



Planned center will promote Northeastern Wisconsin's arts and culture

While many entrepreneurs go into business hoping to make a lot of money, Lori Marie Cuene of De Pere has a different motivation.

She wants to make an impact on present and future generations with the creation of The [Arts](#) & Regional Cultural Heritage Center of N.E.W.

Cuene envisions a nonprofit corporation that will preserve, promote and celebrate the history of art in Northeastern Wisconsin.

She sees an Arts and Heritage Center that will provide space for classes, programs, performances and retail sales.

"It will be a vibrant place to bring people together and develop creative capacity — a link between the arts and history," Cuene noted. "The arts and history groups in the area are doing a fantastic job, and we will collaborate and spin right alongside them."

She continued, "Really, we aim to build on the colorful tapestry that's been spun by the diverse ancestors before us. Our emphasis will be on preserving those elements of [cultural](#) heritage left by our ancestors, but also encouraging creative innovation moving forward."

Her business plan is almost complete, and elements of the project are coming together. Cuene is working with various local mentors such as [SCORE](#), SBDC and art enthusiasts. Since her strong suit is creativity, she looks to others for help.

"One of the most important things I've learned is that planning is critical. I've been taught that you don't have to be nor can you be an expert on everything," Cuene said. "If you don't have skills in one area, enlist the help or skills of someone that does have that expertise."

A nurse by trade, Cuene comes from a family of [small business](#) owners. She graduated from several entrepreneurial programs and knows that it isn't enough to create a great place. The nonprofit must also be self-sustaining.

To that end, she is working with experts on a financial plan including [funding](#), grants, income generation and operations. A feasibility study is planned, and she will be working with SCORE on filing her nonprofit application.

If all goes well, the center will open in late 2012 and will include a Heritage Hall, classrooms, retail store, feature films, a community performance stage, open study and folk arts rooms, mixed use activity space, [galleries](#), a paper making lab and print shop.

She is full of ideas for the next phases, but will listen to the community and fill needs. To her, art and the center will be transformative.

"The arts are essential, and we'll need more than ever to pick up the slack and fill some voids or gaps in the schools where government funding is being cut," Cuene said. "We will be successful when the center is part of the community and people are touched in some way by the positive things the center is doing. I want everyone to feel like they have a home there; they belong."

Tina Dettman-Bielefeldt is co-owner of DB Commercial Real Estate in Green Bay and district director for SCORE, Wisconsin.