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EYE OF THE TIGER



During a chilly early morning in Mattapoisett, a man jogs around the Ned's Point lighthouse.

PETER PEREIRA/THE STANDARD-TIMES

New artists group bridges gap between Fall River, New Bedford

Seth Chitwood

The Standard-Times | USA TODAY NETWORK

NEW BEDFORD — A new effort is attempting to bridge together the artistic communities of Fall River and New Bedford. After holding its first official gathering on Feb 2, the prospects look promising after drawing an unexpectedly vibrant mix of creative minds from both cities into one room.

"The mission is really to bring creative artists together from across New Bedford and Fall River, who usually don't get to be in the same room together," said Nathaniel Roberts of Fall River, who co-founded the NB + FR Artist Collaborative with New Bedford resident Kaylin Pacheco.

"There is a lack of creative community in Fall River," added Pacheco, who grew up in Fall River but moved to New Bedford to be closer to a more vibrant art scene.

"For me, I was embraced by New Bedford and their creative and artist community. So I just want to reach back out to the place I was born and lived for 31 years, to bring that community to them and to anyone in these two cities."

At its core, Roberts and Pacheco said, the collaborative aims to unite artists who rarely get a chance to meet, break bread and compare notes.

First meeting saw a split between NB and FR artists

At the first meeting, which took place at SoCo Art Labs on Quequechan Street in Fall River, Roberts said he was surprised to see a mix of familiar faces but also people he hadn't seen in years fill the room.

"This is great. Doesn't feel like there's a lot of events for people around our age, or who do what we do. It was clear people were really hungry for this connection," he said.

Roberts said it was about 50/50 in the room from both cities, which included painters, potters, photographers and even a glass-blower, as well as a great mix of ages and of experience.

"It was honestly great. It was better than I had hoped, or we had hoped," he added.

When the meeting broke-off into smaller groups, Roberts said, the energy of the room totally switched.

"The energy was really ecstatic. ... It was really clear people were really connecting," he said. "Afterward, members talked about how they had so much in common and how exciting it was to have this place to come together and build friendships and community."



Two men walk briskly past the mural of buddha meditating painted on the side of the Spicy Lime restaurant on Pleasant Street in New Bedford.

PETER PEREIRA/THE STANDARD-TIMES

There's a disconnect between both cities

Pacheco said there has been a strange longstanding disconnect between the cities' art scenes.

"With New Bedford, you have that downtown area and it's so centralized ... and creatives and artists coming from all over. I feel like there's a separation maybe between [Fall River] and its creative community," she said.

"I personally tried to do some of my events there, and I got a lot of pushbacks."

Roberts said he agreed the issue runs deeper than the arts. He said while assisting with a *pastel de nata* challenge between the two cities, he was stunned when someone at a bakery in New Bedford said they'd never visited Fall River in their entire life.

"I think there's this deeper disconnect ... it feels like a world apart," he added.

Despite this, they both said they believe the creative community is uniquely open to bridging divides.

"Honestly, I've done some work in political campaigns, public health, small-business outreach, and it feels like the creative world is actually a lot more open to coming together across the two cities," Roberts said.

Future plans for the collective's members

The collective's plan is to meet on the first Monday of each month, alternating locations between Fall

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Fire devastates New Bedford's Sunrise Bakery

Frank Mulligan

The Standard-Times | USA TODAY NETWORK

NEW BEDFORD — New Bedford firefighters kept fire from spreading to surrounding homes as they battled a blaze at Sunrise Bakery on Wednesday night, Feb. 11, into early Thursday morning, Feb. 12, which caused heavy damage to the iconic bakery.

The quick and effective action of New Bedford firefighters prevented the flames from spreading to adjacent structures just a few feet away, according to a press release from Fire Chief Brian Medeiros.

Emergency dispatchers received calls about smoke coming from the one-level commercial building that houses the bakery on Wednesday night.

When firefighters arrived on scene, they noted heavy fire showing in all ventilation openings along the backside of the building, according to the release.

Most of the roof collapsed

Firefighters entered the building and began an aggressive interior fire attack to knock down the flames, but due to the volume of the fire inside, crews were forced to pull out of the building. The fire spread into attic space and burned through the roof, resulting in the majority of the roof collapsing.

Firefighters at the scene called for an additional engine company, bringing a total of four engines, two ladders, two command units and Medeiros to the scene.

The NBFD transitioned to a defensive operation in an attempt to prevent spread to neighboring buildings, including a three-story residential apartment building that was connected to the bakery on the first floor, the release states. To the east of the bakery, a three-story apartment building was located just two feet away. Firefighters were able to navigate the challenging areas and prevent the fire from spreading.

This fire could have easily spread to nearby homes

"Sunrise Bakery has been a neighborhood staple in the South End for decades, and while the loss is deeply felt, I am grateful no one was injured," Mayor Jon Mitchell said. "The NBFD did an exceptional job preventing the fire from spreading into neighbors' homes, some of which were a few feet away."

"If not for the firefighters' quick action and tactical decision-making, this fire could have easily spread to other buildings," Medeiros said.

NBFD crews remained on scene overnight into Thursday morning to extinguish pockets of fire. The Sunrise Bakery building sustained heavy damage while two neighboring buildings sustained minor damage from smoke and/or heat.

Four adults and two children temporarily displaced

Four adults and two children were displaced during the fire but have since returned to their homes. No injuries were reported. The fire remains under investigation by the NBFD Investigation Unit. No cause has been identified.

The NBFD was assisted on scene by New Bedford Emergency Management, New Bedford Emergency Medical Services, and the New Bedford Police Department. The Providence Canteen also provided assistance.



A New Bedford firefighter continues to keep hotspots in check after an overnight fire ripped through the Sunrise Bakery on Bolton Street in New Bedford. PETER PEREIRA/THE STANDARD-TIMES

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