



**Remarks of Gregory W. Powell
Harold Alfond Foundation**

**Paul J. Schupf Art Center Opening Event
Waterville, Maine**

**December 16, 2022
6:45 p.m.**

Good evening. Thank you, Jim, Shannon, Jackie, and David. What a great party! And what a great crowd we have for this terrific celebration! Billy and Joni Alfond, Allison Holton, Ryan Fitzsimmons, Liz Menard. The Alfond team is feeling great to be here with you all.

Now, knowing this is, first and foremost, a party – a great party that is just getting started – I am feeling like after four speeches that a fifth speech could be kind of a drag.

Shannon warned me: “Greg,” she said, “just about everything has been said, but not everyone has said it. So, keep it short and find something to say that hasn’t been said already.”

So let me close out the speaking roster tonight with a very few words – hopefully, unspoken.

First, words about the very beginning of the Harold Alfond Foundation’s commitment to the arts in Waterville. And second, words about all of us and our commitment to the future of the arts in Waterville.

First, the beginning. How did Harold Alfond, a man who cherished and supported athletics above all else in his life, come to support the arts? Well, I love to tell this story, and some of you have heard it before, but it’s true. Ironically, it was the convergence of art and athletics that first inspired Harold Alfond to support the arts.

In the fall of 1999, while sitting at his card table overlooking Great Pond, Harold and I were opening his mail. We came upon an envelope mailed to Harold by his long-time friend and attorney, Bob Marden. Bob was an accomplished musician and huge patron of the Waterville Opera House.

In addition to Bob's many talents, Bob was also a sketch artist. If you put Bob in a board room of hot air, Bob could sketch the Mona Lisa in less than five minutes.

And so, when Harold opened the letter from Bob, it was not the short note from Bob asking Harold to make a donation to the Waterville Opera House that caught his eye.

No, it was a pen and ink drawing. Bob's own work. Knowing that a picture says a thousand words and knowing of Harold's love for athletics, Bob had sketched a drawing for Harold. A very strategic drawing. The drawing was of City Hall, home of our historic Opera House.

And draped elegantly across the front of City Hall, Bob had sketched a giant jock strap.

That did it. From that day forward, for the next 23 years, Harold and his foundation have supported the arts in Waterville to the tune of well over \$20 million dollars.... as of yesterday.

So here we are tonight celebrating the opening of this beautiful new center for the arts in our hometown.

And best of all, as has been said, this celebration is not only the capstone of this city's renaissance, but the product of teamwork at its finest. Colby, Colby alums, the Film Center, the Opera House, the Ticonic Gallery & Studios, the Public Library, all of you here tonight.

What a fabulous team. And with the finest of leadership: David, Jackie, Jim, Shannon, Patricia, Michelle, Mike, Brian, Paul, Larry.

Congratulations to each and every one of you! And thank you!

Now about the future. In Castonguay Square, on a cold November night in 2015, we gathered to celebrate the Waterville community and the promise of what was to come. Many of us here tonight were there.

To shelter us from the cold, there was a big white tent. But that night, we could see up through the tent into a sky lit with bright stars, with a feeling that we were on the move and our future was bright.

A Waterville Creates banner was hanging from the side of the old building that was once here.

We knew we had work to do to bring back our town. Words were spoken, and we said, "Bring it on." We committed to bringing this town back. And back it has come. Through your great efforts.

But what does the future hold for us tonight?

Here and across the skybridge to the Opera House, pottery and ceramics will be molded, classic films will be shown, concerts and musicals, the smell of popcorn and chocolate will fill the air, the best of contemporary art will grace the walls, the art of our kids will be nurtured and admired. And the heart and soul of this community and beyond will be enriched as only the arts can do.

We will commit to this future, and what we celebrate tonight will be just another beginning.

Theaster Gates, a dear friend of David Greene, our terrific Colby President, is an internationally known sculptor and ceramicist. His life's work has been all about inspiring the revitalization of communities through art. When you think about it, revitalization is at the core of what we are celebrating tonight.

Revitalization by and through the arts.

In 2018, as Waterville Creates was blossoming, Theaster was awarded an honorary degree here in our town at Colby College.

On the eve of his award, Theaster reflected on his life's accomplishments, much as we do tonight in celebrating the opening of the Schupf Art Center.

He asked aloud, "What do we do in the future as we celebrate the accomplishments of our past?" "What do we do with our future?" he asked. The answer, he said, is simple: "We do more."

"We do more."

So tonight, as we celebrate all that we have done to bring us to this fine moment and imagine the days and years ahead, we commit to "do more." Just as we committed to do that cold, star-lit November night.

Do more.

With that in mind, let me leave you with this: With the image fixed in our minds of Bob Marden's sketch, the Foundation will be joining all of us here tonight in our commitment to "do more."

So, on behalf of the Harold Alfond Foundation, I am pleased to announce a new grant to Waterville Creates for the future, to do more, in the amount of \$3.2 million dollars.

Thank you for all you have done, and congratulations!