

## Kingston's Historic Laurel Ave School to Get a New Life

KINGSTON, NJ: Renovation is underway at the historic Laurel Avenue School (c. 1920 with addition c. 1950) at the northeast corner of Laurel Avenue and Union Street in Kingston, NJ. The building, owned by Franklin Township, has been unoccupied with boarded windows for over 10 years. It was last used as an elementary school in approximately 1997. In October 2015, Franklin Township signed an agreement with the non-profit organization, The Tuchman Foundation, to redevelop and lease the property for non-profit use. Construction activities are expected to be complete by Summer 2016.

The Tuchman Foundation, through Princeton International Properties, is renovating the interior to meet modern school requirements. The building will contain 13 classrooms, a library, offices, multipurpose room with gymnasium and performance space, and commercial kitchen. The exterior of the building will be repaired and modernized for energy efficiency, but will maintain the same look as the historic architecture and finishes. In fact, using historic photographs as guides, a few features will be returned to their original historic style. All improvements have been blessed by the Franklin Township Historic Preservation Advisory Commission, who are "pleased with the project," according to the Commission Chairperson Barbara Lawrence. At an open public meeting in May 2015, Mr. von Zumbusch of the Kingston Village Advisory Committee stated that, "The KVAC is very interested in seeing the building restored and opened for community use."

YingHua International School, an independent school currently leasing space from a church in Princeton, will lease and occupy the building. In addition, the community meeting room will be used by local groups such as the Kingston Historical Society. The building's large multipurpose room will also be accessible for social events,



25 Laurel Ave has been unoccupied with boarded windows for over 10 years. Construction began in October.

performances, classes, tournaments, and more.

Bringing the building back to its original purpose, the English-Chinese Immersion School of Princeton (also known as YingHua International School or YHIS), will run its preschool, elementary, and middle schools in the building. YHIS will move to Kingston prior to the 2016-2017 school year. Founded in 2007, YingHua International School is a full-time independent school for preschool through middle school grades. Over 70 local students are taught the majority of their school subjects in Mandarin Chinese by native Chinese speakers. Through an inquiry-based approach, the YHIS curriculum exceeds NJ Core Curriculum standards, incorporates an international view, and uses the best of the world's resources. YHIS is accredited by the Middle States Association Commission on Elementary and Secondary Schools and is a candidate school for the International Baccalaureate World Schools Primary Years Programme. Kristin Epstein of West Windsor, YHIS Executive Director, is thrilled that YHIS is moving to Kingston and looks forward to the relationship with its new neighbors. Ms. Epstein explained, "As soon as the building is ready, we plan to host a community-based house

warming party so we can properly introduce ourselves to the residents and businesses of Kingston. We hope that both groups will look to us a community partner that enhances the historic downtown area."

In addition to their day school, YHIS also offers summer camp and after school Chinese Tutoring. Its after school enrichment program, open to students ages 3 through 14, will include offerings such as Chinese style dance, ping pong, math, arts, music instrument instruction, makers club, and more. Franklin Township public school students may register with the Franklin Township School Transportation services to make YHIS their bus drop off location. Additionally, YHIS will host Chinese story times, Parent and Me classes, and "Parent Night-Out" babysitting services at their campus. YHIS is holding open houses at its Princeton campus on January 23, February 5, February 20, and March 11. For more information, please contact Kristin Epstein at [info@yhiss.org](mailto:info@yhiss.org) or (609) 375-8015.

Please join the fun at the

# KINGSTON COMMUNITY FESTIVAL



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- If you would like information for vendors, please contact Nancy Sobin at [nsobin@paperwork-services.com](mailto:nsobin@paperwork-services.com) -

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