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Lebanon Opera House Becomes First Disability-Friendly Certified Business in the Country

Lebanon, NH – On Wednesday, March 13th, the Lebanon Opera House (LOH) held a pledge-signing ceremony with the Special Needs Support Center (SNSC) to officially certify LOH as a Disability-Friendly business. This milestone event brought together members of the community, board members, staff, and individuals with disabilities who served as consultants in the process, ensuring that accessibility improvements truly reflect the needs of people of all abilities. With this certification—awarded through SNSC’s *Enabled Upper Valley* program—LOH has made history as the first business in the United States to earn this designation, reaffirming its commitment to fostering belonging and making the arts accessible to everyone.

“We believe that belonging is essential,” said Kendra LaRoche, Executive Director at SNSC. “By becoming the first Disability-Friendly Certified business in the country, Lebanon Opera House is setting a national example. *Together We Grow* when businesses take meaningful steps to ensure that all individuals feel valued and welcomed.”

The *Enabled Upper Valley* program helps businesses enhance their accessibility efforts through physical accommodations, staff training, and inclusive customer service practices. The certification goes beyond compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), recognizing businesses that actively cultivate a culture of inclusion and accessibility. Accommodations at LOH address the needs of individuals with both visible and invisible disabilities, ensuring a truly welcoming environment for all.

Kristen Coats, Community Engagement Associate at Lebanon Opera House, emphasized the importance of accessibility in the arts:

“We are incredibly proud to be the first business in the country to receive this certification. At Lebanon Opera House, we want all patrons to experience the transformative power of the arts. If we can help someone experience that at a better level or in a more comfortable place, we are very willing to do that. We are excited to be partnering with the Special Needs Support Center.”

Lucas Mendelshon, Communications and Technology Coordinator at LOH, echoed this commitment:

“Having accessible theater space is really important to Lebanon Opera House because our main goal is to bring amazing artists to the area and connect them with our audiences, our community, and our patrons. This is only accomplished if we can connect amazing arts to everybody.”

Joe Clifford, Executive Director of Lebanon Opera House, encouraged other organizations to take steps toward greater accessibility:

“Accessibility work is important, and it is something you can take in small bites. I think that everyone should look at their own spaces and their own programs and see how they can invite more people into the space. Be open to finding new ways to engage with programming and space. The Special Needs Support Center has done quite a good job helping us look at our work objectively, making small changes that are important to the community.”

SNSC encourages businesses and organizations locally and nationwide to follow LOH’s lead in becoming Disability-Friendly Certified. By doing so, they contribute to a more inclusive society where individuals of all abilities can fully participate.

For more information on how businesses can become certified, visit <https://snsc-uv.org/enabled-upper-valley>.

About Special Needs Support Center

The Special Needs Support Center is dedicated to fostering belonging and empowering individuals with disabilities through advocacy, education, and community partnerships. By working with local businesses, families, and individuals, SNSC is creating a more inclusive society where *Together We Grow*.

About Lebanon Opera House

Lebanon Opera House is a historic performing arts venue committed to enriching the Upper Valley through diverse cultural programming. As a community-centered organization, LOH strives to make the arts accessible to all by embracing inclusivity and innovation.

Media Contact

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