

Commentary: Nurturing the arts for a thriving community

Who cares about the arts in Nevada County? And why? We do! Nevada County Arts is the Nevada County board of supervisors-designated representative to the California Arts Council and has been representing our community in so many ways for almost five years.

The Arts Council itself is more than 30 years old but was re-organized locally in 2009 and has been serving the needs of artists, arts organizations, the public and business since then. When we asked the local arts community what it wanted and needed, paramount among its requests were an online calendar where events could be posted; a website that gave valuable information about the arts scene in Nevada County; help with the box office systems locally; support for arts education; public art; and advocacy to state and local government. During the past four years, we have methodically focused on and delivered on all these important components to a thriving arts community.

Until now, most of our funding has come from the board of supervisors (a one-time grant in 2009) and the CAC (a series of annual grants with specific goals that help create a stable organization). We have now reached the point of maturity in our evolution that allows us to present ourselves more widely, make the case that we provide a very valuable role and then ask for the support of the community — because Nevada County is all about the arts! We are 200 members strong (individuals, businesses and organizations); have more than 1,400 Facebook fans (receiving up-to-date information every day); nearly 800 newsletter recipients; we post upward of 90 arts events in any given month; and we have more than 1,000 page views on our website each month. All this has been building over time in a thoughtful and deliberate manner. As we have built a foundation for reaching the public with information and news about the arts, we have moved forward to engage in a seriously needed area: that of arts education.

From arts convergence — a day-long seminar with many highly regarded speakers from all across the state — to our artists workshops with a focus on the technical to our new Salon Series, which gives successful, full-time working artists an opportunity to share the story of how they reached their level of success, we are filling a need that has become more clear as we reach out to artists in Nevada County.

These programs are only going to get more far reaching and more valuable as we move forward. One of our next chapters is to form a “Local Advocacy Network” as part of the California Alliance for Arts Education. By becoming part of the statewide organization, we receive a small grant to help begin building an understanding and support for the critical role of arts education in the development of every student, to enhance our already initiated coalition of local advocates and (here’s the big one) to enhance the capacity of local leaders to mobilize community support for arts education.

We are also the funding vehicle that will allow ART/OnSite, seeded with a \$25,000 NEA grant (and matched by local donations), to create the Tribute Trail exhibit that we expect will draw many thousands of visitors to Nevada City to experience a truly unique environmental outdoor art exhibition. Arts matter in Nevada County! We have one of the most vibrant groups of arts organizations, venues and individual artists anywhere in the state of California. This long-standing truth is acknowledged by Arts Council representatives across the state. Arts matter for several reasons: the arts feed our spirit; enrich our children and ourselves; create a desirable and well rounded community; and the arts is an economic engine that is among the most significant in Nevada County. For example, the investment that the city of Grass Valley made in the Center for the Arts several years ago (a \$250,000 capital funding grant) has repaid the community many fold since it was delivered. Grass Valley knows how valuable the Center is to the health of the community. Alongside Music in the Mountains, the Miners Foundry, InConcert Sierra, the Fairgrounds (for their music festivals) and many other arts organizations and venues are undeniably at the heart of the economy and of the vitality of Nevada County. Nevada County Arts is reaching out to you. For information about membership in NC Arts, go to <http://nevadacountyarts.org>. You can help us continue all this great work we are doing in our community.

What we do is important on so many levels, but first and foremost, we help support and promote the arts in Nevada County, we help organize the various groups and individuals that give their souls to the Arts, and we help shout to the world around us that the arts in Nevada County is, as our tagline says, "Where Art Grows."