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## Cain family donates \$5 million to Cornelius Arts Center, gets naming rights

Carrie C. Causey Sep 18, 2018

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*Bill and Ericka Cain, second and third from left on the front row, have donated \$5 million and will have naming rights for the future Cornelius Arts Center.*

Courtesy of Cornelius Arts Center

CORNELIUS – Bill Cain said when he and his wife, Ericka, heard about the plans to create a regional arts center in town, they “immediately became interested” and see it as having a lasting impact. The Cornelius couple has donated \$5 million to the project and will have naming rights for the future downtown center.

“We moved here in 1998 and found a community that we truly love,” Bill Cain said as he addressed the crowd during the announcement at the Sept. 17 Cornelius town board meeting. “We feel like Cornelius is our home. It’s become very special to us. ... One thing we wanted to do as we built our company here, we wanted to see Cornelius not just be a good town – it’s a great town – but to become a beautiful town. Part of that as you know would be to bring some changes about in the inner city of our town.”

“We decided this could have a lasting effect for not just the city, not just our town, but for the whole area and will have a lot of influence on children and young people and adults for a long time to come,” he added. “So we are excited about that.”

The Cains relocated their company Financial Independence Group to Cornelius, and Bill Cain serves as chief executive officer with Ericka Cain as executive administrator. Last year both were recognized for their work in the community, including Bill Cain receiving the Robert T. Cashion Person of the Year Business Award. Prior to committing to the donation, the couple received unanimous support from their family.

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## HOW TO GET INVOLVED

*For more information or to find out how to support the Cornelius Arts Center, go to [www.corneliusarts.org](http://www.corneliusarts.org).*

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“And I think that says more than anything else I could tell you about these folks,” said Greg Wessling, who serves as the president of the 15-member Cornelius Arts board of directors.

The contribution in addition to the 2013 voter-approved \$4 million in bond money and other donations brings the funding for the future arts center to \$12 million of the \$25 million campaign goal, Wessling said.

“This tireless group is going to raise the other 13 million,” he said of the board of directors. “We have no doubt. We are absolutely certain as a result we’ll deliver for this town and this community and the greater Lake Norman region a world-class art center for the community, the public, for young and old, little kids, adults ... and everyone in between.”

This is the latest announcement about the arts center, which is a nonprofit, as it continues to gain momentum.

The three-year process has included hiring Justin Dionne as executive director; completing market studies to find out what the community wants, needs and is willing to pay for; having the town acquire the property near Oak Street Mill in downtown near town hall to construct it; and starting the design process with award-winning architect Malcolm Holzman and Charlotte-based C Design.

The last rendering that came out earlier this year has a 35,000-square-foot facility with a theater, classrooms, a dance studio, multipurpose room, gallery and event space and an outdoor amphitheater. Nothing is finalized.

“We formulated an arts board that started out as a think tank created by a past board (of commissioners),” Mayor Woody Washam said. “We started with nothing, and now we are in serious 'gonna happen' mode.”