maine Arts Academy was in a leased building of about 12,000 square feet at 11 Goldenrod in Sidney. The Sidney lease expired in June.

With the former veterans' home, the charter school took on a 69,615-square-foot building on nine acres, located near the Capital Area Sports Complex and Viles Arboretum.

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The original part of the building dates to 1983; it was added onto in 2003. Renovations in Augusta included taking down some walls to optimize space and installing elements such as flooring for the dance studio.



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Maine Arts Academy cut the ribbon last week on its Augusta campus, after relocating for Sidney.

Free and equitable access to education and the arts are critical to Maine’s rural communities, said USDA Rural Development Maine State Director Rhiannon Hampson.

“Seeing the student artwork and performances underscores how essential the arts and humanities are to Mainers of all ages,” said Hampson. “This project demonstrates that the community building work of USDA Rural Development is not limited to public safety buildings, medical facilities, and municipal structures.

Established in 2016, the academy offers education in the visual and performing arts as well as a full academic curriculum to high school students. The free public charter school has students enrolled from 13 Maine counties.

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