

Robert Gillham (2008)



Bob Gillham's professional career has been as a research scientist, not a musician. After two years as the parent of a very young violin student, however, he became the moving force behind the creation of the Guelph Youth Music Centre. The Centre exists because of his dream, drive and determination, and his thousands of hours of personal volunteer labour.

The initiative, which culminated in the Guelph Youth Music Centre, began as a search for a permanent home for the Suzuki String School. Almost immediately, the creation of a facility that made exposure to the arts possible for young people who might otherwise not have that opportunity became a central goal. As a result, the structural initiative was broadened into a facility that would provide space for the many youth arts organizations in the Guelph area. Thereafter, it was a matter of sheer determination.

Over a number of years, Bob worked extensively with the City of Guelph, spent time pursuing the possibility of partnership with the University of Guelph, and time working with the planning committee for the River Run Centre. Eventually, it was Bob who led the planning and the volunteer labour team who transformed the Heritage Seed Building into the Guelph Youth Music Centre. It was through his initiative that the City provided temporary support to allow the project to be completed. He served as the founding Chair of the Board of Directors from the Board's origin in the 1980's, and he remained in that position until the outstanding debt for the building had been paid fifteen years later.

The period from the inception of the idea to the opening of the building was twenty years. A combination of vision, passion and dogged determination allowed Bob to see the project through to completion. The Guelph Youth Music Centre would not exist without him.