

# spotlight

## New Arts Center — Centennial Hall — Opens To Rave Reviews!

**"T**he dedication of Centennial Hall was one of the most special nights I have experienced at Pembroke Hill," said Steve Bellis, head of school. That sentiment was expressed over and over again by members of the standing-room-only crowd who attended the event on Oct. 23.

The evening was not only a wonderful opportunity for Pembroke Hill to celebrate the beautiful building dedicated solely to the arts, but also an opportunity to showcase some of Pembroke Hill's student artists and the amazing work that takes place in the arts center every day.

The program featured performances by students, and student artwork adorned the walls and the gallery. Students demonstrated their visual art projects in classrooms after the dedication program.

The program also included the much-awaited announcement of the name – Centennial Hall. Sarah and Landon Rowland, major benefactors for the facility, explained their choice of the name. "This extraordinary building

*"Our commitment to art, and the study of art, is ongoing, and we trust that this building will enhance that study for generations of students who will pass through these halls."*

*Sarah & Landon Rowland*



brings honor to all those who have generously contributed to the arts at Pembroke Hill, those who have given of their considerable talent, their energy and imagination, and their resources.

“Acknowledging the breadth of the commitment, we thought Centennial Hall a most beautiful and appropriate name, for it recognizes many, and marks a century of achievement on this site.



*The Sarah and Landon Rowland family joined head of school Steve Bellis on stage after the dedication ceremony for Centennial Hall (standing, 1-r) Guy Townsend '78, Josh '86, Alice, fifth grade, Sarah, Landon, Ann, Steve Bellis, (sitting, 1-r) Marjorie Townsend, eighth grade, Wil, second grade, Liza Townsend '79, Harriet Townsend, first grade, and Nancy Eliot.*

“Our commitment to art, and the study of art, is ongoing, and we trust that this building will enhance that study for generations of students who will pass through these halls.”

The 28,000-square-foot structure opened at the beginning of the school year and earned rave reviews from both faculty members and students. “I love Centennial Hall, especially for the excitement it has given to the students this year,” said Joel Diffendaffer, upper school music teacher. “The sounds from the bands and choirs, along with the student artwork hanging in the galleries, make the building come to life. Centennial Hall has quickly become an exciting and lively place to be for students.”

The architects, Peter Gisolfi Associates, designed the structure to be a loft-like building. The interior features many open spaces, hard surfaces and large windows to provide natural light. Views from Centennial Hall’s windows are nothing less than breathtaking.

“I love the feel of the space!” explained Connie Creek, chair of the upper school visual arts department. “It allows one to move freely and to see things from a distance. The angles and surfaces show such strong design.”

The beautiful 200-seat theater provides an intimate venue for productions with sophisticated audiovisual capabilities. “From a technical standpoint, it is providing the opportunity to train students in the operation of equipment that is state-of-the-art, especially in lighting,” said Robert Craig, theater technical director.

“This building,” Connie concluded, “through its existence, shows that Pembroke Hill values the arts. It makes the artists here feel respected and important plus it gives us a space to meet and enjoy the process of making art.”

A generous \$4.5 million gift from The Ever Glades Fund, Sarah and Landon Rowland, Liza '79 and Guy '78 Townsend, Jennifer and Matthew '81 Rowland and Ann and Josh '86 Rowland, provided approximately half of the building’s funding. ■



*Morgan McCluskey, junior, worked in the pottery area of Centennial Hall, the new Ward Parkway campus arts center, which was dedicated on Oct. 23, 2008.*