Arts
Build Communities
A Report on the 2010 Grants
Building Community

How many ways are there to build community? Every year for the past fifteen, the Oregon Arts Commission has asked that question through the Arts Build Communities program. And every year, arts organizations and civic agencies provide fresh answers, some building on experience and best practices, others blazing promising new trails.

In 2010, the Arts Commission, with funds from the National Endowment for the Arts, provided $110,000 in support for 28 projects that benefited more than 300,000 people across the landscape of Oregon.

Those projects were striking in their creativity and diversity, but one thing they had in common. Each was a creative response to a particular need in its community. Clearly, the creative economy is not limited to Portland; it extends from Powers to Enterprise, from Halfway to Tillamook, from The Dalles to Medford.

- In Halfway: A community far removed from the nearest urban area created its own program of art classes, bringing generations together to learn and create.
- In Falls City: Needing a place to store supplies for its popular arts center, the community came together working toward a common goal to acquire, equip and decorate an arts trailer.
- In Enterprise: The 2010 chapter of The Big Read drew an audience of 2300, using To Kill a Mockingbird as the centerpiece for lectures, discussions and performances, many of them about issues of social justice that permeate the book.
- In the Columbia Gorge, 34 artists opened their studios to 600 out-of-town visitors who bought art works, ate in local restaurants and slept in area hotels and B&Bs.
- In Redmond: The difficult issue of bullying was taken on by middle school students, who created a variety show from their own experiences and presented it to peers and families.
- In Powers: Low-income youth living in a remote area of limited resources worked with professionals in learning and creating community art projects.
- In Tillamook: Townsfolk and local dairy farmers united in creating a quilt trail to attract tourists and celebrate the community’s heritage.
- In Molalla: Citizens and community leaders joined with a Portland-based theatre company to produce an ambitious theatrical exploration of rural/urban issues.

These projects succeeded because thousands of Oregonians in communities large and small gave generously of their time, muscle, money and expertise. More than 1,500 artists and 2,200 volunteers played important roles in planning and implementation. Arts Commission funds were matched by more than $200,000 in support from foundations, businesses, civic agencies and individuals. Local companies and individuals made in-kind contributions totalling another $175,000. Altogether, the projects reflected more than $620,000 in economic worth, much of it representing salaries paid to artists and others in the community, and products and services purchased from local companies.

Art-making is a part of human DNA. We have an innate need to express ourselves, to say “Here we are, this is what we believe, this is what we find important, this is what should change.” We create art to connect with others, across the miles and across the years, because we think it can make a difference in the world. The Arts Build Communities program is important because it helps thousands of Oregonians make a difference in their own back yards.

Christine D’Arcy, Executive Director

Cover: Ji Seung-Hee, Oregon Korean Traditional Art Center, performs in Ten Tiny Dances, presented by the Beaverton Arts Commission. Photo: Alan Ruger
Oregon Mozart Players Go South of the Border and Find Common Ground

Communication in our diverse nation can work only if we find places of common ground where it’s possible to share similarities and celebrate differences. Not easy to do when we let our attitudes be shaped by stereotypes and clichés. Music, like many art forms, is a universal language with the power to bring people together. All we have to do nowadays is get them to listen to the same music in the same place at the same time.

In 2010, the Oregon Mozart Players, a 29-year-old professional chamber orchestra in Eugene, took steps to carve out common musical ground in one of the most stereotypically freighted landscapes: the classical music concert. While Oregon’s communities are growing more diverse, conventional wisdom says that classical music remains Eurocentric in programming and audience.

For a series of January concerts, the 35-member orchestra partnered with Centro LatinoAmericano, a local social services agency, on a program designed both to engage Eugene’s growing Latino community and to free “Latin” music from the salsa-band, street-fair cliche.

Artistic Director Glen Cortese programmed a “South of the Border” musical travelogue reflecting the area’s diverse cultural heritage. From South America: works by Brazil’s Heitor Villa-Lobos and Argentina’s Alberto Ginastera, probably the two most recognized Latin American composers. Movements of the Fifth Symphony by Carlos Chavez, a central figure in the music of Mexico yet practically unknown in the United States. A world premiere of “Tango Fantasy” by Cortese himself. And Sonoran-born composer Arturo Marquez’s “Danzon no. 2,” often called the second national anthem of Mexico.

“...The concert concluded with Argentine composer Alberto Ginastera’s “Variaciones Concertantes,” a work in which masterful counterpoint, melodic ingenuity and engaging rhythms combine to stirring dramatic effect.... The work’s 11 variations spotlighted many of the orchestra’s section leaders. All of the wind solos were handsomely delivered.

—TERRY McQUILKIN, Eugene Register Guard

The program gave orchestra regulars a better idea of the scope, quality and appeal of Latin music. Even better, it opened doors for a population typically under-represented in the concert hall. Centro LatinoAmericano led efforts to make the opportunity attractive and appropriate for the Latino community; the organization distributed 100 free tickets and assisted people in attending – for many, their first classical music concert.

“Families with young children, single mothers who rarely get out and senior citizens all converged upon the Hult Center, bringing with them an energy of anticipation not commonly found at comparable concerts,” the ensemble’s report to the Oregon Arts Commission stated. “The program allowed us to serve our regular ticket buyers, and brought together the two populations through a common goal: enjoying a live performance of classical music.”

The concerts showed that Latin American music, like music from every part of the world, reflects countless influences – some European, some native born. Latin classical composers borrow themes and emotions from the folk traditions of their countries, just as Dvorak, Bartok, Copeland, Stravinsky and a hundred others did from theirs. Those traditional roots can make music, all music, a powerful connection from one person to another, from one time to another.

The audience for the two concerts at the Hult Center totaled 750, nearly 85 percent of capacity. Nearly 350 were single-ticket buyers, 100 above projections. More than a hundred “clearly engaged” members of the Latino population attended the concert, pre-concert lecture and reception. “This was a true learning experience for many Latino families,” wrote Centro LatinoAmericano executive director Marcela Mendoza. “The families ... appreciated the introduction [of each piece] on stage (also interpreted into Spanish) ... We are looking forward to continuing with the authentic, honest efforts to bring learned music to individuals and families who have never been exposed to it.”

The Mozart Players followed its outreach success by establishing CAMEO, a chamber music education initiative directed toward underserved Lane County youth and families. For the 2010-11 season, the orchestra established musical partnerships with FOOD for Lane County, Family Relief Nursery of Cottage Grove, Looking Glass Riverfront High School, Lane County Relief Nursery and Mapleton, Dorena, Oakridge and Triangle Schools.
Beaverton celebrates its diversity in the universal language of dance

Picture a series of stages dotted through an urban landscape on a bright July Saturday. Each stage is about the size of a coffee table, each hosts its own dancer performing a fully realized work, compressed in space and time. What can happen on such a small stage? A glimpse of the world; a taste of another culture; a moment of grace, music and joy shared with others.

The Beaverton of the old cliché is fading into a 21st century sunset. For generations, this one-time bedroom community snuggled up against Portland’s west side was viewed as a poster child for a kind of generic suburbia. Now, thanks in part to a geography that favors both farmland and (silicon) forest, it’s grown to become Oregon’s sixth largest city and, perhaps inevitably, one of the most culturally diverse.

Current figures show that 29 percent of Beaverton’s population consists of ethnic minorities, ranging across the socio-economic spectrum from migrant workers to high tech execs. More than 90 languages are spoken in the city’s schools.

Populations sometimes try to resist the cultural changes sweeping in, a choice that seems both futile and short-sighted. The more productive course is to acknowledge that diversity is a Good Thing and embrace the opportunities it presents. Beaverton took a large step in that direction in 2009, when the city convened a multicultural summit made up of 65 representatives from 25 cultural/ethnic communities.

The summit’s mission: Seek to engage the city’s ethnic minorities in public cultural life in ways that are both meaningful and sustainable over time. That goal dovetailed nicely with the Beaverton Arts Commission’s Public Art Master Plan, which seeks to draw attention to the city’s public spaces, encourage artist-led events, showcase the cultural contributions of its ethnic communities and create significant public works of art.

"Beaverton is not a place of overt racism,” the Commission wrote in its application for Arts Build Communities funding. “In fact, many people cited ethnic diversity as one of the many positive aspects of the city.” Even so, how do you begin to forge connections between people who speak 90 different languages? How, in fact, do you attract participants and audiences among people whose first language may not be English and who may need extra encouragement to participate in public life?

Beaverton’s answer: Communicate through the universal language of dance. Even better, take the dance to the people, rather than the other way around.

The Beaverton Arts Commission found a perfect partner in Ten Tiny Dances, the brainchild of Portland choreographer and dancer Mike Barber. The company’s name pretty much describes what it does: Ten different dances performed on tiny stages – just four feet by four feet - a delicious challenge for choreographers and dancers, and an absolute joy for audiences.

The small scale frees the dancers to perform anywhere people congregate; Ten Tiny Dances

Isaias Santiago and Karina Atanasio of Ballet Folklorico Sol Azteca perform traditional dances from the east coast of Mexico/Veracruz during Ten Tiny Dances. Photo: D’Arcy
Tiny Dances has appeared in spaces ranging from warehouses to restaurants. In Beaverton, the perfect place was outdoors (this was summer, after all) at what has become the public face of the city. Each Saturday from May through October, as many as 20,000 people from across the Portland metro area make their way to the Beaverton Farmers Market, the largest all-agricultural market in the state. One dance stage was set amid the hustle-bustle of the market itself; a second in the adjacent city park, near the fountain where kids create their own dances in and out of the spray; a third beneath the giant sycamore that fronts the nearby Beaverton Library, itself a much-loved city landmark.

The Beaverton Arts Commission collaborated with Barber to shape an event blending the choreographer’s interest in contemporary dance with traditional dance forms representing the city’s cultural diversity. The effect was something of a whirlwind world tour, with visits to Mexico, Japan, Korea, India, Polynesia, Ireland, urban America and Northwest tribal lands.

The collaboration between Beaverton and Ten Tiny Dances began in 2009 and continued in 2010 with support from an Arts Build Communities grant. Approximately 1500 people attended each year. Equally important, the number of ethnic organizations involved in planning and promoting the 2010 event increased by three, and the number of ethnic groups represented on those tiny stages increased by five. The city intends to keep the dances as one of its three signature events offered during the year. “It showcases our diversity and artistry and is a successful vehicle for cultural awareness and celebration,” the Commission stated in its final report. “We have been able to build meaningful and ongoing relationships within several of our ethnic communities, which was and is our ultimate goal.”

“...I think it’s absolutely important to have these kinds of events to share culture and to share dance. I met kids who’d never actually seen my kind of dance or a lot of the other kinds of dance that were here today and want to learn. It’s nice to have this venue to bring about this art and this inspiration to a new generation who can continue it.”

—KLINTON HALLIDAY
Indian Classical Dancer
A Farm-Based **Community Lures Tourists with Colorful Remnants** from a Patchwork Past

*The quilt has been a popular form of folk art in many cultures. For rural Americans, the making of quilts was a practical necessity made beautiful through the skill and creativity of the maker. Quilting, then as now, was an activity that drew people together.*

If a vote were held for the most down-to-earth community along the Oregon Coast, Tillamook would win in a landslide. While the dramatic Three Capes Loop draws plenty of sightseers and the Tillamook Cheese Factory is a must-stop for a million passers-through each year, the town itself has stayed pretty much in the shadows of its beach-side neighbors. Tillamook, after all, is the country cousin, a hard-working farm community where cows outnumber people and tourist attractions don’t roll at you with the power of a 10-foot wave.

Which is not to say pleasures and treasures don’t exist. There’s a rich heritage of agriculture and pioneer life here, set in a picture-book landscape. It’s the kind of place that has made rural tourism a fast-growing segment of the travel industry.

The question: How do you showcase that bucolic heritage in a way that encourages visitors to slow down and spend some time in the area?

In Tillamook, the quilting tradition has always been strong. You can see it every year at the county fair (very stiff competition), and in the exhibit spaces and demonstration rooms at Latimer Quilt & Textile Center. Nowadays, though, Tillamook’s quilting heritage is evident nearly everywhere you look. In 2008, local resident Marti Rhea came to the Latimer Center with an idea taking hold in other parts of the country, but which had yet to find its way to the West Coast: The quilt trail.

For the uninitiated, a quilt is made of dozens of bright, geometrically shaped squares called “blocks.” There are literally thousands of traditional block designs with colorful names like Oregon Star, Westward Ho and Card Trick (patterns and names often change from region to region). A quilt trail is built by turning quilt blocks into giant decorative panels, displaying them on barns and other buildings, then connecting the barns with an annotated self-guiding tour map. The blocks, besides giving an appealing “treasure hunt” feel to the tour, serve as historical markers to interesting nuggets about the area’s past.

The Latimer Center took the idea to its heart, assembling a coalition of local partners to create, manage and promote the trail under the mission “Preserving and Promoting Our Rural Heritage.” Phase one, a 16-site loop through central Tillamook County, went active in late summer 2009. Many of the patterns were designed exclusively for Oregon, and the driving map gave intriguing hints of early Tillamook life: “Tom Hyder ... grew barley on the farm and made moonshine. ... During a remodel of the barn, hundreds of whiskey bottles were found under the floorboards ...”

Local reaction to the new Tillamook County Quilt Trail was swift. “Requests came in from all over asking if quilt blocks were available, what they would cost and ‘how fast can we get them?’” wrote the Latimer Center in its report to the Oregon Arts Commission.

Phase two, a “Walk Our Blocks” tour through downtown Tillamook, was in place by August 2010. “We had hoped for about 30 blocks,” coalition chair (and now Tillamook mayor) Suzanne Weber told the local Tillamook newspaper last November, “and we were gratified beyond belief at the acceptance of the idea.” In addition to
30 participating businesses, 42 others went on a waiting list. The activity continues. Thirty new downtown quilt blocks are slated to go up in 2011; plans are underway to add quilt trails in the northern and southern parts of the county.

“This project has strengthened the arts and our community greatly,” the coalition reported in January 2011. “The Urban Renewal Committee ... has embraced the project and is putting together their recommendations to the council for their new slogan.” One candidate: “Piecing our community together, one block at a time.”

The trails have drawn unified enthusiasm from the community, but what about tourists? Time will tell, but quilt trails are increasingly popular in other parts of the country - more than half the 50 states have them. Sunset Magazine and other print and on-line publications have featured both Tillamook trails. The Chamber of Commerce has reported that increasing numbers of visitors ask specifically for quilt trail maps, many of them referred by those who have come before.

Encouraged by the interest, the coalition printed 15,000 Barn Quilt Trail maps and 10,000 Walk Our Block maps and constructed a dedicated website. Given the advantages of a striking landscape and a prime location as gateway to the Oregon Coast, exploring Tillamook’s patchwork past should become as natural as stopping for a block of that famous cheddar.
Pat Courtney Gold had anticipated this moment for five years, yet when the curator placed the basket into her gloved hands, the emotion was almost overpowering. “I didn’t think I could imagine a design that intricate,” she said later. “It was horizontal petroglyph faces and surrounding was a geometric design. And it completely encircled the basket so you never knew where the pattern began. You didn’t know where it ended.”

That basket, created by an unnamed Wasco basket maker, was given to Lewis and Clark more than 200 years ago. It now resides in the Peabody Museum at Harvard University as part of a large Corps of Discovery collection. “The basket was letting me know that... these faces were made by my ancestors. I felt that I was touching my ancestors.” Gold, a nationally honored basket maker who helped preserve the almost lost intricacies of Wasco basket making, remembered cradling that old basket for six hours.

To appreciate the power of that experience, it’s helpful to understand the role basketry played in life along the Mid-Columbia. Baskets were nothing less than lifelines for peoples whose survival depended on their ability to collect, transport and store berries, roots and salmon over the long wet season. The baskets that made life possible were venerated through the skill and art of the weaver.

In 2010, The Museum at Warm Springs created an exhibit and series of programs called “Baskets Tell a Story” to help keep an honored tradition alive. The exhibit placed special emphasis on the way each basket reveals its history, its environment and its weaver, illustrating the point with examples drawn from the museum’s permanent collection. “Such pieces are treasured because they recall loved ones and precious memories,” the Museum wrote in its report to the Oregon Arts Commission.

Pat Courtney Gold designed a contemporary basket especially for the exhibit and sculptor Lillian Pitt created a glass and ceramic piece that honors the tradition of basket-making. Many community members loaned baskets from their personal collections. And what of the memories and stories for future generations? “Our people were moved from a traditional place to reservations,” Pat Courtney Gold has said, “and during that move we lost a lot of our culture. We lost skills, especially basketry, and it took a hundred years to get it back.” Elders, in particular, understand how important heritage and culture are for community pride and wellbeing, the Museum noted. “They (the Elders) feel it is important for all ... but particularly tribal youth, to maintain a strong, positive sense of self during these trying times.”

And so, the museum designed “Baskets Tell a Story” to highlight the work of young Warm Springs weavers and to provide learning experiences for museum visitors of all ages. Activities included demonstrations and classes, a “basket corner” where youngsters could try their hand at a simple weaving technique and a workshop for community members who wanted to write about their family history and memories.

Humans love stories. We love them because they tell us where we came from, and that helps us know who we are. Stories are so important to us that we’ve invented hundreds of ways to tell them – through words and pictures, through music and movement, and yes, through basket making. Here along the banks of the Columbia,
the stories those baskets tell are ones of prosperity and privation, of change, of connections to other villages and other generations, and of a close relationship with the natural world.

"A girl wanted to learn how to weave, so she sat under a cedar tree. She was making a basket but didn’t know what kind of design to put on it. The tree told her, ‘Look around and you will see images.’ She looked around and the first thing she saw was mountains. So her mountain design became triangles — geometric triangles — all in a row. She showed that to the cedar tree and he said, ‘That’s what I want you to do.’ As we listen to this legend, it helps us open our eyes and go out in nature and see things that would be good for a basket.”

—PAT COURTNEY GOLD

Such legends, wrote Mary Schlick, “lift baskets out of the realm of art objects alone. They place them firmly where they belong, in the complex fabric of the life of the people of the Mid-Columbia—not as fringes to decorate the edge of a beautiful shawl, but as threads in the shawl itself.”
Oregon Shakespeare Festival Brings Diversity to the Audience as Well as the Stage

Kaleidoscope: 1. An instrument of multiple reflection where colors and shapes may be shifted into new patterns and relationships. 2. Anything that constantly changes, as in color or pattern. A fusing of the Greek words for “beautiful,” “shape” and “tool for examination.”

The mission of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival is “to reveal our collective humanity through illuminating interpretations of new and classic plays, deepened by the kaleidoscope of rotating repertory.” Of the many fine words in that statement, one of the most appropriate perhaps is “kaleidoscope.” The company has a long history of using the theater as a lens to examine the nature of humankind in its myriad shapes and diversity. Since the 1970s in particular, the Festival has embraced non-traditional casting, building its acting company into a multiethnic community that can illuminate the modern world as well as Elizabethan England.

Each change in leadership brings a nudge of the kaleidoscope. When Bill Rauch was named artistic director in 2008, he was determined to build on the multiethnic traditions that had become as much a part of the company as its Shakespearean roots. During his tenure, the playbook has expanded east and west, featuring world classics like The Clay Cart, a 2,000-year old tale from India; Death and the King’s Horseman, inspired by an event in Nigeria during British colonial rule; and Throne of Blood, a stage version of the Akiro Kurosawa film that was itself an adaptation of Macbeth. To handle the demanding repertoire, the company became yet more diverse; by 2010, nearly 50 percent of the 100-plus members of the acting company were actors of color.

More than 400,000 theater-goers make a pilgrimage to Ashland each year, many coming from hundreds, even thousands, of miles away. But the Festival is also part of a growing community that calls the Rogue Valley home, a community every bit as diverse as the one treading the Festival stages each performance.

In 2008, the company was determined to strengthen ties with neighbors who had been underrepresented in the past. Supported by an Arts Build Communities grant, they launched a year-long, two-way outreach program to showcase Latino culture and welcome the Hispanic community into the theaters. Elements included steeply discounted theater tickets, Spanish language captioning and job opportunity outreach to high schools, community colleges and universities. The activity culminated in a five-day Festival Latino in July that transformed the pre-curtain Green Show on the Plaza with Latino/Hispanic performing groups. The Shakespeare Festival distributed 742 free and discounted play tickets to community members; approximately 4,000 people attended Green Show performances.

Why it worked
The project was an extension of a previous highly successful program. OSF has enormous capacity and experience in implementing arts-oriented programs and a history of working with multicultural partners. Extensive collaboration among arts organizations and service agencies throughout the community.

Project
CultureFest

Organization
Oregon Shakespeare Festival

Principal Partners
Planning partners include Multicultural Association of Southern Oregon, Chamber Latino Network, Rogue Community College (RCC) Latino Programs, La Clinica de Valle, Una Voz. An additional ten organizations and groups provided programming.

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The success of that event led directly to plans for an even more inclusive celebration of multiculturalism in 2010. The idea behind CultureFest reflects a movement to “new, nontraditional roles for theater and theater artists,” the company wrote in its application for 2010 grant support. “Spanning multiple areas of activity (community building, education programming and the work on stage), The festival seeks to integrate multicultural communities into this large, established, classics-based theater company. This heightened awareness touches all stages of our work, from artistic development to production to surrounding programming.”

The process of building community connections continued to expand throughout the 2010 season. Again, the company distributed free and discounted tickets - nearly 2,500 of them - to community members who otherwise might not have been able to attend. This was triple the number anticipated due in part to the success of American Night: The Ballad of Juan Jose by Culture Clash, the world premiere of a work commissioned by the Festival. To accommodate the demand for tickets, the company was obliged to add an unprecedented five performances. All season long, the free Green Show in the courtyard featured performances by multiethnic cultural groups.

The program culminated with a multicultural festival on the OSF campus September 30 through October 3. CultureFest celebrated a wide world of music and dance traditions: Japanese koto music, Native-American drumming and
storytelling; klezmer music; music and dance of the African diaspora; Mexican folk dancing and contemporary Latin music.

Discounted tickets for the nine productions on stage during CultureFest were made available to underrepresented multicultural groups, and five performances were offered with Spanish open-captioning. The Festival also included a Spanish-language “Introduction to Shakespeare” workshop and local vendors selling food on “the bricks,” the public courtyard between theaters.

“CultureFest provides attendees with a full journey around the world,” wrote Sunshine Lampitoc, the Festival’s audience development associate, in Latino Times Magazine. But that is “just a small part of OSF’s dedication to the inclusion of diverse people, ideas, cultures and traditions. As one of the nation’s largest arts institutions, the theater company has committed itself to reflecting America’s diversity onstage and in its audiences.”

In a remote corner of Oregon, then, here is a kaleidoscope aimed at the world: an instrument to examine the human condition in all its splendid variations and all its infinite mystery.
Sojourn Theatre Sets the Table for a Conversation About Community

There are two Oregons, it’s often said. We share a state divided east from west, urban from rural, Portland from everywhere else. It’s a split that frames our politics, interests, economic outlook and values – at least our perceptions of them. But how far apart are we, really? Does common ground exist anywhere in this vast, multifarious landscape, and if so, how do we go about finding it?

Portland-based Sojourn Theatre is a company that seeks to redefine our understanding of what theater is and how it works. In a Sojourn production, there is often no stage or auditorium – no separation, in fact, between actors and audience. The company describes itself as a “multi-ethnic ensemble exploring contemporary life through adventurous theatrical approaches to complex material.”

In 2010, Sojourn used an Arts Build Communities grant to tackle a subject that certainly fits the definition of complex: Oregon’s urban/rural divide. “Some artists are fascinated ... by person-to-person relationships, or family, or love,” artistic director Michael Rohd told The Oregonian’s Marty Hughley. “We’re interested in how larger groups of people come together. How do communities come to exist? How do they function?”

On the Table was not designed to find answers to those questions. Instead, it would provide an opportunity for community members to engage in conversation, to wrestle with issues of identity, resources, values and governance. “We believe that art, and theater in particular, can act as a bridge; that it can offer spaces for illumination, recognition, and above all else, dialogue,” the company wrote in its report to the Arts Commission. “And we believe that our job as artists is to identify the questions to ask, and then create a story and a space within which those questions can live. The answers, or responses, come later - not from us as artists, but from the event itself - the interaction between art and audience.”

The result would be an evening “that’s really thoughtful and uses space in purposeful ways,” Rohd has said. “But also something that’s really fun and a good time.”

On the Table took 18 months of planning, community collaboration, coordination, writing and rehearsal. A look at the description on Sojourn’s website shows why: It’s a performance project that “goes beyond metaphorical bridge-building to physically move audiences across geographic boundaries.” Site-specific productions are challenging enough; this one involved three separate sites, in Portland (urban), Molalla (rural) and Oregon City (neutral ground), connected by intercity travel.

The multi-location concept was critical both to the storytelling and the

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Sojourn company members and others who worked on On The Table: Front row (L to R): Ty Hewitt, Rebecca Martinez, Juan Marquez and Joaquin Lopez from Mayahuel Catering, Clare Parker, Mari Bunnage, Joel Sugerman. Middle row (L to R): Nikki Zaleski, Liz McCauliffe, Courtney Davis, Hannah Treuhaft, Nicole Ripley, Akari Anderson, Rachel Sullivan, Alison Lehner, Liam Kaas-Lentz. Back row (L to R): Eben Hoffer, Andy Prahl, Michael Rohd, James Hart, Jono Eiland, Isaac Hoffer, James Mapes, Jake Cohen, Dave Lowensohn, Connor Anderson
participatory nature of the project. “We’re engaging people around the notion that action in Place A impacts action in Place B, and vice versa,” Rohd said in an April 2010 interview with American Theatre magazine. “Actions that happen far apart from each other are not necessarily distinct in their impact and meaning. You can use the journey of food and the activity of food as a way into those complicated issues.”

Act 1 of On the Table is set in 1980 at a funeral/memorial service that introduces two families, one in Portland, one in Molalla. Separate casts perform for an audience of 40 in each community. Act 2 takes place on buses as the audiences are driven toward a geographic midpoint. By the time the buses arrive, the stories of the two families and their communities have been brought up to the present day. Act 3 finds the actors and audience members together at a wedding uniting these two families. Fictional characters and audience members, Portlanders and Molallans, join for a meal and the conclusion of the performance. People who were once strangers now break bread as a community and, perhaps, find some measure of common ground or understanding.

Audience members provided their cell phone numbers to cast members and were invited to call counterparts on the other bus – strangers – to share responses to the first act that they had each just experienced separately. These conversations with strangers (or new friends) were among the highlights of the production, as many audience members sought out their phone-chat partners once they reached common ground in Oregon City.

On the Table was a critical and popular success, drawing audiences that were culturally, geographically and generationally diverse. More than 900 people attended the 12 performances. The production received positive press coverage in local newspapers in both Molalla and Portland, including a feature article on the front page of The Oregonian.

The project also succeeded as an exercise in community engagement. “We knew with On the Table that we would be partnering with local businesses and organizations to integrate the arts in a new way,” the company wrote in its final report. “These partners would be the vital liaisons that will help us to establish credibility and engage deeply with community members ... However, we weren’t prepared for the extraordinary level of enthusiasm we met from our community partners, and the true ownership and deep involvement they developed with the Sojourn company and with the project.”
Snapshots

The Oregon Arts Commission awarded $110,000 through the Arts Build Communities grant program in 2010. Those funds supported 28 diverse projects, including the six showcased in this issue. The following pages feature capsule descriptions of the other 22 projects. Comments are taken from reports and materials submitted by the grantee organizations.

Art on Alberta/Art Hop

Portland

Art Hop has been a popular fixture in Northeast Portland’s Alberta neighborhood for a decade. Previous editions have drawn upwards of 20,000 people to a community celebration/street festival that connects artists, musicians, neighbors and business owners. In the past, the event had left behind no permanent contribution to the community. That changed in 2010, when the organizers commissioned four new public murals. Festival participants, youth groups, volunteers, community partners and artists collaborated to create, paint and install the works. In the process, the festival drew nearly 25,000 people, a noticeable increase from previous years.

“Hosting Art Hop challenges our members, animates and inspires artists, unifies the business community, provides outlets for community involvement and ongoing education, and builds Northeast Alberta Street’s reputation as an exciting place for art in the Portland metropolitan area. Our inclusion of performing and visual arts, as well as active engagement, enhanced the district’s overall purpose and participant involvement.”

The Arts Center / Celebration of Youth Arts

Corvallis

The month-long Celebration of Youth Arts produced annually by The Arts Center addresses the need to offer quality visual arts opportunities throughout the Corvallis school district, especially to grades K-8, where arts instruction has been entirely cut or greatly reduced. The project also offers opportunities to high school students. The 2010 event included two professionally hung student exhibits and receptions featuring four student performances at no cost to the public. The Arts Center collaborated with 15 school sites and 1 home school group for K-8 project participation (75 percent of these projects were integrated into core curriculum), and both Corvallis high schools.

Young women in the Oak Creek transition group (working toward their release) were invited to a 6-week evening clay class. Not one of them had ever been in an art gallery before the project. They came tentatively, yet completed the project with enthusiasm.

“The population served has an energized interest in arts integration as a result of the project…. Teachers enjoyed their projects and witnessed enthusiastic participation on the part of youth who are receiving so little art in the classroom today.”

Columbia Gorge Arts in Education / The Gorgeous Sounds

Hood River

The Gorgeous Sounds sought to enrich and expand the culture of classical music in the Columbia Gorge. Those goals were met in 2010 as the project introduced students and their parents to the richness of classical music and prompted discussions and interchanges about its power and value. Events centered around visits to the Gorge during the year by the Vinca Quartet, an internationally recognized string quartet based in Baltimore. Two of those visits included free community concerts, instrument petting zoos, master classes and school residencies. Eight hundred students attended in-school performances and other events; 1,000 community residents attended the quartet’s public concerts – nearly three times as many as expected. The quartet was applauded for its virtuosity, passion and expertise in teaching everywhere they went.

“Many students were inspired to take up playing stringed instruments, including an entire kindergarten class in a small, rural school. In addition, the project gave Columbia Gorge Arts in Education a deeper understanding of the strengths, challenges and needs of music education our communities.”
Community Center for the Performing Arts/WOW Hall / Youth Outreach Project  
Eugene

The Youth Outreach Project sought to engage at-risk youth with educational and leadership opportunities within the community arts organization itself. Participants received first-hand training in such skills as management, booking, promotion and production, and worked with staff throughout the organization. Through this experience, youth had exposure to a diverse array of performances and to multiple art forms and music genres that they may not have experienced otherwise. While many were drawn to the program because of their love for music, survey results demonstrated that participants were greatly impacted by their volunteer experience in other ways. One hundred percent of respondents felt support and guidance from their experience; 85 percent felt their experience was educational and provided job-related skills; 85 percent reported that they gained self-confidence from their experience.

www.wowhall.org

“One participant commented, ‘I feel like I’m doing some good here and at the moment it’s the only thing going on in life, so I want to help in whatever ways I can.’”

Cornucopia Arts Council / Art Camp  
Halfway

Art Camp is a summer program that offers classes in a variety of artistic disciplines for both children and adults. In the process, it offers employment opportunities for artists and creates an environment for multi-generational interaction. The program serves rural communities that lie over 40 miles from the nearest urban area where art instruction is offered. In 2010, Art Camp exceeded its goals by providing 157 hours of instruction in 15 different classes taught by 10 instructors and two student assistants. 55 students from 35 families took classes – 10 more students and six more families than last year. Scholarships totaling $275 for 24 class enrollments were awarded, representing more than a 200 percent increase over last year. Class offerings expanded to include five new courses for younger children and two for teens and adults.

“At the core of Art Camp is the belief that artistic experiences are a fundamental part of on-going education that should be available to all citizens. The grant funds received not only made it possible for us to offer a wide variety of art classes, but to offer scholarships where needed, truly making them available to everyone in our communities.”

Crow’s Shadow Institute of the Arts / Traditional Arts Program  
Pendleton

Traditional arts programs serve an important role by enabling the community and artists to learn about the material culture of their ancestors and to enter into a healthy and meaningful relationship with the culture and history of the tribes. “Reviving the material culture of the horse” featured a series of workshops to give tribal community members the knowledge and skills to create three traditional Native American horse regalia items. By the beginning of the project, 32 participants had signed up. Another 30 sat in on certain workshops to augment their skills. The total was significantly greater than the 40 participants projected.

“The need for this project is clear, as each year, we are losing our collective knowledge of the traditional Native arts...primarily practiced by tribal elders who are often without an effective means to share their talents with the younger generations. These arts ... are of invaluable cultural significance, part of the very fabric that shaped the Native American identity and way of life for thousands of years.”
Dancing People Company / Call Back the Sun  
Ashland/Central Point

Ashland-based Dancing People Company believes that “dance is an accessible art form that illuminates the commonality of human experience; that dance is an important means of expressing our every day lives.” Every December, the company convenes a community of musicians, dancers, civic leaders and neighbors from all parts of the Rogue Valley to join in a winter solstice celebration. In 2010, Call Back the Sun involved two months of rehearsals followed by four performances over two days. The company facilitated connections between 55 participants; 730 people came from throughout the Rogue Valley to attend the event. With support from an Arts Build Communities grant, 100 free tickets were distributed to Rogue Valley Head Start programs, the Ashland Food Bank and the Human Development Dept. [www.dancingpeople.com](http://www.dancingpeople.com)

“One of the main outcomes of Call Back the Sun is the collaborative creation of dance and art, providing personal empowerment for community dancers as they learn to trust their bodies and express themselves through movement.”

Elders in Action / Grand Works Northwest Art Festival  
Portland

The Grand Works Northwest Art Festival was developed to help dispel negative myths about growing older in our culture and demonstrate the positive impact of remaining creative as we age. The festival centered on an exhibit at The Geezer Gallery, a project partner. Other activities included entertainment, workshops and interactive discussions on issues dealing with creativity and aging. Festival-goers learned that many artists had discovered their artistry late in life, such as Virginia Carson, who learned to paint at 97 and is now 102. “Life is an adventure and I like to learn something new all the time,” she said. “It keeps me looking forward to every day.”

“People from all around the Portland Metro area...saw something that they have never seen before. They saw 72 artists – all over age 60 – show and sell their incredible works of art. They also had the opportunity to participate in workshops or discussion group lead by people over 60, and experience wonderful entertainment with entertainers over age 60.”

Falls City Arts Council / Arts Trailer Project  
Falls City

Falls City is a community of about a thousand that sits astride the Little Luckiamute River west of Salem. In 2010, the town created an arts center as a response to the community’s desire for a place to socialize, create art and to share ideas and creativity. But a lack of art supplies and storage limited the projects the center could offer. The arts council applied for Arts Build Communities funding to acquire a storage trailer to organize art supplies for the local Friday Night Art Group. The project brought people together for a common goal and then became a catalyst to create more as more people began to volunteer and donate supplies. The trailer strengthened the community and the arts by bringing focus to council’s desire to create opportunities and to develop quality programs for all residents. [www.fallscityarts.com](http://www.fallscityarts.com)

“The final result of our project demonstrates we have gone above and beyond our own expectations and also demonstrates the willingness our community has to work together for the greater good. We continue to build on this energy.”

Fishtrap / The Big Read  
Wallowa County

The 2010 chapter of The Big Read featured the classic novel To Kill a Mockingbird. Fishtrap distributed books to adults, public schools, libraries, and reading groups throughout the area. Activities included lectures, panel discussions, a musical performance, guest lecturers in the schools, Monday movie nights, six performances of the stage version of To Kill a Mockingbird, and a community potluck finale. The audience reached 2300, far exceeding the anticipated goal of 1750. A highlight was the partnership between Fishtrap and the Peace and Justice Network, opening the door to an exploration of the theme of social justice that runs through the book. [www.fishtrap.org](http://www.fishtrap.org)

“The Big Read is, without question, the single most visible and influential program Fishtrap conducts for the local community. Each year we grow, learn, expand our literary knowledge, and make new friends in Wallowa County. What better way to involve young and old, red and blue, readers and reluctant ones than to come together around this great program? We believe the more diverse the activities, the more community investment and supportive participation we will receive.”
Gorge Artists / Open Studios Tour

On May 15 and 16, 2010, about 600 art visitors traveled up and down the Columbia River Gorge during the fourth annual Gorge Artists Open Studios Tour. Thirty-four artists were accepted into the tour, from communities throughout the Gorge, including Cascade Locks, Hood River, White Salmon, High Prairie, Mosier, The Dalles and Goldendale. The tour provided artists with the opportunity to sell their work directly to collectors and to help demystify the arts for the public. Two workshop/lunches and a range of volunteer activities helped artists meet and begin relationships, a crucial element in building community and evolving one’s work. Successful events included a presentation on developing arts marketing and sales skills. **www.gorgeartists.org**

“Although the number of visitors was lower this year, almost half of them were from outside the Gorge and they bought more work than in previous years... Many were spending the weekend, not just the day. Several restaurants also reported increased sales. Artists reported repeat visitors who looked last year, but bought this year. This means we are nearing our goal of building long-term relationships between artists and buyers.”

Heritage Theatre Company / Community Arts & Meals

Heritage Theatre Company created Community Arts & Meals to provide free education in visual and theatre arts at community sites to students, families, teens and others who are experiencing homelessness or other economic hardship. In 2010, the program offered 12 sessions of visual arts training and two 6-week acting workshops to a total of 87 at-risk, homeless and low-income participants ranging in age from 5 to 70. As part of a partnership with local social services agencies, the students then joined their families for after-class meals at Bend’s Family Kitchen. In addition to serving its students, the program helped raise awareness of the issue of homelessness and of the positive effects of arts education. **www.heritagetheatrecompany.net**

“People experiencing homelessness deserve opportunities to create, to socialize, to learn at their full level of potential and to explore experiences from which they can launch their dreams. Community arts programs can provide these opportunities while also supplementing the role of others in meeting basic material needs of homeless students.”

High Desert Museum / Art Through Ancestry School Program

The High Desert Museum partnered with The Museum at Warm Springs and Arts Central to design, produce and implement an arts learning class based on the High Desert Museum’s Art Through Ancestry exhibition. Students experienced contemporary Native American art pieces and traditional artifacts from the museum’s collection, using those experiences to create their own art pieces in a wide range of media. The project connected the artistic process and product, and explored themes of tradition, ancestry and art. It expanded the reach and life of a compelling exhibit to school-aged children with a hands-on arts learning program. **www.highdesertmuseum.org**

“Our region’s need for arts and culture resources in the field of education is immense. Bend-La Pine school district removed 48 teachers to relieve the budget and cope with the current economic downturn... Providing opportunities to view the Museum’s collection to learn about the artifacts and art at the Museum, and integrating arts education into the Museum’s program is a high priority for these interest groups.”
Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art / Information Panels  
Eugene

The Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art's Asian collection now contains more than 7,000 objects. Mexican photography and a growing Cuban art collection reflect a significant Latin American population. One of the museum's strategic goals is to build and sustain diversity among Latin American, Asian and Asian American constituents. In 2010, the museum undertook to provide improved multilingual access in four permanent collections galleries by the addition of flat screen panels. The panels accommodate a wide variety information, including multiple translations to better serve museum visitors. They also improve sustainability by reducing the need for printed materials. jsma.uoregon.edu

“Since its opening more than 75 years ago, the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art has been dedicated to the vision of its founder, Gertrude Bass Warner, to use art as a means of bridging diverse communities and building peace. Her original goal of linking the East ... with the West ... has blossomed to making the JSMA a welcome center for learning and enjoyment for an increasingly diverse population in Lane County.”

Liberty Restoration, Inc. / 5-Year Sustainability Plan  
Astoria

Prior to the renovation of the Liberty Theater, downtown Astoria was slowly losing its artistic and historic architectural edge. The theater helped spark revitalization. Since its opening in 1995, the community has experienced more and richer cultural experiences each year. Life most small performing arts theaters, the Liberty needs long term planning to face uncertain times. The five-year plan will address an integration of key sustainability issues: economic (leading to an affordable venue for artists), ecological (artist safety), and social (connections to local artists). The plan will provide information necessary for a more effective annual strategic plan update. www.liberty-theater.org

“Small nonprofit performing arts theaters ... especially if they reside in non-urban communities, often face difficulties in maintaining an annual budget that allows a wide variety of performing arts to the community at a reasonable cost. In searching for a solution to long-term planning the Liberty has found a sustainability model that will not only keep the doors open but enhance cultural opportunities for the community.”

Teatro Milagro / Journeys Anti-Bullying Program  
Portland / Redmond

Journeys, Teatro Milagro’s bilingual arts-education residency program, introduces an anti-bullying curriculum to schools and community groups. In the 2009-10 season, the company took the program to Redmond in Central Oregon. Obsidian Middle School was chosen due to its high ratio of Spanish speaking students who qualified for assistance. In a series of classroom workshops over three weeks, students created self-portraits, shared stories of their childhoods, and created individual and group choreography to reflect positive self-esteem. The themes were then molded into skits and songs, which the students performed for peers and families at an evening variety show. The evening culminated with performances of American Sueno, Teatro Milagro’s play addressing the cultural and social barriers faced by Latinos. www.milagro.org

“One anticipated outcome was that all of the students would participate in the final performance. At first they were all reluctant ... but then after three Fridays of arts-integrated activities, all of the students in the program came back ... and performed.”

Mittleman Jewish Community Center / Jewish Arts Month  
Portland

Stories can be told through spoken and written words, images and sound; they play a role in all cultures. Jews have successfully assimilated in America and because of that are losing touch with their traditions and values. Jewish Arts Month is a collaboration between Jewish and secular community organizations in the pursuit of dialogue and better understanding of Jewish art in American culture. Participants were treated to a wealth of contemporary music, writing, literature, film, visual arts and storytelling, as well as exhibits, workshops, discussions and other activities. A major goal was reaching the broader non-Jewish and the unaffiliated Jewish communities. Approximately 23 percent of survey card respondents identified as non-affiliated Jewish and 20 percent identified as non-Jewish. www.portlandjewishacademy.org/page.cfm?p=1187

“Jewish Arts Month seeks to bring Jewish stories to life ... to help the local Jewish community experience the rich artistic inheritance of its culture, creating pride and an understanding of the need to preserve a rich heritage in the face of assimilation.”
The Disability Pride Art and Culture Festival is an introduction to the power of disability art and culture, seeking to replace the traditional limiting views with those that look at disability within multiple contexts. The Disability Pride and Culture Project presented the 2010 festival on May 20–22 at Zoomtopia, a community space in Southeast Portland designed to be fully accessible, and at Portland State University. Special guest was Eli Clare, the noted writer and activist on disability issues. Events included a writing workshop, a disability culture lecture and an evening performance. Over the three-day festival, participants exchanged ideas, performed together, volunteered and/or joined in as audience members. The performance drew a standing room audience of 85, comprised of people who share the organization’s affirmative views and those who are hearing them for the first time.

“We believe this festival strengthened the arts and strengthened the community through the arts by creating and presenting artistic and cultural forms that are underrepresented in communities at large as well as in arts.”

Bread and Art is a summer program that takes art workshops into low-income housing complexes during July and August. The museum partners with Oregon Hunger Task Force, a project of the U.S. Department of Agriculture to supplement free summer lunches with arts programs. In 2010, the museum delivered a total of 20 programs at five program sites, reaching more than 150 children. Children discussed and created artworks based on such questions as: What do you see in your community? What would you like to see? What makes you special? What is important in a community? Participants were encouraged to work together and to discuss their artwork with the teaching artists and their peers. The workshops culminated in an art show at the museum, with all participating children and their families invited for a reception and viewing of the art they had made.

“Through the transformative powers of art, children participating in the program leave their differences at the door as they enter a world dictated only by the power of their imaginations, the breadth of their empathy, and the audacity of their creative minds.”

Powers Action Team / Art Along the River

Powers, at the isolated southern end of Coos County, offers limited opportunities for young people to experience art and arts education. Art Along the River enabled low-income youth and adults to work with professionals to learn art mediums and art as a business. In a series of practical workshops, artisans and students crafted 215 nature-and community-inspired mosaic stepping stones for the Powers Bicentennial Park and nearby community garden. In other activities: 15 students participated in a Rustic Furniture project, with three students contracted to work as paid apprentices for nearly 12 weeks; 17 students helped create the nature-inspired mural being painted on the public library; 41 students participants in a free day of arts education organized by 20 project planners. The artwork they created was exhibited at a community art event.

“Each partner plays a vital role in supporting the community process of this project by bringing residents and youth together, and by providing space, management and support for students to learn, and overcome regional, financial and demographic limitations.”
Rogue Valley Chorale Association / Spring Sing
Medford

Spring Sing featured two concerts performed for students in the Medford School District by the Rogue Valley Youth Choruses. The aim was to address funding cuts in school music programs and share the joy of singing. The many benefits of choral singing include increased self-confidence and self-discipline, better memory and greater academic success across the curriculum. Evidence shows that adults who sang in choruses as children are more inclined than non-singers to engage in civic life, philanthropy and volunteerism. The decrease in choral singing opportunities in schools is therefore a missed opportunity for improving student achievement and life success.

Spring Sing, a concert presented to children, by children, personalizes the experience and motivates students to seek out musical opportunities.

“Presenting choral singing as a musical outlet demonstrated to the students a way of sharing singing with others, especially since the concert was presented by children, for children. Many students expressed interest in joining Rogue Valley Youth Choruses, and several (students and parents) took the next step and requested specific audition information.”

Salem Art Association / Building Opportunities for Artists
Salem

The Salem Art Association’s Building Opportunities for Artists program strengthened the arts community by addressing the need for technical assistance, networking and convening opportunities for artists in Marion, Polk and Yamhill counties. The program provided 17 events and five exhibits, along with monthly artists gatherings, lectures and speakers and a new artist-in-residence program. The City of Salem benefited from the addition of a summer art venue, Project Space, which accommodated part of the Art Association’s lecture series and artists’ studios. Area university students gained skills and course credits through an intern program. The project also supported the Arts Association’s Artists Services Program, which served 3,685 participants, mounted seven exhibitions, exhibited 46 artists, published 15 writers and created 38 events.

“There were positive reports from the community that there were more opportunities to engage in discussion with artists and learn about processes... Artists have reported ... that this program has increased awareness of contemporary art. There have also been reports ... that Project Space was a valuable service in sharing contemporary art with the community.”

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. FY2012 applications must be submitted by October 3, 2011. The application process will be fully online for this round of funding.