

# Kevin Howard Hopes To Create Many New Fans Of Arts Foundation

By MICHAEL C. BAILEY

A group of students from the Sandwich Montessori School are wandering around the Cotuit Center for the Arts, getting up close and personal with the paintings and sculptures that make up the "So Big!" exhibition, a showcase for established and emerging Cape artists.

For Kevin Howard, the new executive director of the Arts Foundation of Cape Cod, the scene is a perfect example of the region's arts scene as he sees it: a combination of education, local culture, and the economy in both small and large scales in harmony.

"This is a perfect example of an event that kind of satisfies all of our missions," Mr. Howard said this week during an interview at the center. "This is kind of an ideal situation."

Mr. Howard was named the new executive director this month following an extensive national search, and he brings to the table a background in business, community service, and the arts—both from an administrative and from a performing perspective.

"I was one of those kids who took piano lessons and guitar lessons and sang in the choir and performed in plays," he said, and he continues to put his musical skills to use today singing at the Chatham Universalist Unitarian Fellowship and performing with the "All-Worn-Out Jug Band" ([www.wojugband.com](http://www.wojugband.com)).

A 22-year Cape resident, Mr. Howard previously served as the president of Wise Living in Chatham, an independent living community for senior citizens, and as vice president of operations for Ocean Edge Resort and Golf Club in Brewster.

It was during his tenure at Ocean Edge that Mr. Howard became more intimately involved in the Cape's arts scene. "I started an event called the Lawn Cotillion" that, over the course of five years, raised \$275,000 for, among other things, "arts organizations like the AFCC."

"With Ocean Edge being such a hub of activity for all sorts of fundraisers," he said, "I got to know a lot of the musicians and

of executive director (it was during his tenure that he oversaw the conservatory's merger with the Cape Cod Symphony Orchestra).

Mr. Howard admitted that until that point, he had never considered an actual career in an arts-related field. "I never thought of really pursuing it as a job, as a career," he said. "It's turned into something of a wonderful thing to be connected with something I love on a professional level."

"My biggest accomplishment, I hope, is that I create many, many fans of the Arts Foundation of Cape Cod," Mr. Howard said. "I'm extremely excited about being in this position."

## Making A Splash

According to Mr. Howard, the Cape's arts community holds a key but often under-appreciated role in the Cape's economy, as a draw for potential visitors and as a viable livelihood for younger residents.

"One of the things that we want to do, that I want to do, certainly in my time, is to look at ways that

we can continue to get our message over the bridge that we are an elite cultural destination," he said, and Mr. Howard planned to parlay his longstanding connections to the Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce to support that goal.

"Our offices are right next to each other," he noted, "and I have every intention of leveraging that relationship and working very closely with (Chamber CEO) Wendy Northcross to really make a splash."

"We want to really leverage our cultural assets to impact the economy and the opportunity to attract people to the Cape, both in travel and tourism, but also to create the kind of entrepreneurs that can come here to create businesses that are going to be compatible with the environment," he said. "I also see it as a tremendous career opportunity for young people who are tending to out-migrate now from the Cape."

"Our number one mission, of

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course, is to support the arts community," he added, "and some of that is financial support, some of that is collaborative marketing." The AFCC's website ([www.artsfoundation.org](http://www.artsfoundation.org)) acts as a clearinghouse for resources for people looking to exercise their artistic side, and for working artists in search of the support and information they need to make a living.

"Whether you're an artist, a member, a museum or a gallery, a theater or a venue or a musician, everybody should feel like there's an organization out there helping

them to pursue their dream," he said.

The foundation is also a direct event sponsor, including this year's summer concert series, which will bring local musicians to perform at town greens in eight Cape towns, and most notably, the annual TD Bank Pops by the Sea concert.

"It's the only appearance of the Boston Pops on the Cape," he said of the concert, which he promised would again be "a jaw-dropping experience" this year.

Such events allow the AFCC to twice a year provide grants to local arts organizations to support

community-based events and programs. The November 2010 round of \$25,000 in grants benefited such organizations as the Boys & Girls Club of Cape Cod, the Cape Cod Museum of Art, the Cape Cod Writers Center, the Mashpee Community Concert Committee, and Veterans for Peace.

Mr. Howard noted the AFCC is in a fortunate position of being a well-established and stable non-profit organization, which puts it in an ideal position to successfully sustain its many projects.

However, Mr. Howard said the time has come for the foundation to engage in some introspection,

and within the next two weeks the AFCC board plans to hold a strategic planning retreat to examine its current mission and lay some long-range plans.

"We are going to look at everything" with an eye toward improving efforts that work and perhaps retiring those that are not yielding solid returns for the foundation's investments, he said. "I think the two things that every organization faces are sustainability and relevance, so you use that as a guidepost...you really want to go out and make sure that you are as fresh as you can possibly be."