

The Ruthmere Record

THE RUTHMERE FOUNDATION, INC. • 302 E. BEARDSLEY AVENUE • ELKHART, INDIANA 46514

FALL/WINTER 2020/2021

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IT TAKES THREE TO PUBLISH *ROBERT RECALLS*

BY WILLIAM A. FIRSTENBERGER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

It took a lifetime of amazing experiences by Ruthmere's Founding Director Robert Beardsley, an inspired nudge from his cousin Bruce Combs, and the fulfillment of staff member Mark Doddington's dream to bring this new release publication to fruition. If any one of those links in the chain had broken, the project would have surely fallen apart, but luckily for all (especially the readers!), each of these three men came together with their best to produce a truly noteworthy piece of literature.

The journey of this little book with a big name, *Robert Recalls: A Collection of Essays Written for The Ruthmere Record from 2003-2020*, began with Robert Beardsley (doesn't it always?) and his treasure trove of family stories, chance encounters, and downright jaw-dropping experiences. He could well be Elkhart's brainy version of Forrest Gump! Robert just happens to "show up" wherever historic events or famous people gather, and he is no bystander—he is there in the middle of it every time. Whether it's turning on his charm as a boy to get the attention of Bob Hope, giving teenager Jane Fonda piggyback rides in Hawaii, or hosting private post-concert cocktails and dinner with "The Maestro," Leonard Bernstein, Elkhart's own Robert Beardsley shows up on the scene as though his life were a scripted Hollywood movie.

Robert's passion for documenting everything led to the journaling of his timeless nuggets and the serial publication in our long-running newsletter *The Ruthmere Record* (you are reading it now!). Enter cousin Bruce Combs from Bozeman, Montana, son of Virginia Beardsley Combs and Peter Combs. Bruce came to Elkhart in 2016 to check in on the old Beardsley family homestead as well as his son Cameron Combs, who had recently joined the Ruthmere Board of Directors—and he came armed with a purpose-filled idea. "Hi Bill, nice to meet you. You should publish Robert's articles as a single volume book. I'll help pay for it." Maybe it was not quite that direct, but it was close. When a Hoosier like me meets a Montana rancher like Bruce, there's not a lot of chit chat small talk, and I knew right then and there that this project would happen pronto if I could lasso Robert the Bull into agreeing to publish his stories to a wider audience. (cont'd page 2)

Robert Recalls

A Collection of Essays
Written for
The Ruthmere Record
from 2003-2020



by Robert B. Beardsley

Compiled and Edited by
Mark Doddington,
Ruthmere Membership Coordinator

IT TAKES THREE TO PUBLISH *ROBERT RECALLS* (CONT'D)

By WILLIAM A. FIRSTENBERGER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

He did agree, but we still needed two more pieces of the puzzle. We needed time—thanks to COVID-19 we found some this Spring, and we needed an editor—a person with the patience and expertise to assemble the articles, update where appropriate, and quietly yet consistently nudge our principal author to review, revise and sign off on the publication every step along the way.

Mark Doddington started working for Ruthmere in late 2015 as a Weekend Site Manager, and he has steadily grown into greater levels of service over the past years, serving currently under the title of Membership Coordinator—a role with many hats. An English major from Hartwick College in upstate New York, Mark is one of the best read individuals you'll ever meet, and he was perfect for the job of making *Robert Recalls* into a reality. Mark had longed for the opportunity to have his name connected with a book-length publication, and he proved to be more than up to the task of serving as editor of this volume. Knitting together unconnected articles into a cohesive whole was no small task, but Mark's analytic, thoughtful approach produced a keenly woven tapestry of stories that flows with entertainment and purpose. You can own this collection of gems in either hardcover or paperback when you visit our museum gift shops in person or online at Ruthmere.org. What's next for this terrific trio now that *Robert Recalls* is in ink on paper? Just wait and see...

A BOOK IS BORN

By MARK DODDINGTON, MEMBERSHIP COORDINATOR



I have had quite a few proud moments in the nearly six years I've worked at Ruthmere—coordinating Coffee on the Piazza artists, successful Gallery Talks and, of course, running the Beardsley Piano Prize competition for the last three years. But one achievement stands above them all so far.

Ruthmere is proud to announce the arrival of a bouncing baby book: *Robert Recalls: A Collection of Essays Written for The Ruthmere Record from 2003-2020*, by Ruthmere's Founding Director, Robert Buchanan Beardsley. I am especially proud to say that I was given the honor of compiling and editing this book for publication. It took me 52 years, but I finally got to see my name on a book cover!

It really was an honor being chosen to oversee this project, a golden opportunity to show off my own creativity while highlighting Robert's masterful work. I gathered over thirty articles, spanning nearly as many years, written by Robert for the museum's semi-annual print newsletter. Anyone who has had the pleasure of reading his essays over the years has come to love and anticipate his brilliant wordplay and razor wit. Even after reading and re-reading them multiple times in the editing process, I never lost that pleasure. The laughs are still as sharp as ever, the insights just as piercing.

I had the joy of selecting the photos featured in the book, as well as taking the picture of the Tiffany lamp on the back cover. In addition to editing the words for punctuation and grammar, I also had the task of designing the final layout, including picture placement, essay order, and overall design. I even dealt one-on-one with the printer! It was a huge task, but one on which I found myself thriving. Of course, I got a lot of assistance from the rest of the Ruthmere staff as well, especially Bill and Carolyn (and her fellow, Howard, who helped with the cover design). Thanks to you all! But thanks, most of all, to Robert himself for writing these juicy slices of literature in the first place!

As involved as the process was, the actual ordering of the essays was absurdly easy. Eschewing the predictability of chronological order, I took a more organic approach. The essays naturally fell into three distinctive categories: people, places, and pieces. Indeed, the essays themselves almost dictated the order in which they should go. Thus, the book is divided neatly into three sections, titled, appropriately enough, "People," "Places," and "Pieces." It could not have been simpler.

Now, having completed this assignment, I am eagerly awaiting the concluding chapters of Robert's as-of-yet untitled autobiography. I have already been hard at work on laying out what I have so far. As soon as I receive the rest, I will be back in the thick of designing in order to publish this next endeavor in 2021. Keep your eyes peeled! It is going to be a doozy!

FEATURED BY THE CFEC!

By WILLIAM A. FIRSTENBERGER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Community Foundation of Elkhart County recently asked if Ruthmere would like to be a featured story for their upcoming 2020 Annual Report. This is a rare honor, and one that we did not accept lightly. Ruthmere Campus is at a pivotal crossroads in its organizational history with the landmark sale of the Rodin sculpture in November of 2019, and the public is eager to know how this resource is going to be utilized. This article provided the ideal moment (especially during this time of COVID-19) to communicate our vision for the sustained caring of our precious collections of art and architecture, and the opening of new opportunities through exhibits and programs. We must reach every member, every donor and every constituent with this crystal clear message—and this was our big chance. Thank You to the CFEC!



On August 20, 2020, representatives of the CFEC interviewed Ruthmere Board President Ed Beardsley (via Zoom), Second Vice President Janet Evanega and myself to ask a few questions and learn more about our vision for the future of Ruthmere Campus. Below are small excerpts, but we encourage all of Ruthmere's stakeholders to go to the CFEC web page, www.inspiringgood.org/annual-reports/ and read the full story in the 2020 CFEC Annual Report. Writer Krystal Vivian and the entire team from LightBox did an incredible job telling our story. We couldn't have said it better ourselves!



Photo courtesy of Sotheby's

In 2019 “The Fallen Caryatid Carrying Her Stone” sold for \$7.5 million. “The sale of ‘The Caryatid’ was the fulfillment of Walter Beardsley’s original intention, to give something to Ruthmere to benefit the Elkhart community not only in art, but in the longevity of the institution of Ruthmere,” says Bill Firstenberger, executive director of the Ruthmere Museum. “It was essentially an endowment legacy gift. Instead of being a chunk of money that resided in a bank or in investments, it resided in a piece of beautiful artwork.”

“This piece of artwork, which was not integral to the history of the house, is a huge stepping stone to create a long-term endowment that will sustain Ruthmere well into future generations,” said President Ed Beardsley.

“We want to continue to reach out to a more diverse audience to get everyone in the community involved in Ruthmere,” Janet Evanega says. “That is one of our biggest goals, to let everyone know that Ruthmere is not just for a certain type of person. Ruthmere has an incredible beauty, store of knowledge, and message for everyone in the community.”

FIRST PRIZE TO SECOND TIMER AT THIRD ANNUAL PIANO COMPETITION

By MARK DODDINGTON, MEMBERSHIP COORDINATOR



The second time proved to be a charm for the winner of this year's Robert Buchanan Beardsley Piano Prize Competition. IU Bloomington doctoral candidate Hyeseon Jin won the \$1000 grand prize Saturday afternoon, September 19, 2020.

A native of Seoul, South Korea, Jin was among the six finalists chosen two years ago in the first Beardsley competition. For 2020, performing a pair of pieces by Franz Liszt—"Sonetto del Petrarca" from *Années de pèlerinage* II, and "Canzone and Tarantella" from *Venezia e Napoli*, *Années de pèlerinage* II—Jin beat out fellow second-timer and IU Bloomington Masters candidate William Chiang of Texas for the top spot.

Jin became the first woman to win the Beardsley Prize, joining past winners Nick Susi and Yixiang Hou, and honorary winner Nicholas Roth.

Also competing this year were two more Bloomington students, Dominic Muzzi and Taiwan native Chih-Yun "Jacqueline" Hsiao. Shuk-Ki "Suki" Wong of the University of Wisconsin at Madison and Joseph Vaz, a native of Portugal currently studying at the Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, rounded out the finalists.

Second prize, \$300, was awarded to Muzzi, a central-Florida native, while third prize, \$200, went to Wong, originally from Hong Kong. Both are eligible for future Beardsley Prize competitions.

Judging this year's competition were three newcomers to the Ruthmere roster: Dr. Chih Yong Yun of Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan; Dr. Winston Choi of Roosevelt University in Chicago; and Professor Kyomi Sugimura-Vatchnadze of DePaul University, also in Chicago. After six brilliant performances, the judges deliberated for only a brief time before announcing who, to them, were the clear winners.

Jin will be back in Elkhart to perform the opening concert in Ruthmere's 2020 Fall Concert Series on Thursday, October 15, and accept her \$1,000 first prize.

Also scheduled to appear this season are the AR Piano Duo—husband and wife Arianna and Robin Giesbrecht—on October 29. Two-time Beardsley Prize finalist Ariadne Antipa will appear on Thursday, November 12. As per tradition, Nicholas Roth will close out the season on November 27.

All concerts begin at 7:00 p.m. in the Ruthmere Game Room, and are held on Thursday nights, except the Roth concert, which is, by custom, on the Friday following Thanksgiving. Tickets for the Fall Concert Series are \$25.00 per show for Ruthmere members, \$40.00 for non-members. Season tickets are also available to Ruthmere members for \$100.00. For further details or to book your reservation, contact Ruthmere at (574) 264-0330, or go online at www.ruthmere.org. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, seating is exceptionally limited.

ANNUAL FALL CONCERT ARTISTS & SPONSORS



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AR Piano Duo
Arianna and Robin
Glesbrecht
October 29th



Nicholas Roth
November 27th



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2020 RUTHMERE FOREVER - WATCH FOR YOUR FALL LETTER!

As a Ruthmere supporter you may have noticed that earlier this year we DID NOT send out a Spring letter asking for Ruthmere Forever support as we have the past 4 years. COVID-19 has impacted our entire community, and we felt it was appropriate to pause and allow our constituents to see where their resources would be most needed during a time of crisis. As we look toward a promising 2021 with exciting new initiatives and opportunities to serve the community, we will soon resume our Ruthmere Forever giving campaign, and we ask for your consideration of a generous 2020 gift. We use Ruthmere Forever funds to support direct operational costs and to provide challenge match support for grant applications--you choose how you want your gift to be used. Thank you for making Ruthmere's preservation and programs a priority in your life and our community.

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CHRISTMAS IS ONLY 14 WEEKS AWAY!

By JOY OLSEN, COLLECTIONS MANAGER

While the thought of just how close Christmas is might delight some folks, for others it feels terrifying, especially during COVID-19. Seeing the end in sight of this challenging year is okay by me. But I'm thinking, what is Christmas going to look like? Will we be gathering together with friends and family members? Will we come together to open gifts and be able to see the delight in our children's eyes when they receive something they always wanted or will it be a "very Zoomy Christmas??"

Families will have to work this out for themselves-but one thing's for sure, the fat guy in red still will definitely fly!

While you are thinking of what to give and send to loved ones, check out our selection of truly different and unique items in Ruthmere's gift shops at both Ruthmere and the Havilah Beardsley House. Take for instance, a Tiffany inspired Dragonfly nightlight. How about an English Tea pot and matching tea cup? Oriental rug inspired drink coasters might pair up nicely with a Miles 'Speedy' mug!

We also carry a line of Ruthmere-inspired gifts that include items such as an umbrella with the Ruthmere logo. Perfect for that hard to buy for aunt—she's always complaining about the rain!

Find these items and more at our on-line shop too, via our web site Ruthmere.org. We will gift wrap your item for free, and ship it to your desired location at cost! It'll make the reindeer happy too—less weight to pull on Santa's sleigh!



"FOLLOW ME, YOUNG MAN"

By WILLIAM A. FIRSTENBERGER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

It was my second week on the job at my new position as Executive Director for Ruthmere Museum, and I was waiting at Ruthmere's recently acquired property, the Havilah Beardsley House, to meet the previous owner, Darlene Adkins. In preparation for meeting Darlene I arrived early and started reading the large label panels with information about the home's history. I was spying a narrative that listed the past owners of the home, when my heart skipped a beat at the name "Arthur W. Kistner." "That's Grandpa Kistner!" I said to myself, and I hurriedly called my mother on my cell phone asking her to confirm if Art Kistner ever lived at the northwest corner of Beardsley Ave. and Main St. My mom said, "Well sure, he had his doctor's office there, but that was several years before he married your grandmother Firstenberger." So it was true! I was standing in the home previously owned by my grandmother's second husband, hence Art Kistner was my "Step" Grandfather, but he was the only grandpa I ever knew during my childhood until he died in 1970.

That moment; a knock at the door was Darlene—"I gotta go, Mom, I'll call you later to explain." In walks Darlene Adkins, and immediately I felt that I was in the presence of someone who was a permanent part of this special place. After exchanging pleasantries I practically burst with the question, "Do you know anything about former owner Art Kistner?" Darlene cocked her head and asked me very seriously, "How do you know Art Kistner?" I said, "He was my grandfather, and I just found out before you walked through the door that he used to own this house."

Still serious, Darlene looked me square in the eyes, "Art Kistner was your grandfather. Follow me, young man." This was not a request, it was a demand, and she proceeded to lead me directly under a beautiful ruby and white cut crystal chandelier in the room that she and her late husband, George Adkins, had used as their dining room. "You see this chandelier?" she asked rhetorically. "Your grandfather brought this chandelier back to Elkhart from Europe at the end of World War II where he was serving as a doctor for the US Army, and it's been in this house ever since." Let's not complicate this beautiful story now with the possibility of war spoils—just hear me out.

I knew my Grandpa Kistner had been an army surgeon, but I had no recollection of his ownership of the Havilah Beardsley House, this chandelier, any of it. Now, here I was standing in HIS HOUSE, under HIS CHANDELIER, and this place was to become a new historic house museum that I was entrusted with restoring. This project just got personal. In following years I've reached out to cousin John Kistner, largely as a result of Darlene's information, and he too, along with his wife, Judy, reconnected with the old family home in Elkhart.

Darlene had more gems of wisdom that day and shared a few more connections. I knew that we were going to be "forever friends." Over the past years she has continued to be involved with developments at the Havilah Beardsley House, and even though the interpretive plan required the relocating of the chandelier to a different room, namely to Havilah and Rachel Beardsley's original dining room, she was a good sport and reminded me all things change over time. "It's learning how to embrace those changes and be happy with them that is one of life's main challenges." A lesson from a retired teacher good for the ages.

But now, one final secret to reveal. After Darlene left her old home that day of our first meeting in 2010, I went back under the chandelier, and I did something a museum person isn't supposed to do. I instinctively reached up to touch the bottom crystal. The instant of contact, goose bumps rose, the likes of which I've never felt before, and I was with my Grandpa Kistner in my mind. Thank you, Darlene.



RUTHMERE CAMPUS GARDENS - PROGRESS & PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

By BREE DEMORROW, CAMPUS GARDENER & ANDREA BARBOUR, OUTREACH CURATOR

Ruthmere's Campus Gardener, Bree DeMorrow, took on a big task when she was hired at the beginning of 2020: make the campus bloom.

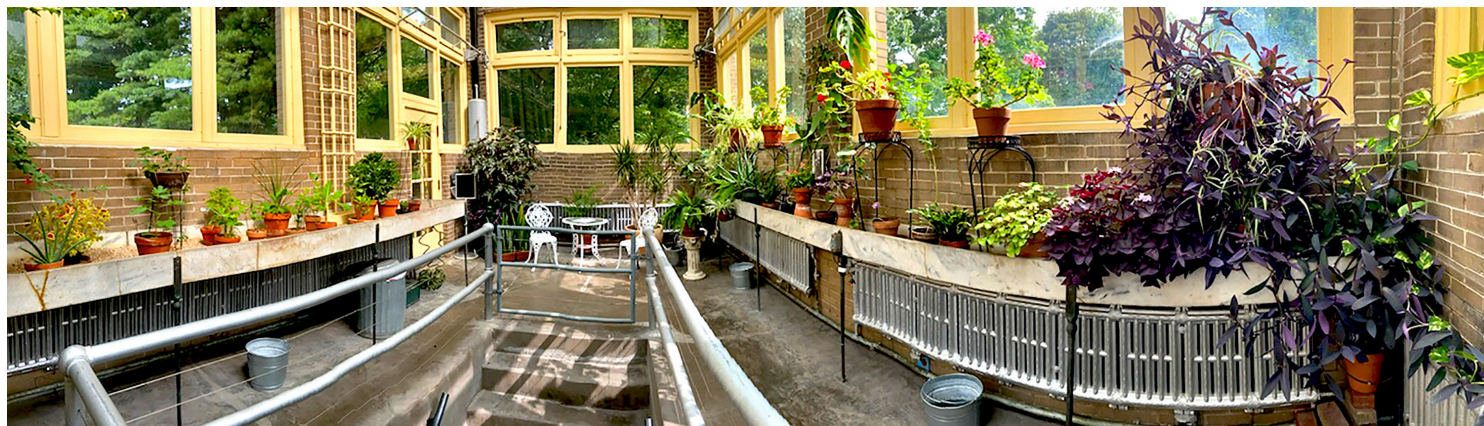
It is not an easy task. Ruthmere Campus consists of two historic houses, an office building, and a greenhouse conservatory, each complete with their own flower beds with unique challenges. How much sun will it get? Does the soil drain well? Will the flowers even like the soil? Even so, with a tremendous amount of work and a love for the plants she cultivates, Bree has been able to tackle the challenges.

The first year working in a new garden is always the toughest. A lot of the work for 2020 involved waiting to see what came up, watching the progress of the blooms carefully, and keeping ahead of things. But in between, Bree found time for some much-needed projects and a little experimentation. By "chipping off little by little," she has been working to improve the landscape of Ruthmere's office building at 303 E. Crawford. It is a fun project – much like flipping an old house in need of work – and she is excited to see how things will look in the years to come. And although our focus is on the flowers, Bree made room for some new additions that added a little flavor to the kitchen garden and the greenhouse. The kitchen garden (found beneath the windows of Ruthmere's kitchen, of course) is now brimming with vegetables and herbs. In our greenhouse, you will find the starts of several fruits - tangerine, orange, banana, lime (it has thorns, so look out!), lemon, fig, and strawberries. Overall, the greenhouse is looking incredibly diverse in both color and content. Even the night-blooming cereus is getting ready to bloom for the second time this year!

So, what is in the plans? Throughout the next year, our gardens and greenhouse will become increasingly important. First, take note that our Quilt Garden will, in fact, return in 2021, and Bree has a few ideas in mind (perhaps continuing our celebration of the Women's Suffrage Centennial that suffered due to COVID-19?). She would also love to see more visitor interaction with Ruthmere's greenhouse plants. Sensory cues (like the distinctive texture and smell of a citronella geranium, to use her example) could be a great learning experience – especially for kid's. Then there is the Tiffany Garden, which is meant to reflect the glass works of Louis Comfort Tiffany. Soon, Bree will be researching the flowers of Tiffany's art to make our garden a living Tiffany homage.

Finally, we are proud to announce that we are partnering with Church Community Services to give back to the community! During the first quarter of 2021, the CCS will be using our greenhouse to grow vegetables that will be used to feed those in need in Elkhart. As our Campus Gardener, Bree will be overseeing these plants, and she is looking forward to starting this exciting new non-profit partnership.

If you have any questions for Bree or if you are interested in volunteering in Ruthmere's gardens, you may contact her at bdemorrow@ruthmere.org or at (574) 264-0330 (ext. 109).



CHANGE HAPPENS, RUTHMERE ADAPTS

By WILLIAM A. FIRSTENBERGER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As a Ruthmere stakeholder receiving this publication you likely already know about the changes that have occurred in 2020--too numerous to recount all of them. However, a handful are worthy of mentioning because they have taught us how to serve you better not just in the present, but into the future.

First, Ruthmere Campus joined the Hoosier Hospitality Promise in June before we opened our doors to the public in an effort to provide a consistent message of health and safety practices in partnership with nearly 700 other businesses across Indiana. Suddenly the house museum mantra of "Please Do Not Touch" is not only easily accepted by visitors, it's now "cool" and much appreciated by all kinds of businesses--who knew that museums would have a head start?! Second, we've gone virtual in a BIG way with our programs such as Tea Time with Ruthmere, Gallery Talks, etc. tapping into technology previously outside of our comfort zone so we document our educational programs and better serve our supporters.

Last but certainly not least, we were faced with very tough choices regarding which programs to keep, postpone or cancel. The cherished Coffee on the Piazza and Fall Concert Series are major success stories. Not only was Coffee on the Piazza robustly attended, it was almost as if it never skipped a beat with the addition of face coverings and common sense seating practices. Sponsorship from the Phyllis Myers Family--Tom and Karen, assured that Ruthmere would continue this vital performance venue for budding artists. In similar fashion, the collective sponsors of the Fall Concert Series (more than ever before!) demanded that "the show must go on" this October and November.

In order to safely host the Fall Concerts, we have installed a new state-of-the-art American Standard Energy Star air conditioning system complete with a Reme Halo UV Air Purifier that will keep our Game Room concert venue "as safe as money can buy." We owe our deepest thanks for this mechanical upgrade to Ruthmere Board member Michael Church, owner of Church Plumbing & Heating, Inc., and his partnership with American Standard without whose leadership we would not have been able to deliver this benefit to our patrons.



American Standard

Thank you to everyone who has dug deep to help Ruthmere remain a beacon of hope for our community!

A MERRY LITTLE CHRISTMAS!

By JENNIFER JOHNS, CURATOR

This Christmas season Ruthmere Museum Campus will be focusing on family and traditions. A Merry Little Christmas holiday tours will feature both houses in traditional period holiday décor. Ruthmere will glisten with Edwardian charm with elaborately decorated mantels and evergreen trimmings throughout. The Havilah Beardsley House will be decking the halls with Victorian flare as St. Nicholas will soon be making his arrival. Mrs. Claus will be available for photos on a special Free Family Sunday on December 6th at Ruthmere.

Take some time out of your busy holiday and plan a family adventure to both of these historic homes. Step back in time with us as your guide! Holiday tours will begin November 28 and run until December 30 (the museum will be closed December 24 - 26).



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RUTHMERE IS SUPPORTED BY ITS MEMBERSHIP, PRIVATE DONATIONS, PLANNED GIFTS AND LEGACIES.

FIRST NIGHT AT THE ARIA

By WILLIAM A. FIRSTENBERGER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Does this sound familiar? It should. COVID-19 pushed back our 2020 Gala event. Stay tuned for this event date yet to be determined in the Spring of 2021. Be the first! Ruthmere has built a reputation over the past several years for unique gala fundraisers -- The Elkhart Black Tie, The Heist, One Night at Ruthmere and Cocktails on Beardsley. 2021 will not disappoint with First Night at the Aria! The Hotel Elkhart renovation project has captured the attention of the entire community. What is being done to Elkhart's beloved tallest landmark, and how will it be given new life for the next 100 years? You can be the FIRST to find out this spring at First Night at the Aria: A Ruthmere Event!

By holding the inaugural event at the new Hilton Tapestry Collection Hotel Elkhart, attendees to First Night at the Aria will explore Elkhart's first boutique hotel, dine on the ninth floor "Room on Top of the City," and kick up their heels in the chic Aria ballroom. To reinforce Ruthmere's year-long celebration of women in history, art and culture, Gibson Insurance is underwriting a one-night-only exhibit of "Women in Fine Art," drawing from Ruthmere's collections. Entertainment will feature the powerhouse vocals of the Janet Hines-Noris Band, and dinner service will offer a gourmet menu from Navarre Hospitality. Who knows what other surprises might be in store for this night of firsts?

Reserve your seats by calling Jennifer Johns at 574-264-0330 ext. 104, or book online at Ruthmere.org. Seating is limited. Underwriting opportunities are still available.