We Are One: 
How the Arts Bring Oregonians Together
A Report on the 2007 Arts Build Communities Grants

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CONNECTIONS
Connections is a series of monographs published by the Oregon Arts Commission highlighting best practices and the arts at work in Oregon.

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Forest and Ruai Gregory taught classes in Nature & Art during the Cornucopia Arts Council Summer Camp. Fourteen resident artists were contracted for the annual summer program that offers classes for children and adults in a variety of artistic disciplines. The camp helps bring the arts to the small community of Halfway.

PHOTO: LOUISE RASMUSSEN, HELLS CANYON JOURNAL
Discovering the Things That Unite Us

For eleven years now, the Oregon Arts Commission, with funds from the National Endowment for the Arts, has supported efforts that incorporate the arts as a means to build stronger communities. In 2007, that support totaled $93,300 in grants to twenty projects large and small across the landscape of Oregon. This has been the case since the Arts Build Communities program began in 1995.

Equally significant, the projects, as they have every year, connect the arts with issues facing thousands of Oregonians: at-risk youth, downtown revitalization, facility development and community building. They speak to the vitality of the arts in community life in many ways. For instance:

- In Bend: A musical theater program entertained nearly 2,000 children, many of whom had never seen a live theater performance before.
- In Eastern Oregon: A folk arts program reached 3,500 people in public libraries serving six far-flung communities.
- In Halfway: An arts camp served children and adults in a remote part of Oregon.
- In Hillsboro: A new gallery/studio became a key element in revitalizing a downtown.
- In Port Orford: A summer camp made arts and recreation available to children from disadvantaged homes.
- In Portland: The power of art was used to help heal children and families facing health crises.
- In the Gorge: An open studio tour provided a valuable source of income and recognition for area artists — and the tourism industry.

These projects and others reflect, as Arts Commissioner Bart Eberwein put it, “the passion and sophistication and power of what Oregon artists are doing to make their communities stronger, livelier and more prosperous.”

The abc program is not the work of artists alone. These projects succeeded because thousands of Oregonians in communities across the state volunteered their time, muscle, money and expertise. Arts Commission funds were matched by more than $535,000 in revenues from other sources, most of them local. Over $166,000 was contributed in in-kind support from local companies and individuals.

Community, we believe, lies in the many things that unite us; the actions and circumstances and characteristics that allow us — individuals all — to live together as productive, empathetic and peaceful societies.

The arts are the building blocks that help us discover the commonalities that lie beneath our surface differences. They teach us that community, far from being weakened by our diversity, is made stronger by it.

— Christine D’Arcy
Executive Director

Keys to Success in Arts Build Communities Projects

While each ABC project is distinct and individual, there are common indicators that show how these efforts succeeded.

- A strong organization behind the project: skilled and experienced staff; specialized expertise; structure; support; volunteers.
- A demonstrated need in the community.
- Realistic and creative goals that respond to those needs: e.g., access to art or other services; economic development; education (arts or other); cultural understanding.
- Planning and preparation.
- Sufficient time and resources to do the job right.
- A connection to the spirit of the community and its residents.
- Participation (physical and financial) by community partners: media, business, schools, government, service organizations, funders.
- A practical way to assess progress and results.
- High quality art and a high quality experience for participants.
As a piece of classic small-town America set down in one of the country’s most scenic areas, Hood River is, no surprise, full of artists. And wherever artists collect these days, monthly art walks are sure to follow.

All such events share certain objectives — they serve as career and recognition boosters for artists, they increase retail traffic and restaurant business, they’re a great excuse for a party. But in Hood River, the First Friday art walk takes community participation to a whole different level, defining itself as a means to promote diversity and serve families and children as well as artists and businesses.

Consider, for instance, that the collaborators behind the event are the Columbia Arts, Hood River Downtown Business Association and The Next Door, Inc., the Mid-Columbia region’s primary social service nonprofit. For 34 years, The Next Door has been working to “develop and deliver innovative programs to build a community of happy, healthy children and strong families.” Its mission includes partnering with compatible organizations on projects that help to strengthen the community economically and socially.

A key attribute of First Friday is the everyday way it seeks to connect the art to the community. Art walks traditionally focus on galleries and the art hanging there. The mere act of walking into a gallery can be intimidating to some, effectively cutting them out of what is intended to be a social, community-building event. First Friday opens its arms to all forms of art and any type of business.

“The art is displayed in the same stores that people walk into every day — restaurants, insurance offices, the gas station, wind surfing stores, bike shops, the bagel shop,” The Next Door wrote in its application for Oregon Arts Commission funding. “On First Friday, they walk into these stores ... to look at the art, listen to some bluegrass, or to pick up some food and chat with friends.”

Using Common Themes as Connective Tissue

We write at length in these pages about the power of the arts in connecting us to issues that affect our lives. First Friday takes this role seriously by shaping monthly celebrations around common themes that echo throughout the community.

In May 2007, for instance, the Columbia Center for the Arts opened a five-week series of exhibits and programs organized around the theme of social justice. The Anne Frank Exhibit, sponsored by a young woman’s group at Hood River High School, was the first component. “The exhibit,” wrote the Hood River News, “provides a vehicle for people to view and think about prejudice, discrimination, hate and violence and to look closely at their own attitudes.”

The theme was extended with talks, films and events on issues as diverse as the Holocaust, media credibility and the internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II.

Elsewhere in the arts center, the Columbia Art Gallery mounted a show in which Gorge-area artists explored the “elusive nature of social justice,” and Columbia Arts Stage Troupe (CAST) mounted...
Project
First Friday

Organization
The Next Door

Principal Partners
Hood River Downtown Business Association, Columbia Arts

Why It Worked
Broad-based community involvement, offering benefits to a variety of stakeholders; strong partnerships with compatible organizations; close connection with mission and goals of partner organizations; creative broadening of a widely used concept (art walks)

Societal benefits don’t always show up in numbers. Clearly, though, events like First Friday, especially when broadened to involve a wide cross section of the community, can have a strong impact on livability and social cohesion. The Next Door, in its application for ARC funding, put it like this:

“According to data used by Children First for Oregon, it is estimated that over 5,200 children in our region between the ages of 6 to 18 have one or more risk factors that make them susceptible to detrimental outcomes such as drug and alcohol abuse. Based on the premise that experience in the arts can provide an opportunity to build self-esteem, confidence and pride, having venues like First Friday will encourage these youth to find more positive, constructive use of leisure time, provide them opportunity to display their talents and expand their knowledge of their own cultures and others.”

A production of “The Diary of Anne Frank.” Up and down the street, businesses displayed social-justice themed artwork. The library hung T-shirts imprinted with empowering words from the local Helping Hands shelter for abused women. The Next Door sponsored a chalk art contest for kids, and the Art Center displayed their work.

In July and August, downtown streets were closed on First Friday for an international festival of music and dance. In October, they were closed again for dance and exhibits celebrating contemporary Native American arts.

In its final report, The Next Door noted that First Friday 2007 “surpassed its goal to create a social and cultural event involving the community and promoting the diversity in Hood River.” In economic terms, 62 percent of participating businesses reported a positive financial impact. Ninety percent of the people attending said they’d come back downtown in the future to purchase items.
From One Generation to the Next:  
Sharing Stories, Building Connections

We often think of communities in geographic terms, as things that exist in horizontal planes — a neighborhood, a city, an organization, for instance. But community also extends vertically through time, as in the connections that link us to family, tribe, tradition. We knew this better in earlier years; today, our lives often seem stratified, generation separated from generation by distance or disinterest.

But there are signs that honoring tradition and the wisdom that comes with age is not wholly a thing of the past. In 2007, students at the Nixya’awii Community School on the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation participated in a project that served both as a learning experience for them and as a way to honor tribal elders.

“Voices: A Legacy of Hopefulness, A Portrait Project” was created by the Oregon Institute of Technology’s Sponsored and Pre-College Programs as a means to “share between generations stories that are often lost, neglected or forgotten.” It is, the institute wrote in its application for Oregon Arts Commission funding, “an opportunity to preserve these stories in one’s own voice ... using storytelling, documents, letters, photographs, songs, drumming, art ... weaving together pieces of a life worth remembering, worth preserving.”

“Voices” combined the cultural tradition of oral history with nonfiction writing, history, photography, multimedia and graphics. For three months, students immersed themselves in interviews with tribal elders, hearing of youthful experiences, of lives full of dramatic change. “They went from living off the land to living in houses, and having to go to school and learn a foreign language,” said senior Isaiah Welch.

For many students, it was the first time they’d talked to their grandparents about the older folks’ childhoods, their teen years, their growth into adulthood, their thoughts and hopes for the future.

They captured recollections of dancing and hunting, of poverty and pride. They heard stories of fishing at Celilo Falls — drowned behind The Dalles Dam in 1957, long before their birth, but a recent memory for grandfathers and grandmothers.

The students captured the interviews in photographs, on audio and video, using equipment and professional assistance donated by Crow’s Shadow Institute of the Arts. They wrote narratives and context, turning the stories into permanent, multimedia records to share with future generations.

Some of the stories became a special exhibit displayed at Tamástslikt Cultural Institute, the center dedicated to exploring and explaining the culture of the Cayuse, Umatilla and Walla Walla tribes.

In the process, the students learned the meaning and tradition behind the Umatilla word Ncicima — the word for “honored elder.”

“I think the experiences are far deeper than what they
Kathleen Gordon, left, was photographed in traditional regalia, as part of Voices of Hopefulness project. Antone Minthorne’s portrait, top right, was taken as part of celebrating the Ncicima – a Umatilla word meaning “honored elder.” Bottom right, Minthorne is pictured with family members, Whitney, Shrieese and Viola Penny Minthorn and Alex Tonasket, highlighting the intergenerational theme of the project.

would normally get in a non project-based activity,” said teacher Brian Purnell at the end. “It’s about them. It’s about who they are, where they’ve come from.”

“For students who really get involved in it, this can really be a significant event in their life.”

Gayle Yamasaki, director of the Sponsored and Pre-College programs at Oregon Institute of Technology, summed it up this way:

“Voices” and the Nixya’awii Community School’s Ncicima ‘honored elder’ program is a gift from the storytellers and the storycatchers. It helps us find our way home. Home is a place where common voices and common ground welcome us. It is a tribute to arts building community and a legacy of hopefulness.

### Project
Voices: A Legacy of Hopefulness, a Portrait Project

### Organization
Oregon Institute of Technology and Pre-College Programs

### Principal Partners
Nixya’awii Community School, Tamástslikt Cultural Institute, Crow’s Shadow Institute of the Arts, Oregon Small School Initiative

### Why It Worked
Project is culturally appropriate to Native American heritage and pride; strong educational element; success based on experience with similar project in the past; participation of key partners with close ties to the community served
There is something magical about drums: their power to get under our skins, capture our heartbeats, take control of our bodies. Throughout history, they’ve marched soldiers into battle and intimidated foes. But they also call us together as communities and, sometimes, carry us over divides that separate cultures and generations.

Portland Taiko has followed a unifying path since its founding in 1994, using its artform “to bring together communities of people, sharing information about history, racism and intolerance, and giving young people and adults tools they can use to navigate an ever-changing world of diverse people and cultures.”

“Taiko” takes its name from the Japanese drums used in centuries-old religious ceremonies, court music and community folk festivals (and, yes, in battle too). The modern artform exemplified by Portland Taiko fuses the new with the traditional, using music, movement and creative storytelling in compelling new ways that will, as the company puts it, “touch the universal in all of us and provide a strong and beautiful voice for Asian America.”

In 2007, the company conceived a production that would merge the rhythm of its “fat drums” with spoken word, movement, sets, costumes and lighting to bring life to a universal part of the human condition: The search for home.

“Millions have come to these shores seeking to build new lives,” the company has written, “overcoming prejudice and hardships, putting down new roots, and finally finding the way home.”

Centuries ago, the great Japanese poet Basho wrote, “Every day is a journey, and the journey itself is home.” The Way Home began with a journey of discovery, a quest for inspiration in the lives of real people. Company members and guest artists partnered with the Oregon Nikkei Legacy Center and the Oregon Vietnamese Community Association to hold a series of conversations with 70 members of Oregon’s Asian American community. Participants included the young and the old, new immigrants and those whose families have lived here for generations.

“We engaged together in exploring what our experiences have been — hearing stories of war, refugee camps, fulfilling immigrant dreams of coming to America, as well as to escape economic and social hardships.”

Most Portland Taiko performances tell a story through sound and movement alone. The Way Home seemed to call out for words as well. Lawson Fusao Inada, Oregon’s Poet Laureate (and an internee with his family during World War II), was commissioned to shape an overarching narrative from the collected stories. His poems, read onstage during performance, added both clarity and poignancy to the immigration experience: the dislocation, the uncertainty, the hope, the red tape …
In addition to Inada, artist collaborators included Seattle-based composer and performer Byron Au Yong, who developed transitional music to weave individual compositions and narratives into a unified piece and composed a new work that grew from the communal creative process. Portland visual artist Valerie Otani designed and built the set using the imagery of bamboo.

Portland Taiko has a history of community outreach consistent with its mission to “affirm Asian American pride, inspire audiences, build community and educate about our culture and heritage.” Its earlier Rock the Boat project brought together a pan-Asian American community to share experiences of racism and to create a response — in effect, to “rock the boat of racism.” The company is now working with its partners to develop workshops and a residency program around *The Way Home* that will be provided at the Vietnamese Language School of the Oregon Vietnamese Community Association.

“We discovered that we share many things in common and that each person has a significant story to tell — filled with joy, hardship, longing ...”

“The performing arts can be a powerful tool in fostering understanding and appreciation of diversity among audiences,” the company wrote in its application for Oregon Arts Commission support. “As the Northwest becomes more diverse, the need for vibrant and visible arts that reflect that diversity grows.”

Communities are made up of individuals, after all, each of us with our own story. When we share those stories, we find common bonds that unite us as a people. We are, for instance, different in skin color and culture, different in the paths we took, but we remain a nation of immigrants, seeking each other and ourselves and a place called “home.”

**Project**  
*The Way Home*

**Organization**  
Portland Taiko

**Principal Partners**  
Oregon Nikkei Legacy Center, Oregon Vietnamese Community Association  
Guest artists Lawson Fusao Inada, Byron Au Yong, Valerie Otani

**Why It Worked**  
The project supported a mission centered around education and inclusiveness. Long experience with community outreach; well planned developmental process that incorporated outreach in all phases of the project. High level of artistic quality.
Reinventing Hillsboro:  
A Once-Sleepy Community Unleashes Its Inner Artist

Can a suburban city of 82,000 hugging the rural outskirts reinvent itself as a center for arts, culture and creativity? Can the arts help to awaken economic and community vitality by turning the central core into a "cool place for area residents to work, shop, study, recreate and live"?

It’s been happening in small towns and cities across the country. Why not in Hillsboro, Oregon? In fact, such a reawakening is already under way, thanks to an ambitious Downtown Renaissance Project developed by a coalition of artists, citizens, and business and civic leaders.

In 2005, Hillsboro used a grant from the Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development to launch a project aimed at making the arts an integral component of revitalization efforts. A citizens advisory committee and a multidisciplinary consultant team led by Portland’s Barney & Worth then set about collecting opinions and input from the community.

Their research uncovered a shared vision for downtown as a magnet for the community and a center of activity.” The results suggested that “arts and culture could contribute significantly to energizing the downtown.” Adopted unanimously by the Hillsboro City Council in 2007, the Renaissance action plan identified 22 initiatives to foster an arts and culture revival.

A vibrant arts scene needs artists, of course, and artists need galleries and studios. Downtown Hillsboro had a notable lack of affordable places for artists to create and show their work, but also had an inventory of empty or underused storefronts. Among its top four priorities, the downtown plan called for turning one of those unfulfilled buildings into a cooperative, artist-run facility.

Following the models of successful projects elsewhere, the city solicited artists to participate. Twenty-five artists signed up for committees dealing with site selection, design and operations. An ABC grant funded a consultant to create a work plan based on local input and research into similar facilities.

Plans crystallized around the Terrace Plaza Building on Hillsboro’s Third Avenue. Ten months of design, demolition, construction and committee work later, the Sequoia Gallery and Studios opened its doors to its first event: a group show by members of the Hillsboro Visual Art Association, the new artists’ collective that would both manage the facility and call it home. The city contributed a $300,000 loan to help run the space.

A Place to Hang with Artists

The association today numbers 30 members, each of whom pays an annual fee for rights to exhibit work at Sequoia and to be featured in one show a year. A spacious gallery occupies the ground floor. Upstairs, a mezzanine level is divided into light-filled studios leased by 14 association artists, who agree to work there at least fifteen hours a week and to maintain open studio hours so the public can watch them work.

Since its January 2008 opening, Sequoia has hosted a full schedule of monthly shows, complemented with receptions and other public events. An education program offers a busy schedule of art classes. Artists who weren’t part of the project at the beginning have flocked to the organization, asking how and when they can join. The collaborative nature of the facility gives artists a greater investment in the community and more opportunity to network, said Beth O’Mahony, a potter and president of the Hillsboro Visual Art Association’s board.

For painter Grace Henson, the facility is “a place where artists encourage and stimulate each other in collective growth. Everyone involved ... envisions it as an opportunity for personal growth and a chance

**Artist Christy Perrine works in her new studio.**

**Thirty member artists display work in the Sequoia gallery, with 14 resident artist studios.**
DAO Architects developed this rendering to plan for the now completed Sequoia Gallery and Studio in downtown Hillsboro.

**Listening**: DAO Architects

**Image credit:** DAO Architects

The completed atrium of the Sequoia Gallery and Studios.

It’s still early to assess Sequoia’s lasting impact on that vitality, but the signs are good. Key to any success is the fact that Sequoia is not an isolated project, but part of a comprehensive and organized effort to connect the city’s future to a heightened cultural profile. That effort includes, among many others, the creation of Hillsboro’s first arts and culture council, the restoration of the historic Venetian theater, and an urban renewal funding mechanism designed to “reinforce downtown as an active and vibrant place.”

Hillsboro’s downtown “has grown from a small district that served local residents and the county courthouse into a more diverse collection of specialty shops, restaurants and services,” the Oregonian noted in a July 3, 2008 article. That’s certainly no secret to the people involved in the Hillsboro Renaissance Project, as the summary report makes clear:

“Experience shows there is an almost limitless talent pool to help get the job done. A recent study found that metro area arts/culture organizations already benefit from the services of 14,000 volunteers who donate 648,000 service hours annually. And in Hillsboro, there are new folks moving here every year, bringing new ideas and energy. About 75 percent of Hillsboro residents regularly attend arts and cultural events — more than sports.”

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**Project**
Sequoia Gallery and Studios

**Organization**
City of Hillsboro

**Principal Partners**
Advisory Committee, Hillsboro Downtown Renaissance Project
Visual artists, eventual founding members of Hillsboro Visual Art Association

**Why It Worked**
Part of a comprehensive planning process; participation by artists, business and civic leaders.
Project filled a clearly articulated need.
Where Some See Junk, These Artisans See Opportunity

Green, as everybody knows, is big in Portland. Bike-riding, light-rail-funding, Prius-driving, organic food-buying, recycling, number-one-city-on-the-sustainability-scale big.

On the arts scene, it’s as big as an old armory upcycled as a state-of-the-art theater. The Gerding Theater at the Armory, home of Portland Center Stage, was the first performing arts center in the U.S. to achieve LEED Platinum certification in the Green Building Rating System.

But green is also as small and personal as a pair of earrings made from — wait for it — recycled auto parts. Both beautiful and eco-friendly, those earrings and hundreds of products just as creative are the work of members of Trillium Artisans, a nonprofit collective funded by the City of Portland and others to connect crafts-makers to markets. While certainly a product of one artist’s singular vision, they also reflect the founding purpose of the collective and its mission as an agent of community development.

How? Trillium’s website states: “Trillium’s primary goal is to help low-income artisans increase their craft business income and build sustainable micro-enterprises. All products reflect the commitment to sustainability: they are created with at least 50 percent recycled or reclaimed materials, and are priced to pay the artisan a living wage.”

The collective was founded in the neighborhoods of outer Southeast Portland more than a decade ago, as a way to help people move out of poverty through their own talents and capacities. Today, the organization has expanded beyond outer Southeast to serve craftspeople who live within the Portland city limits.

The products are functional works of art ranging from “the refined to the hip and funky,” said Artisan Coordinator Claire Patoine — jewelry, apparel, items for home and garden, stuff for kids and pets, at a wide spectrum of prices. They’re sold on consignment at the Trillium retail store in Southeast Portland, on Trillium’s website and other sites like etsy.com dedicated to craft sales. Many members have their own websites or blogs, sometimes developed with assistance from Trillium training sessions.

Reclaiming Community from the Inside Out

In 2007, Trillium applied for Arts Build Communities funding to support product review and artisan peer gatherings, and to market new artisan products on the collective’s website.

The product review process is the backbone of the organization’s quality control. To qualify for the Trillium program, products must meet stringent criteria. A panel of artisans and customers reviews each new product to ensure it meets the standards of high-end green consumers for excellence, durability, honesty in marketing and authenticity. In 2007, seventeen artisans submitted a total of 42 items to the product review committee; eight new artisans were subsequently invited to join the collective, bringing 28 new products under the Trillium banner.

Craftspeople entering the Trillium program typically come with little or no business background. Monthly artist peer gatherings fill in that gap by offering networking opportunities and guest speakers who conduct workshops and classes on business issues such as pricing, product design, product photography and

A family examines work made by Trillium Artisans during the Cracked Pots Garden Art Festival on the grounds of historic Edgefield in Portland.
marketing and promotion. While the focus is on the artistic talents and capacities of its members, Trillium also provides social services referral and support as needed.

The guiding theory behind Trillium’s work holds that each community possesses a unique set of assets; economic growth starts with the community itself, through the process of identifying and mobilizing those assets. This “inside-out” approach follows the principles of asset-based community development (ABCD) pioneered by John McKnight, professor of education and social policy at Northwestern University and a national expert on neighborhoods and how to heal them. The building blocks of revitalization in an ABCD program include such things as the skills of the residents; the power of local associations; the resources of public, private and nonprofit institutions.

The success of this merger of ABCD practice with green enterprise and human creativity can be measured in Trillium’s growing number of artisans, its sales at its popular retail store and website and its expanding role in the Portland crafts community.

The best result, however, is the growing success of the artisans themselves. In 2007, artisan credit card sales through Trillium’s merchant services reached nearly $25,000, a 66 percent increase over the year before. Though the stated goal of the collective is to raise the craft business sales of member artisans by 15 percent per year, in 2007, 18 of the 19 artisans who have been with the collective for longer than a year actually increased their income by 25 percent or more each year – a 94 percent success rate.

The sustainable development field is generally divided into three categories: environmental, economic and sociopolitical. Trillium Artisans, with its focus on eco-friendly enterprise, income growth and community building, would seem to encompass all three.

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**Project**
Product Review and Peer Training

**Organization**
Trillium Artisans

**Principal Partners**
City of Portland, volunteer customers who serve on Trillium’s review panels, member artisans

**Why It Worked**
Creative approach encompassing economic, environmental and social sustainability; reflects local emphasis on green enterprise; builds success from the bottom up rather than imposing it from the top down; incorporates systems to keep quality high; high volunteer involvement.
Out of the Garret, into the Marketplace:
Mastering the Business of Selling Art

“Art is art, and business is business, and never the twain shall meet.” It’s an old idea, and a broken one, but shards of it still persist: Money corrupts creativity. Good work sells itself. And, of course, artists don’t have a head for business.

What these myths ignore is the fact that art-making may not be a “business” in the usual sense, but the selling of art clearly is. More and more artists are taking on that role themselves, through art shows, open studio tours and the Internet. Artists engage in business every time they submit slides for a show, build and populate a booth, hang an exhibit, publish a website and, of course, buy art supplies. Equally important, small businesses, including those involved in the making and selling of art, play an important role in every community’s economic vitality.

Lane MicroBusiness knows this landscape well. The Eugene-based nonprofit exists to help low-income residents become self-sufficient by building and running successful small businesses. About 10 percent of the organization’s clients are artists, many of whom live at or below the federal poverty level.

In March 2007, Lane MicroBusiness mounted a training conference to help artists address critical business issues that affect their ability to make a living through their work. Artists, Lane MicroBusiness wrote in its application for Oregon Arts Commission funding, “are often lacking marketing and distribution skills for events and wholesale possibilities. They are not sure how to get their work out in front of the right people or how to go about closing the deal effectively.”

To help address that knowledge gap, the conference kicked off with a number of specialized presentations to artists in Douglas County. The Business of Art series was presented under the umbrella of project partner Microenterprise Development and Learning (MEDAL), a program of the Umpqua Community Development Corporation.

The Art of the Sale, the Sale of the Art

Retail arts marketing is a specialized field. Lane MicroBusiness and MEDAL enlisted one of its most influential voices in Bruce Baker, a nationally known speaker who has long straddled the business and arts-and-crafts worlds. For the past sixteen years, he’s helped craftspersons and artists across the country become better, and better-selling entrepreneurs.

The subjects he addressed with artists in Roseburg, Coquille and Reedsport left no doubt about the business focus of the event: “Creating an advantage: How to be a successful art and craft show artist”; “Sales techniques to make your cash register ring.”

The training then shifted to Lane County with a two-day Artists Learning Conference, in which Lane Microbusiness partnered with the Downtown Initiative for the Visual Arts (DIVA) and Oregon Crafted. Attendees came from the Eugene area and as far afield as Portland, Salem and Vancouver, Wash., a mix of beginners and artists with as many as 30 years experience, for sessions on merchandising, display and sales.

Baker served as lead speaker here. His “Artist Survival Training” workshops concentrated on the practical side of visual marketing, from preparation of slides to submit for juried shows, through booth design and construction, to sales techniques for turning prospects into art-buyers.

Participants came away with ideas they could put into practice almost at once. Lane MicroBusiness project manager Leah Murray recalled passing Baker’s handout on slide preparation to one client, then noticing the slides the client was planning to submit to a juried show. “I immediately saw every no-no that Bruce had discussed, and began to point them out. The client had planned to do another shoot using almost the same techniques as in the flawed set of slides.”

After following Baker’s advice to redesign their booth, another set of Lane MicroBusiness clients saw an increase in sales and were awarded “best booth in show” the first time they used the new format.

The romantic notion of the starving artist in a garret doesn’t compute in today’s wired, do-it-yourself landscape. Artists want to sell their work in their own lifetime, which means getting in touch with their inner entrepreneur. Smart communities want the same thing. “Our hopes for the conference,” Lane MicroBusiness noted in its follow-up report, “were that artists will sell more and get into high quality shows more consistently, and that their booths and merchandising would attract more customers. Also, that there would be some artists who break though from part-time work to full-time business owners, generating enough income to sustain their businesses and create jobs as they grow, which would strengthen the art industry as a whole.”

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**Project**
Arts Training Conferences

**Organization**
Lane MicroBusiness

**Principal Partners**
Microenterprise Development and Learning (MEDAL), Downtown Initiative for the Visual Arts (DIVA), Oregon Crafted

**Why It Worked**
Strong partnerships with compatible organizations; close connection with mission and goals of lead organization; selection of highly credible presenter well known in the field
The Oregon Arts Commission awarded $93,300 through the Arts Build Communities grant program in 2007. Those funds supported twenty diverse projects, including the six showcased in this publication. On the following pages are capsule descriptions of the remaining projects. Comments are excerpted from reports and materials submitted by the grantee organizations.

Deborah Mader demonstrated the use a horse-drawn cultivator during the Cornucopia Arts Council Summer Camp in Halfway.

*Photo: Louise Rasmussen, Hells Canyon Journal*
Snapshots: Summaries of Arts Build Communities Projects

Artists Repertory Theatre | The Spotlight Project

Artists Repertory Theatre collaborated with Rigler and Woodmere Elementary Schools, two low-income Portland public schools, and the SUN Schools Program in a project that matches at-risk youth with professional playwrights and actors, modeled after the now-closed Haven Project. ABC funding helped The Spotlight Project provide theater instruction for 40 students, present performances for more than 200 community members and families and give 20 students the chance to act in an original play inspired by each child's interests. The program tackled themes that ranged from the intensely personal to the universal; from lighthearted to heartbreaking.

"Each performance used an intimate connection with the audience and classic techniques of theater to create vignettes that not only mirrored the life of the child, but illuminated them for a wider audience through performance. Although these offerings cannot replace the need for full-time arts education, it does provide students with a deeper and more nuanced theater experience than they would otherwise receive." [www.artistsrep.org]

Athena Library Friends Association | Public Art for a New Library

Once a stage stop between Pendleton and Walla Walla, Athena today is a place rich in agriculture, scenic wonder, neighborliness and history in the shadow of Oregon's Blue Mountains. Current focus in the community of 1,200 is the building of a new library that will be "a place of civic pride, celebrating our community's heritage and having a significant impact on downtown revitalization." ABC funds were granted to support the commissioning of two public art projects incorporating stained glass panels and façade tiles celebrating the community's heritage and economic underpinnings.

"A sense of place is critical to the ability of people of all ages to know themselves through knowing their past. Loss of anchors to the people and events that have shaped our present is all too common in today's highly mobile world of speeding lifestyles. The panels and tiles will tie together and emphasize — in a compelling visual way — the new library's commitment to local history and heritage preservation." [www.jhmand.com/AlPA]

Children's Music Theatre Group | Community Outreach Performances

The Children's Music Theatre Group, Inc. (CMTG) is the only organization in Central Oregon that provides professional instruction in musical theater to children and youth. In 2007, CMTG partnered with Bend's Tower Theatre Foundation and Bend-La Pine School District to present four community outreach performances of its winter production, The Sound of Music. ABC funding helped pay for the performances, artistic staff and royalties.

"A total of 1900 students experienced going to a historic theater for a live performance, many for the first time in their lives. Many of the schools attending serve low- and moderate-income children. Free tickets were given to all who requested them. The remainder of the students saw the show for $5.00 compared to $10.00 for the public performances. Theater arts are often a place of strength and refuge for teens that don't fit into the academic or athletic worlds at school, teaching students to be independent and accountable and valuable members of their community." [www.cmtg.org]
Snapshots: Summaries of Arts Build Communities Projects

CITY OF ST. HELENS ART & CULTURE COMMISSION | ROCK, PAPER, SCISSORS

The City of St. Helens Arts & Cultural Commission partnered with St. Helens School District, the chamber of commerce and St. Helens library to create a project designed to promote arts and culture and involve community members around the theme of art and industry. “Rock, Paper, Scissors” brought three artists into the community for week-long residencies to create two permanent art pieces for the city’s public art collection (“Rock” and “Paper”). Live performances of shadow puppet theater and workshops (“Scissors”) were geared to students, educators, and parents.

“This project is consistent with the Economic Development Council’s mission of collaborating to promote economic strength and diversity while enhancing the livability of Columbia County. We continue to build a strong community by promoting and supporting arts and culture, which are essential elements of a community’s sense of pride, its educational standards and its visual appeal. Overall, the commission and the community were pleased with the results of our first year-long project.”

www.ci.st-helens.or.us/CouncilBoards/Arts%20Commission/Arts&CulturalCommHomePage.htm

CHILDREN’S HEALING ARTS PROJECT (chap) | ART CLUB

The Children’s Healing Art Project (chap) brings the healing power of art to children in crisis through a mobile team of teaching artists working in Portland’s children’s hospitals (Doernbecher Children’s Hospital, Shriners Hospital for Children, Legacy Emanuel Children’s Hospital). Art Club, supported by ABC funds, is an out-of-hospital art camp based in chap’s Pearl District studio. One of its goals is to create an art environment where children/patients and their siblings are all treated equally and where each young artist is allowed to continue his or her artistic interests and expression.

“We have children without arms beading necklaces, kids in wheelchairs in dance classes, cancer survivors painting with siblings of children with heart defects. We are all joined in an art experience that engages and inspires – where children can be seen for their artistic talents and not their disease, diagnosis or disability. Art Club is a prototype for ongoing arts education for children/patients and their families, once they have been released from the hospital.”

www.chap.name

CORNUCOPIA ARTS COUNCIL | ART CAMP

The Cornucopia Arts Council serves as a clearinghouse for bringing the arts to the small Eastern Oregon community of Halfway. Art Camp is its annual summer program that furnishes classes for both children and adults in a variety of artistic disciplines. As a summer program, it serves a need by providing constructive activities for youth outside the school year. It also creates employment opportunities for local artists and an environment for multigenerational interaction, both in mentoring and co-learning relationships. ABC funding helped pay for class instruction, supplies, facility rental and outreach to low-income children.

“We believe that artistic experiences are a fundamental part of on-going education, and should be available to all citizens. The generous funding of our grant partners enabled us to offer more scholarships this year, making classes

The Gorge Artists Open Studios offer the public an inside view of the artmaking process. The Columbia Gorge is the natural backdrop for the event and is frequently featured in the work of local artists.

PHOTOS: JOHN MAHER
open to all residents of Eagle Valley, Pine Valley, Oxbow and Brownlee regardless of their ability to pay. Since last fall, we have also received many positive comments from teachers and parents alike and have seen evidence that students are continuing to practice and experiment in artforms to which they were introduced last summer."

Cove Community Association | Cove Arts Festival and Fair

The Cove Community Association was established in 1999 as a nonprofit volunteer organization to implement community priorities outlined in the strategic plan for the fruit-growing community on the eastern edge of the Grande Ronde Valley. Established in 2000 through the support of an Arts Build Communities grant, the Cove Arts Festival provides two days of arts classes and activities conducted by skilled artists from throughout the Northwest. The Cove Cherry Fair conducted on the following day is a modern version of such fairs held a century ago. Partners included Arts in the Schools and Music over the Valley.

“The Cove Arts Festival and Cherry Fair are the primary community programs in which the arts serve as the vehicle for enriching the lives of children and adults while building a proud and cohesive community. As community members and organizations work together to plan and participate in the Festival and Fair, they develop a sense of ownership which results in a unifying community experience.”

Dancing People Company | Solstice: A Participatory Dance Performance

Dancing People Company is a professional modern dance company founded in Minnesota in 1994 and relocated to Ashland in 2003. Its mission encompasses community-centered events that combine professional dancers with members of the public as a means of extending dance beyond the studio. In 2007, Solstice partnered the company’s five professional modern dancers with community dancers and musicians in a cohesive, celebratory performance by movers of many different styles and levels of experience. Each of the two performances culminated with open dancing for audience members and performers. A BC funding helped cover theater rental and artist fees.

“Solstice has become an event that our community anticipates and views as an all-inclusive holiday celebration. The audience consisted of people of all ages, beliefs, backgrounds and interests. It was overwhelming to watch the audience as their collective enthusiasm and elation spilled onto the dance floor and they joined the performers for a spirited community dance lasting more than an hour after the formal performance had concluded.”

Snapshots: Summaries of Arts Build Communities Projects

Alonzo Moore, Emily Abrahams and Heather Klopchin, with Keely O’Dougherty and Mila Phelps perform in Dancing People Company’s “Shining Night Sky” piece during the annual Winter Solstice Performance and Community Dance in Ashland.

PHOTO: MICHAELA BEGG
FISHTRAP | THE BIG READ

After 20 years of existence, Fishtrap is well known nationally for its mission of “promoting clear thinking and good writing in and about the West,” and for offering diverse literary and educational events from its base in scenic Wallowa County. The focus of the second annual Big Read event was John Steinbeck; 700 adults and students read and discussed The Grapes of Wrath; recited excerpts on local radio; attended films and lectures on the author, migrant labor, poverty, and the Depression; viewed Depression-era photos by national and local photographers; recorded and published senior citizens’ pre-WWII stories; listened to live Depression-era music; and attended social service and teacher trainings on poverty. ABC funds covered presenters’ lectures, trainings and travel, senior’s recording sessions and publication, and books.

“The Big Read built community through a multitude of events, cultural media, venues and collaborations; focused attention on compelling issues of poverty and immigration; involved multiple community organizations; and stimulated interest in literature and the arts. More than any other event in recent memory, the Big Read has increased Fishtrap’s visibility in the local community.”

KLAMATH ART ASSOCIATION | FABRIC OF LIFE – ART QUILTS CELEBRATING FAMILY HISTORY

Klamath Art Association works “to stimulate and encourage the practice, study and appreciation of the arts in the public interest.” In 2007, the association worked with Favell Museum and local quilting groups to create “Fabric of Life – Art Quilts Celebrating Family History,” a fiber arts project that featured a juried exhibition, classes, and an oral history component in which quilters discussed the family history represented in their works. ABC funding paid for production of educational CDs and advertising to promote the exhibition.

“The project provided opportunities for artists to learn new techniques, for quilt makers to see opportunities in the ‘art world’ and for artists to express their family histories in ways that preserve them for the future. It strengthened the community through the arts by recording and preserving community history. We held a juried show to have the best quality possible, but included everyone who submitted a quilt in the oral history component to make the most of the opportunity to record unusual facets of local history.”

LIBRARIES OF EASTERN OREGON | FOLK ART AT THE LIBRARY

Libraries of Eastern Oregon (LEO) serves 46 public libraries under its mission to help bring gold-medal library services to rural eastern Oregon. In 2007, LEO used ABC funding to help launch an integrated folk art program in partnership with the Smithsonian American Art Museum. Folk Art at the Library reached an estimated 3,500 persons at six public libraries over four weeks. Elements included video conferencing, scholars’ discussions about the significance of folk art, prints of nationally acclaimed folk art for public dissemination as library collections and exhibits of local folk art.

“The programs and exhibits brought persons to the library who had not previously been there, creating increased awareness of the public library as a resource. Three of the libraries have opted to display local art regularly. The Smithsonian was pleased with the collaboration and has since strengthened its partnership with LEO and the libraries to bring programs to the region. Feedback indicated increased public awareness of folk art, recognition of its strong presence in the region and a desire to learn more about art through the public library. LEO has not had such a favorable response to any previous project and continues to receive requests from other communities for art exhibits and programs to be brought to them.”

Photos: Elane Dickenson, Wallowa County Chieftain

Steinbeck scholar Susan Shillinglaw speaks to audience of 120 local residents during the Big Read in Enterprise. Local residents viewed a touring photography exhibit of life at the time of The Grapes of Wrath.

Photos: Elane Dickenson, Wallowa County Chieftain
Snapshots: Summaries of Arts Build Communities Projects

**PORT ORFORD ARTS COUNCIL | SUMMER DAY CAMP**

The mission of the Summer Day Camp is to make arts and recreation accessible and economically feasible for schoolchildren who otherwise enjoy little artistic or recreational exposure. The camp has served largely lower income children ages 8 through 13 for four consecutive years. The event offered four days of free arts, crafts, bicycle maintenance and safety activities, and interactive classes about the local ecology, giving its underprivileged participants a taste of local artistic and outdoors possibilities. Partners included the Lower Rogue and South Coast Watersheds, Port Orford Police Department, North Curry Families and Children Center (NCFCC) and the 2C1 School District. Many artists donated supplies, and ABC funds supported artists’ wages and materials.

“On the final day all 74 students showed up, many with their parents, and participated in a group bike-ride led by the local sheriff throughout the city. Students used bikes they had repaired and even built entirely from scratch over the course of the program. Seeing all of those delighted faces lined up across the street really brought the purpose of the program into focus. Having such huge community turnout is a rare but welcome sight.”

[www.portorfordart.org](http://www.portorfordart.org)

**ROSS RAGLAND THEATER | THEATER LOBBY ART GALLERY**

The Ross Ragland Theater and Cultural Center partnered with the Klamath Arts Council to open the theater lobby as a year-round gallery promoting public access to the visual arts. The gallery, curated and staffed by the Arts Council, is the only gallery in the community able to accommodate large-scale works. It welcomed a new exhibit each month showcasing visual arts from around the state and region. Klamath County has one of the highest poverty rates in Oregon (15.3 percent). The communities are rural and diverse, represented by farmers and ranchers, the Klamath Tribes, a large Hispanic population and a growing service industry and business community centered in Klamath Falls.

“In communities recovering from economic hardship and addressing issues of job creation and growth, a renewed appreciation of the arts reflects the evolving and recovering community heart. It is critical that arts organizations and other entities that support the arts increase the type and number of opportunities for citizens of all ages and backgrounds to experience art in its many forms, especially in rural areas where access to cultural experiences are often limited.”

[www.rrtheater.org](http://www.rrtheater.org)

**THE DALLEs ARTS CENTER | GORGE ARTISTS OPEN STUDIO TOUR**

The Gorge Artists Open Studios Tour seeks to make art accessible, to help artists earn a living and to provide opportunities for artists and the public to interact. During the 2007 tour, more than 600 people traveled the Columbia River Gorge to “visit artists in their natural habitat.” Thirty-four participating artists had the opportunity to sell their work directly to collectors and to meet and develop relationships with other artists and to help demystify the arts for the public. Nearly a third of the visitors were from outside the Gorge, helping bring additional money into an economically depressed part of Oregon. ABC funds paid for a part-time coordinator who managed volunteers and conducted outreach.

“The goal of the tour was to expand the capacity of the arts community by: improving the viability of the arts as a contributor to the local economy; building a sense of community among artists; providing Gorge artists with a direct sales opportunity; branding the Gorge as a venue for art and culture; and creating an event that will expand as the years progress. It also helped demystify the art-making process by allowing the public to meet artists and watch them work. We feel that we succeeded in each of these objectives.”

[www.thedallesartcenter.org](http://www.thedallesartcenter.org)

Arts Build Communities grants are available to nonprofits, schools, and local governments interested in building community through art. The program provides $3,000 – $7,000 grants for arts and community development projects in rural and urban under-served communities. To request an application or for information, contact the Arts Commission at (503) 986-0082 or visit www.oregonartscommission.org. FY2010 applications must be postmarked by October 1, 2009.