

Parents urged to promote arts in schools more

By Lisa Millegan Renner

The new Stanislaus County Alliance for Arts Education encouraged parents Wednesday to get more involved in promoting arts at their schools. "When programs are in danger, it's the parents and only the parents that save them," Patty Larrick, the alliance coordinator, told 45 people at a parents forum at the Gallo Center for the Arts.

Attorney Ryan Gallo, a parent at Modesto's Fremont Open Plan School and an alliance member, is helping organize a program at the campus that focuses on backstage workers, including costume and prop designers. She urged parents to write articles in school newsletters or letters to The Bee about the importance of the arts.

Sam Pierstorff, who is also a parent at Fremont Open Plan, said parents should make connections with local performers. An English instructor at Modesto Junior College, he invited a dancer from MJC to do a presentation for Fremont students.

"My message is attend everything you can," said Pierstorff, who founded the Slam on Rye monthly poetry slams. "Harness the power of the community."

Jim Johnson, arts education coordinator at the Gallo Center, encouraged parents to get their schools to take students to the center's daytime educational program. The center is offering a range of programs this year, including productions of "Zorro," "The Grapes of Wrath" and "Androcles and the Lion" for schoolchildren for \$5 a ticket. There are grants available to pay for bus transportation.

Founded a year ago, the Stanislaus County Alliance for Arts Education is an outreach of the California Alliance for Arts Education, an organization that advocates for visual and performing arts for preschool through postsecondary students. Funders include the John F. Kennedy Center for

the Performing Arts and the James Irvine Foundation.

Larrick, a Groveland resident, is the only paid employee of the Stanislaus group and works with volunteers. She said there is a problem of balance in the area, with some Stanislaus County schools maintaining excellent arts programs and others having nothing.

"This is about building and sustaining true arts programs in the schools," Larrick said.

On the Net: For more on the Stanislaus County Alliance for Arts Education, go to www.artsed411.org/stanislaus.

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