Shelter Cove on Hilton Head Island, S.C., is a quiet, stately community. Many of its residents are retired and have chosen this graceful community as their “golden years” retreat for fine living. The area is famous for its picturesque waterfront and rolling golf courses amidst the gracious estates of former plantations. Perhaps most noteworthy of all, Hilton Head Island serves as host to the MCI Heritage Golf Classic every spring.

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In 1988, the community’s Cultural Council, a non-profit organization, started working on an idea for a fine-arts center that would be situated on land given to the community by the J.C. Self family.

The center would accommodate a performing arts theater, an art gallery, meeting rooms and offices. Major fundraising began with donations being sought from the private sector as well as local businesses, churches, schools and various state, county and cultural boards.

The FWA Group in Hilton Head and Theatre Project Consultants of New York were selected as the architects to create and develop the new plans for the center. The 45,000-square-foot building was designed to contain the Elizabeth Wallace Theatre—a new home for a troupe of performers and theatrical associates, the Hilton Head Playhouse.

The Elizabeth Foundation, for whom the theater was named, and the Playhouse were both major contributors to the new community center. The 350-seat theater would be the heart of the center, with 125 seats designated as “black box.”

The building design also included a full production area behind the theater, with adequate work area space and dressing rooms. Additional space was designed as offices for the Playhouse and the Cultural Council, meeting rooms and a 2,000-square-foot art gallery, now named the Wallace Greer Gallery.

Because the community wanted to maintain certain aesthetics, it was requisite that the town’s Corridor Review Commission sanction the building plans. In keeping with the community’s desire that the building achieve the “Hilton Head” look and fit in with the natural surroundings, the exterior was to be a stucco-like, in natural, muted colors.

A clay tile roof was mandated, and lighting, signage and landscaping requirements and restrictions were outlined.

It was determined that the building
would be clad with an exterior insulation and finish system. EIFS was ideal for achieving the required stucco look, as well as for its durability and flexibility.

Barry Taylor, AIA, project manager for the FWA Group, worked closely with the EIFS manufacturer’s technical personnel to ensure proper detailing in order for the installation could be covered by a warranty.

Of particular concern were sealant joints at the windows, expansion joints and parapets. Taylor wanted to ensure that these areas were correctly detailed so that the EIFS manufacturer’s recommendations and to eliminate the possibility of any water intrusion.

Royce Lehman of East Coast Exteriors applied Senergy EIFS to the exterior of the building. The EIFS consisted of 2-inch expanded polystyrene insulation board adhesively attached to the concrete-masonry-unit substrate, a cementitious base coat with reinforcing mesh and a final coat of classic stucco-lie acrylic finish in two different colors, which was troweled onto the exterior of the building.

The front of the building has a semi-circular appearance, which was achieved through a series of flat wall surfaces set at angles. This area, too, called for particular attention to detail (the control joints at the angles) to ensure no water intrusion behind the system.
Joe Harden of Harden Construction, construction manager for the project, told of the generous spirit evident in this community project. The center was built with “private donations and public charity,” he said, “and some suppliers and manufacturers helped us out by discounting.”

The public also was invited to help by “purchasing” everything from brick pavers to theater seats to windows, which are now all specially engraved in appreciation.

More than $10 million was raised for development of the center.

The Cultural Council and the Playhouse consolidated in 1995 and formed The Self Family Arts Center, Inc., owner and manager of this very active center. The Elizabeth Wallace Theatre offers performances and functions several times a week, and patrons can also browse the Greer Gallery and other exhibits or check out the golf memorabilia in the MCI Heritage room.

The Self Family Arts Center has become a focal point for cultural, educational and social opportunities for the Hilton Head Islanders, as well as for the surrounding neighbors and visitors.