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. FY2014 applications must be submitted by October 1, 2013. Applications are online.
Building Community

How do we come together as a community? How do communities use the arts as a powerful tool to solve common issues?

For the past 17 years, the Oregon Arts Commission has asked those questions and others through its Arts Build Communities program. And every year, arts organizations and community agencies offer new solutions, some building on existing partnerships and relationships, others forging new alliances with unexpected partners. In 2012, the Arts Commission, with funds from the National Endowment for the Arts, awarded $112,000 to 24 Arts Build Communities projects that directly benefited over 25,000 people across Oregon.

This year’s projects were notable for their creative use of the arts, but they had one thing in common. Each was a creative response to a particular need in its community. Many of the projects targeted area youth. And the communities that pooled their resources to use to the arts to tackle local issues were as varied as Oregon’s landscape: from Hood River and Odell to Central Oregon, from Wallowa County to Bonanza, from Southeast Portland to the Illinois Valley.

- In Hood River and Odell, students and teachers joined forces with area fruit growers and their migrant workers and families to document the dynamics of the fruit industry in the shadow of Mt. Hood.
- In the small towns of Philomath and Sweet Home, artists brought a fresh perspective to downtowns and created new work for display in empty storefronts in a partnership with local economic development leaders.
- In Central Oregon, when a coalition of environmental, arts and community groups came together to clean up Whychus Creek, Sisters Middle School students produced a conservation field guide.
- In adult care facilities in the Portland region, actors used comedy to transform day to day living for seniors with Alzheimer’s and dementia.

These projects succeeded because Oregonians in communities large and small gave generously of their time, energy, money and expertise. Over 870 artists and nearly 1,000 volunteers played important roles in planning and implementation. Arts Commission funds were matched by more than $311,000 in support from foundations, businesses, civic agencies and individuals. Local companies and individuals made in-kind contributions totaling another $146,000. Altogether, the projects reflected more than $570,000 in spending, much of it representing salaries paid to artists and others in the community, products and services purchased from local companies.

Making art helps us 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

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ON THE COVER

Dancers from the Kalabharathi School of Indian Dance perform Anandha Tandav – The Joyous Dance of Shiva and Shakthi during Ten Tiny Dances in Beaverton. The piece portrays the Indian god of dance, Shiva, together with his consort, Shakthi, and was choreographed specifically for Ten Tiny Dances’ 4 x 4 foot stage. Photo: Gordon Wilson.
Empty Storefronts Receive Contemporary Art Makeover

Art in Rural Storefronts of The Corvallis Arts Center

Vacant commercial spaces may be an eyesore to some, but they’re an artistic opportunity for The Arts Center in Corvallis’ Art in Rural Storefronts project. With an ABC grant and in partnership with local businesses, rural advocacy organizations, and local artist groups, Art in Rural Storefronts brought innovative, thought-provoking artwork to areas that don’t typically have access to contemporary, non-commercial art.

The Arts Center, dedicated to advancing the arts in Benton and Linn counties, consulted with Rural Development Initiatives (RDI) for advice on the cultural needs of rural communities in their service area. RDI’s input resulted in the selection of Sweet Home and Philomath to host the Art in Rural Storefronts project.

Sweet Home is a town of 9,000 located on U. S. Route 20 about 33 miles southeast of Corvallis. From 1940 to 1980, it flourished as a timber town and benefited from the construction of the Green Peter and Foster Dams. The town’s Oregon Jamboree, a country music festival held each summer, contributes seasonally to the local economy.

Philomath, a town of 4,500 located six miles west of Corvallis on U.S. Route 20 was named after Philomath College that was founded in 1867. Philomath’s economy rose with the timber industry and boasted 25 mills in operation as recently as 1980. Today, only one sawmill and one plywood mill remain in operation due to the steep decline in the timber industry.

Working with local partners that included the Sweet Home Economic Development Group, the Sweet Home Active Revitalization Effort, and the

Unseen Natives, a site specific installation by Gale Everett, was displayed in an empty storefront in Sweet Home as part “Art in Rural Storefronts.” The piece depicts the native 3-Spined Stickleback fish found in the Willamette Valley’s agricultural watercourses. Photo: Randall L. Milstein
Philomath Downtown Association, The Arts Center identified property owners willing to open their vacant storefronts for a set time. That was followed by a statewide call to artists for proposals. Those ideas were then juried by The Arts Center's director David Huff, curator Hester Coucke, and Andries Fourie, a sculptor and associate professor of art at Willamette University. They selected a finalist pool of 10 projects.

Then The Arts Center convened a panel of its own staff members, regional arts professionals, and representatives from each community to make the final selection of artists' projects. Each work would be visible 24 hours a day from the street. The Philomath panel chose Avantika Bawa of Portland to create one installation, and the Sweet Home panel chose Andrew Myers and Gale Everett, both from Albany, to create two separate installations.

Bawa transformed a former liquor store into “Cocktail #ff080” (#ff080 is the color code for magenta). Her work featured abstract color blocks in the interior, while the exterior of the building incorporated areas of brightly colored vinyl to punctuate its 1970s design.

“It was the most challenging of the three installations,” noted Huff. “Bawa gave a lecture about her work that was open to the public at the Benton County Historical Museum, which really helped the public understand it.”

Myers exhibited Origins of Sweet Home, a diorama of three large scale drawings that depicted a fantasy creation tale of antlered giants building the Sweet Home valley.

Everett constructed a three-dimensional piece, Unseen Natives, using paper, wire, clay and lights to produce a tribute to the native fish of the Willamette Valley.

“The original idea was to have one art installation,” said Sweet Home Economic Development Director Brian Hoffman, “but it was important to get a critical mass and show what the art can do for the streetscape.”

According to Huff, Art in Rural Storefronts successfully reached new audiences. Given the public nature of the work, the audience size is difficult to estimate. On average, though, the Philomath project was seen by users of 20,000 cars every day, and the Sweet Home projects were seen by users of 15,000 cars each day.

“One lady in Philomath liked Bawa's installation so much that she parked her car in the parking lot every lunch hour and had her lunch there,” remarked Coucke.

With the success of this year’s pilot project, The Arts Center and surrounding communities are planning for the growth of Art in Rural Storefronts next year. “We introduced art to people who might not consider themselves fans of non-commercial art,” said Huff. “This was our first project like this and it's something we hope to build on over the next few years. We are now getting ready for another round. We plan to do four more installations, and we've secured a $30,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts to do it.”

Project
Art in Rural Storefronts
Organization
The Arts Center, Corvallis
Principal Partners
Rural Development Initiatives, Sweet Home Economic Development Group and Sweet Home Active Revitalization Effort, Down Town Association of Philomath, Benton County Historical Museum
Why it worked
By transforming empty retail spaces into vibrant, unique sites to experience contemporary art, the project built community value and sparked conversations between the artists, residents and businesses that make up a downtown. Arts in Rural Storefronts strengthened arts participation by bringing new ideas to unexpected community spaces.
Nurturing a New Class of Botanical Artists

Students Use Art to Produce a Conservation Field Guide

Picture a group of school kids gathered along a streambed in the mountains of Central Oregon to draw plants in the field. That was the scene when students from Sisters Middle School took pencils and paper to Whychus Creek to illustrate hundreds of plants as part of the Whychus Creek Field Study Project. The unique interdisciplinary project blended visual art, botany, conservation, and an awareness of water issues to teach middle schoolers to be keen observers of the natural world. With guidance from Arts Central, a regional arts and culture council located in Bend, and the Upper Deschutes Watershed Council, these budding naturalists produced a 28-page field guide that’s proving to be a useful tool for community building and education.

Sisters, with a population of 2,000, is 20 miles west of Bend. Its unemployment rate still hovers over 11%, which reflects the economic struggles of Deschutes County where one out of every five residents relies on food stamps. At Sisters Middle School, the free and reduced lunch program serves a third of the students. The fifth and sixth grades don’t have an art teacher and don’t receive any regular arts instruction in the classroom.

As part of the Whychus Creek Field Study Project, funded with an Arts Builds Communities grant, Arts Central evaluated each student’s ability to draw and paint. It also provided three hours of observational drawing instruction to 90 middle school students. Approximately 40 of those students participated in the plant study group, where they received six more hours of drawing instruction in the field plus another three hours during the process of finishing their pieces for exhibition. Arts Central provided a teaching artist, Kyla Schoessler, who led the observational drawing lessons and oversaw the on-site documentation of the vegetation at Whychus Creek. The Upper Deschutes Watershed Council provided an on-site guide, and Sisters Middle School supplied life science teachers.

The participating students visited Whychus Creek, which runs through Sisters and becomes a tributary of the Deschutes River. A portion of the creek has been restored as a naturally flowing habitat for fish and wildlife. The kids were taught how to accurately portray the plants by using observational drawing skills. Students supported their drawings with additional notes, and as they drew, they depicted richer details about the plants’ leaf texture, stem coloration, and plant growth stages.

Arts Central photographed the students and their artwork in the classroom and in the field. In addition to the field guide, the project generated curriculum that will used as a template for future student projects involving community watersheds. The printed material is distributed as a free community resource to school teachers, administrators, city councils, and county commissioners.

“As a resident of Sisters,” added O’Hagan, “I’ve noticed that projects like this one have had a positive effect, because the kids no longer disrespect the creek by leaving trash there. It’s getting cleaner and cleaner.”

Arts Central coordinated two public art exhibitions and produced the text panels for each installation. Community partners included the Old Mill District and the Deschutes Public Library, both of which donated space for the art exhibit. The project
was presented to 150 students at “Students Speak: A Watershed Summit,” an annual event sponsored by the Upper Deschutes Watershed Council and Arts Central.

The Bend LaPine Educational Foundation has since asked the Upper Deschutes Watershed Council to lead a similar project for students in the Bend LaPine School District, creating a resource guide for the Deschutes River Watershed.

“It was a neat experience,” said one enthusiastic student, “going out in the wild to draw from real life, instead of from magazines, books and the Internet. To be a part of the field guide was also exciting, since my drawings would be published and used for future reference.”

“It was a neat experience, going out in the wild to draw from real life, instead of from magazines, books and the Internet. To be a part of the field guide was also exciting, since my drawings would be published and used for future reference.”

— student
Helping Seniors Make New Memories

Memory Care Patients Use Improvisational Theater as Therapy

“Laughter is the best medicine” is an adage that’s worked well for Curious Comedy Theater, a Portland-based arts organization that seeks to improve the lives of kids, adults, and the elderly through humor. With an Arts Build Communities grant, Curious Comedy Theater expanded its outreach to seniors who suffer from Alzheimer’s and memory loss. The program, the New Memories Project, used improvisational games to bring demonstrable improvements in cognitive function and mood of the residents at the Marquis Companies’ assisted living facility in Oregon City.

Nationwide, over 5.4 million Americans suffer from Alzheimer’s. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Alzheimer’s is the sixth leading cause of death and the only one that is not preventable. Despite the rapid growth of the elderly population, seniors in memory care are often neglected and voiceless. Life in an assisted living facility can be difficult, lonely, and depressing, leaving residents sad, agitated, and irritable. Even well-meaning caregivers and family often cause patients frustration by asking them to recall a past that they cannot access. The patients live in a constant state of “trying to remember.” Yet, on a hopeful note, recent studies have shown that arts education for seniors can be effective in increasing memory, cognitive abilities, and problem solving.

The Alzheimer’s Association provided Curious Comedy’s teaching artists an overview of the realities of Alzheimer’s disease and dementia. Then, grant funds enabled Curious Comedy Theater to use its expertise in improvisational theater to develop a program for Marquis Companies assisted living residents.

The teaching artists led 45-minute workshops each week at the Marquis facility in Oregon City. The program included a four-week pilot plus two workshop series over an eight-week period. Curious Comedy artists engaged memory-care residents to live in the moment and playfully respond to what was immediately around them rather than dwell on what they couldn’t recall from the past.

Through improvisational play, the residents began to share positive moments with their families and facility staff, and that, in turn, improved morale, and relieved frustration and loneliness.

Marquis Company’s caregivers and staff were also involved in the workshops. Before and after each workshop, they gave feedback related to each patient’s mood and needs.

After the workshops were underway, the programs director, artistic director, and teaching artists met weekly with staff from the Marquis facility and Alzheimer’s Association to discuss the workshops and patient outcomes. They evaluated each patient’s reaction to each activity. The evaluation form helped to track the progress of the workshop in a timely manner and to update and improve the curriculum and inform the teaching artists as needed.

The patients noticeably improved in cognition, recollection of games, and overall mood. Some residents began to recognize the teaching artists and started to remember the core values of each game. This was extremely surprising not only to the teaching artists but also to the staff and caregivers at the living facility.

New Memories also gave the staff at the Oregon City Marquis facility games and activities to help create positive interactions with their patients. The activities director at the facility reported that New Memories has “increased the staff’s understanding of resident capabilities, and gives the staff more positive and fun ways to interact with the residents.”

Vince, an elderly resident who was very hard of hearing, showed a lot of enthusiasm for New Memories. He showed so much improvement that during the final weeks of the program, he tried to teach the directions of the games and activities to other patients and was constantly offering assistance to other participants in the activity circle.

New Memories teaching artists built rapport with Alzheimer’s and dementia patients by greeting them personally at the start of each workshop.

Project
New Memories
Organization
Curious Comedy Theater
Principal Partners
Alzheimer’s Association, Vital Life Foundation, the Marquis Companies, professional caregivers, Seniors living in the Oregon City Marquis facility
Why it worked
Organizers used carefully planned improvisational theater activity delivered by professional actors in a care facility with supportive medical and administrative staff. The Alzheimer’s Association also prepared and trained teaching artists/actors prior to the program on what to expect while working with patients with Alzheimer’s disease and dementia.
Curious Comedy artists helped memory-care residents live in the moment through theater and playfully respond to what was immediately around them rather than dwell on what they couldn’t recall from the past.

Participants played a variety of cognitively challenging games such as “Hesitation,” a story activity where participants fill in the blank to complete sentences based on an improvised storyline.

Vince, a Marquis care facility resident, participated in Making Memories by playing his favorite improv game, “Sound and Motion!”
Students Bring Fishermen’s Stories to the Stage

The Pacific Dory Fleet Project of Linfield College

Fishing along the Oregon Coast in a small, flat-bottomed dory is a tradition that goes back at least 100 years in Pacific City, home to a fleet that’s one of the last of its kind in the world. There are now only a handful of men and women who still use dories for commercial fishing. Their stories and culture would probably go unheard and unknown were it not for Linfield College staff and students, who created a multimedia play to convey the essence of the lives and livelihood of the fishermen.

Pacific City, a town of 1,000 located 24 miles south of Tillamook at Cape Kiwanda, doesn’t have a bay. Fishers there use dories, launched directly into the ocean surf with paddles. Once a dory has pulled away from the shoreline, its motor is lowered in the water, and the hunt for fish is underway.

“Being a dory fisherman is no easy task,” said Jackson Miller, a professor at Linfield College. “They’ve all had experiences where they felt fearful for their lives. Almost everyone has a story about a big storm or mechanical problems or even encountering a shark.”

Miller and Chris Forrer, a theater major at Linfield, co-authored “Kickin’ Sand and Tellin’ Lies,” a play based on oral histories told by members of the Pacific City dory fleet. Over a period of two years, Linfield students and staff interviewed 80 dory
fishers, aged 9 to 91. In the process, they archived 15,000 photos, 150 hours of audio and video, and more than 1,500 artifacts.

“We had so much great material from all of the interviews,” said Forrer. “This is an intriguing piece of Oregon culture. Thirty or forty years ago, Pacific City was one of the top fishing ports on the West Coast.”

The late 1970s and early 80s were boom times for dory fisherman. Trailers were lined up two or three deep on the beach and fishermen could make $1,000 a day. But overfishing and competition from deep-sea fisheries contributed to a severe decline in the commercial fleet. Knowing that the people who worked the fleet were vanishing, the Pacific City Art Association suggested the oral history project to Linfield College in McMinnville.

Contacted through the Pacific City Dorymen’s Association (PCDA), the dorymen and women were eager to tell their stories. According to Professor Brenda DeVore Marshall, “Our storytellers invited us into their kitchens, living rooms, yards, boat barns, and yes, even their dories.”

“We got a great sense of the community, speaking patterns, jargon, boat terms, and how people communicate with each other,” added Forrer.

“Kickin’ Sand and Tellin’ Lies,” funded in part with an Arts Build Communities grant, follows a young fisherman as he learns respect for the ocean, the dory fleet, and fellow anglers. Set in Pacific City, the play opens with the annual Blessing of the Fleet celebration that kicks off the fishing season, and references local landmarks, such as Haystack Rock. Environmental regulations, fishery management practices, gender issues, and tensions between loggers and fishermen, also figure into the play, which had a run of seven performances at Linfield (three of which were sold out) and one standing-room-only performance in Pacific City. The Art Association, which assisted with food, lodging, and publicity in Pacific City, noted that this was the first experience for some audience members with live theater.

Paul Hanneman, co-chair of the Dorymen’s Association, remarked, “It is important to talk about our history. It has taken a great burden off us to know we have a play and a digital archive that is going to be preserved well into the future and after we’re gone.”

“Our students have come to understand the importance of storytelling in handing down traditions,” said Professor Marshall. “We all became a part of Pacific City.”
Students at Mid Valley Elementary School in Odell began by recording the thoughts and experiences of migrant laborers who work the orchards that are the heart and soul of the Hood River Valley. That was the first step in *Harvesting Our Stories*, a project which followed the path of fruit from the orchard to the boxes in which they are placed for shipment across the nation. Involving second through fifth grade students, the project connected them with many aspects of the fruit industry, and ultimately inspired them to create a large mural that’s become the centerpiece of the school.

Odell is a small, unincorporated town eight miles south of Hood River. There are no local art classes, theaters, or museums. Access to arts and cultural events is limited, because public transportation is not available.

Mid Valley Elementary School has served the Odell area for 70 years. Nearly 95% of its 520 students are from families that came from Mexico. At least 70% of the student population is considered English Language Learners (ELL). Over 82% of the students qualify for the free and reduced lunch program. Nearly 100 students qualify...
as migrant, which means that they miss between two and 12 weeks of school each year, moving as their families seek seasonal farm work.

“Most of the Mid Valley kids live around the orchards here, and a lot of their parents work in agriculture,” said Kim Yasui, the After School Program Site coordinator. “We wanted the kids to see different parts of the fruit industry. So they visited packing houses, a couple of places where gift baskets are made, and cold storage units.”

The Hood River County School District supported the project with staffing, facilities, and basic supplies. The Migrant Summer School provided high school volunteers. The Hood River County Commission on Children and Families added financial support, oversight, and evaluation.

The project incorporated 45 after-school and four evening activities, with migrant laborers working side by side with orchard owners to help the students. Over 640 different students, families, and community members participated in at least one of the community art activities.

Hood River artist and teacher Peggy Dills Kelter taught the students a paper cutting technique called papel picado, which has roots in Mexican folk art. Guided by Kelter, the students created images that reflected the stories they had compiled about varied aspects of the fruit industry.

“After making paper cutouts from a picture that they drew, the frames of each cutout were laid out and taken to a local fabrication business,” explained Yasui, “which re-imaged the artwork on steel, and then used a laser to cut through it. Now we have a beautiful mural that hangs in the school cafeteria and is seen by many people, because the school doubles as Odell’s community center.”

Pre- and post-surveys given to the students revealed an increase in knowledge of the fruit industry. The surveys also indicated that the project helped to generate interest in local activities. Evaluation of the four evening activities was very positive with an average score of 4.3 on a 1–5 scale.

“Everything went far better than we had expected,” remarked Yasui. “For example, the fabrication fellow let the children watch him as he worked, and they were fascinated. Some of them began to think that they might do this kind of work when they grow up rather than work in an orchard.”

The project expanded the kids’ horizons, and got some of them to think about their future.

“Working in the orchard is hard work,” said one of the students. That’s why it’s important to go to school and get an education.”

“My parents have worked in the orchard. They pick the fruit from the tree like cherries, apples, pears, blueberries. Also they have worked in the packing house sorting and packing fruit. Working in the orchard is hard work. That’s why it’s important to go to school and get an education.”

PHILLY, STUDENT

Students surveyed community members to gather information on the region’s fruit growing industry during Harvesting Our Stories and to evaluate the overall project. Photo by Kim Yasui

Students produced papel picados or paper cut-outs during the Migrant Summer School portion of the project. Those images, depicting fruit, local landmarks and other messages were then assembled to produce a mural depicting the Odell fruit industry. Photo by Kim Yasui

Project
Harvesting Our Stories
Organization
Mid Valley Elementary School
Principal Partners
Hood River County School District, Migrant Summer School, Hood River County Commission on Children and Families, Duckwall Pooley Growers-Local packing house, Webster Orchards/Fruit Heritage Museum, Michoacan Restaurant
Why it worked
Arts activities helped members of a diverse community focus on their mutually-shared knowledge of the fruit industry. Migrant laborers and their families worked side-by-side with orchard owners to create works of art that shared personal experiences and highlighted the many experiences of life working in the orchards. The project fostered mutual respect and recognized the contributions of everyone in the local food economy. It brought about an exchange of ideas and beliefs between groups separated by income, language and culture.
Slamboo Brings Poetry to Middle Schools

One of the most fun and creative ways for young students to express their literary talents is through Slamboo, an innovative program that brings Slam Poetry into schools. Through Slamboo, kids are encouraged to create and recite their poems in a positive environment, collaborating with students from other communities on their writing and performances.

Directed by the Oregon Writing Project, Slamboo in 2012 engaged students from four middle schools: St. Helens, Five Oaks, da Vinci, and Lane. The populations reflect a wide range of communities with diverse cultures, races, languages, ethnicities, countries of origin, socioeconomic classes, political leanings, and religious beliefs.

St. Helens is thirty miles northwest of Portland in Columbia County. Once dominated by families that worked in the forest products sector, its school population is now less than 10% Latino with few African-American and Asian-American students. Only 14% of the town’s adult population graduated from college.

Five Oaks, a large, suburban middle school in Beaverton, is home to 1,100 students representing a diverse economic, ethnic, and social range. About 70% of the kids receive free or reduced lunches and 60% identify as part of an ethnic minority. Over 50 languages are spoken by the students’ families.

Da Vinci is an arts magnet school in Northeast Portland. Students must apply to enroll at the school, noted in the Portland area for its innovative integration of the arts throughout its curriculum.

Lane serves Southeast Portland’s Brentwood-Darlington neighborhood. It boasts 450 students whose families emigrated from countries as varied as Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Mexico, Guatemala, Ukraine, Russia, China, Nepal, Thailand,
Sudan, the Philippines, El Salvador, Somalia, and Ethiopia. About 84.7% of the students receive free and reduced lunches.

With an Arts Build Communities grant, the Oregon Writing Project sent writing coaches to each school to guide students participating in the Slamboo program. Using four high school slam poets as mentors, students were coached on both poetry and performance. In addition, actor Bobby Bremea, artistic director of BaseRoots Theatre, gave a special workshop at each school on how to improve participants’ delivery through acting techniques.

One of Slamboo’s main goals is to foster a sense of pride and self-esteem, increasing each student’s capacity to write, perform, and collaborate.

“I think that no matter who was up on stage, or in our small groups, we all recognized that no matter what race we are or how we were raised or treated, we all deserved to be heard,” noted a student.

“Slamboo not only gave the opportunity for self-expression, but an opportunity to gain self-confidence,” commented another.

Over 56% of the students surveyed felt that Slamboo did “extremely well” in providing an opportunity for self-expression. Also, 60.6% indicated that Slamboo did “extremely well” in increasing their self-esteem as poets and/or performers.

Slamboo has a secondary goal to expand each student’s sense of community. Participants from each school had the opportunity to visit and host the other school to share poetry and a common meal. Almost three-quarters of the students felt the collaboration with students from different communities went “extremely well.” About 61% said that Slamboo did “extremely well” to help young people build relationships across perceived boundaries of geography, race, and class.

“We created amazing friendships that we never would have had without Slamboo,” commented one student.

“I felt we did not find each other to be strangers, but we found one another as people we can actually communicate with,” added another student.

For three schools – Five Oaks, Lane, and St. Helens, Slamboo provided the kids with their only extra-curricular artistic opportunity that year.

Overall, 60.9% of the students responded that Slamboo was one of the best extracurricular activities, and 40.1% said that they would do it again.

“I loved the Slamboo,” stated a student. “Slamboo gave me a place where I belonged.”

Project
Slamboo
Organization
Oregon Writing Project
Principal Partners
Five Oaks Middle School, Lane Middle School, St. Helens Middle School, daVinci Middle School
Why it worked
Slamboo used its participants’ love of Slam poetry to build bridges between youth from four rural, urban and suburban Oregon middle schools. The students performed original artistic works and had the opportunity to build friendships based upon cooperation, trust, understanding and a shared affinity for the power of words.

“Slam became a vibrant, thriving program that started a buzz in each school with participants gaining prestige amongst their peers, teachers, administrators and staff members. … Slam became a reason for many participants to show up to school. One student who moved 30 miles away continued to enroll in his home school, riding a bus an hour each way to and from school in order to participate in Slam.”

CHARLES SANDERSON, LANGUAGE ARTS TEACHER, ST. HELENS MIDDLE SCHOOL
Snapshots

The Oregon Arts Commission awarded $112,000 in Arts Build Communities grants in 2012. Those funds supported 24 diverse projects, including the six showcased in this report. The following pages feature capsule descriptions of the other 18 projects. Comments are taken from reports and materials submitted by the grantee organizations.

Arts Action Alliance Foundation of Clackamas County/Youth Art for Change  
Oregon City

The Arts Action Alliance of Clackamas County used the power of live theater to reach out to youth offenders in the Clackamas County Juvenile Justice system. Working with a $4,500 ABC grant, the County Juvenile Department’s Community Connections Program, the North Clackamas School District and two actors, Youth Art for Change brought theatre workshops to 15 incarcerated youths to increase participant’s confidence, self-esteem and self-awareness through theater and stagecraft practice. Counselors participating in the program introduced the young offenders to the positive benefits of creative expression to help reduce their sense of vulnerability. The activities connected “safe risks” experienced in the theatre workshops to the real-life problems encountered by the kids – and offered new options for a positive resolution. The participants also worked with peer student interns who offered positive role models and relationships for the youth offenders. The program included a post-performance “talk-back” for a 78 member audience and the youth. These program’s lessons reinforced that each participant offered something of value to his or her community. (www.clackamasartsalliance.org)

“We underestimated the highly positive impact created as a result of engaging 5 high school drama student interns with the remanded youth in the program. The peer relationships that developed between interns and youth produced a surprisingly high level of interpersonal accountability and commitment to positive change for the youth.” – Cheryl Snow, Arts Action Alliance

Beaverton Arts Commission/Ten Tiny Dances  
Beaverton

A $6,300 ABC grant supported the 4th annual presentation of Ten Tiny Dances in Beaverton. The Beaverton Arts Commission partnered with the Mayor’s office, City Library, a Diversity Task Force, Beaverton’s Farmer’s Market and local ethnic organizations to broaden the program’s reach into Beaverton’s diverse performer population. The free performances featured both contemporary dance and traditional choreography ranging from belly dance, to ancient Nepalese dance, to four styles of Native American dance. The 2012 event attracted an audience of 1,700, its largest and most diverse to date. Audience surveys indicated that the performances were of “the highest quality level.” Ten Tiny Dances provided increased visibility of Beaverton’s public art program and provided an innovative way of animating the public spaces around the public library and the farmer’s market. Beaverton Mayor Denny Doyle observed, “Ten
Tiny Dances is an integral part of our summer event season. The beautiful performances celebrate the community's diversity, while bringing art into the city's public spaces. (www.beavertonarts.org)

“I was pleased to see multi-generational immigrant families enjoying the performances and traveling from one stage to another. This is an audience that we hope to serve and are often difficult to reach.” – Valerie Otani, Beaverton Public Art Consultant

Bonanza Community Association/Artist Residencies

The Bonanza Community Association brought three artists for residencies at Bonanza Elementary School, where students have been without arts programs for ten years. In one, Gary Thibedou brought 50 violins to the school where he taught students to fiddle and then perform on stage after just two hours of instruction, entertaining 650 residents over two days. Another, led by painter and muralist David Kinker of Bend, involved activities in which 170 students contributed drawings and then painted a mural, learning the importance of revision as a critical skill in art and in life. At the same time, Kinker created a permanent mural for the school’s lobby, depicting local landmarks, historic buildings and a portrait of the school. This project resulted from a partnership between the Bonanza Community Association, Bonanza governmental agencies, the school district, local parks and community volunteers. The $5,700 ABC grant supported artist’s fees and materials. As a result of the overall work, the Bonanza Community Association developed plans and strategies to continue art activities at Bonanza Elementary in the ongoing absence of formal art programs. Planning is underway for a summer arts festival in 2013 and a visit by the Missoula Children’s Theatre in 2013.

“(The project) was hugely successful and well received by students and staff. It was a foreteller of how hungry for art the children are. It was a wonderful example of community and school coming together in community to fill the need for art in the schools.” – Sherry Hartley, Bonanza Community Association
Fishtrap/The Big Read

Each year, Fishtrap cultivates a love of reading and an appreciation for a major work of literature through a month-long celebration, *The Big Read*. 2012’s celebration centered on Amy Tan’s *The Joy Luck Club*. A month of programming, undertaken with 60 volunteers, served over 2,200 Wallowa County residents. Nearly half of them were young people, 875 of were high school age or younger. The programs included: six evening lectures; four movie nights in Joseph, Enterprise and Wallowa; a screening of the movie, *The Joy Luck Club*; three chess and mah jong game nights; a weekly “Radio Storytime;” and over eight different book discussion groups. Several local schools spent class time studying Chinese culture. First graders at Joseph Elementary learned to write their names in Chinese characters. Over 200 adults and children attended a performance by the Dragon Arts Studio Chinese puppet theater. Three Wallowa County schools brought 400 elementary students to a performance the next day. The puppet show inspired teachers and students alike, and classes spent time on art projects, including drawing dragons, making lanterns, and building puppets. (www.fishtrap.org)

“I can tell you that getting involved with the Big Read at the elementary levels allows children to see the bigger world of literature. It engages them with the community at large and it made them excited to hear and see things in town connected with what they themselves were learning ... I’ve thoroughly enjoyed working with the Big Read as it simultaneously awakens children to their community of readers and the world beyond.” – Melisa Bush, Enterprise Elementary School

Zhengli Xu of Portland’s Dragon Arts Studio reaches out to students with rod puppets during Fishtrap’s celebration of The Big Read in 2012. Dragon Arts Studio is the only professional Chinese puppet theatre in the United States. Photo: Janis Carpe
Gorge Grown Food Network/Exploring Sustainable Farming through Art

Forty-eight Hood River Middle School students were enmeshed in hands-on learning about sustainable, local farming practices when they worked after school with area artists to create permanent artworks for the garden at their school. The students designed and fabricated a whimsical but functional garden sprinkler while working with metal sculptor McRae Wylde, learning about recycling and welding in addition to sculpture. They learned the history of papel picado (paper cutting) from visual artist Shelley Toon Hight, then created prayer flags for the garden. Their designs were duplicated as vinyl cut-outs that will adorn the Gorge Grown Food Network truck as it makes its delivery rounds with local produce throughout the Gorge. Throughout the project, students learned basic design principles, paper cutting techniques and gained machine sewing experience. The $3,000 grant paid for artist-teacher fees and art material costs. Said one of the student participants, “It was really rewarding to walk through the garden, after we finished, knowing that I created the art that will be there for a really long time.” (www.gorgegrown.com)

“… the students felt the art-integrated aspect of the project made it much more interesting than a typical garden project and that they had a better understanding of how sustainable farming is very good for the local economy, community farmers and those who buy and consume the food. Many students stated that the garden inspired them while they were creating their art pieces.” – Todd Dierker, Gorge Grown Food Network

Literary Arts/Oregon Book Award Authors Tour

The Oregon Book Awards, a project of Literary Arts, publicly recognizes and celebrates the state’s most accomplished writers through a prestigious judged competition and ceremony. The Book Award Authors Tour, supported by a $6,000 ABC grant, brought 13 finalists and winners to rural and underserved communities throughout Oregon. Those writers conducted readings, book signings, discussions, writing workshops and book group and school visits in La Grande, Baker City, Astoria, Manzanita, Salem, Klamath Falls, Ponderosa, Chiloquin, North Bend, and Millicoma. By connecting authors and readers statewide around literature, the tour keeps Oregon’s literary traditions alive and relevant and provides free access to accomplished writers in small communities. (www.literary-arts.org)

“One of the 8th graders said the last time she saw an author at school was when she was in 3rd grade. She was accurate … With our low socio-economic population, many of our students are not able to travel to Eugene or Portland to see authors …” – Laurie Nordahl, librarian at North Bend Middle School

Miracle Theater Group/ Theatre and Arts Residency

Teatro Milagro, the touring arm of Miracle Theater Group, brought bilingual arts workshops and residencies to Corvallis High School and Oregon State University and a public performance to the Majestic Theatre in downtown Corvallis. A partnership involving Corvallis High School, Oregon State University, the Community Alliance for Diversity, Majestic Theater and Rainbow Health Resources wanted to create a community-based Latino arts experience with a focus on anti-bullying that would also build alliances between cultural organizations and institutions. Working to reach students who might feel left out due to language or cultural barriers, Miracle Theater’s UNIDAD curriculum used bi-racial/bilingual literacy workshops to foster open dialogue, build community awareness and ultimately build a new generation of involved leaders. Teatro Milagro worked with Corvallis High School to plan and implement an
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intensive arts experience for both Spanish and ELL classes. 370 high school students participated in workshops; 30% recorded improvement in knowledge of social issues like bullying for minority students. (www.milagro.org)

“I learned that while you don’t have to be perfect, being you is all that matters. Thanks for giving us the opportunity to do this workshop while you were in town. I plan to use these lessons while going further in life.” – A participant comment from the written program evaluation.

My Story/Exquisite Kids – Family Portrait Day

My Story's Family Portrait Day, brought hands-on photography experiences to Somali and Slavic youth living in the Lincoln Woods Apartments in outer-Southeast Portland. Following an eight-session photography workshop, 20 kids hosted “We are Portland,” a community portrait shoot, where young photographers took formal portraits of their families, friends and neighbors. Then the young people took a series of field trips to expose them to photography opportunities in the broader Portland community. They had an afternoon of nature photography at Oaks Bottom Wildlife Refuge on the Willamette River, three trips to the Newspace Center for Photography to develop and print photos and visited Do Jump Theater for a performance of “Seeds of Hope.” The project ended with a retrospective exhibit at Lincoln Woods showcasing work produced over five years, including the portraits from the “We are Portland” shoot. Then, the featured families received free prints from the young photographers. The $4,000 ABC grant was used to pay for materials, photo printing and processing, transportation, and staff. (www.mystoryworkshops.org)

“The Family Portrait Day broke down barriers between Somali and Slavic families as they gathered in the courtyard waiting to pose for our youth photographers. The beauty of the portraits fostered community pride as residents gathered at the photography retrospective to see the portraits on display” – Alexander Ney, My Story

Oregon Cultural Access/5th Annual Disability Pride Art and Culture Festival

Oregon Cultural Access presented the 5th Annual Disability Pride Art and Culture Festival in April, 2012, using venues that included Zoomtopia, Project Grow and Lynch View Elementary School’s SUN Community School. The overall festival focused on the power of art to cultivate social change, featuring artists whose work educates and empowers people to recognize and act on issues that affect lives and communities. A $4,000 ABC grant underwrote the involvement of Antoine Hunter, a deaf/hard of hearing choreographer and dancer who is the Artistic Director of

My Story's Family Portrait Day gave photography experience to youth in southeast Portland. Twenty young photographers at Lincoln Woods hosted “We are Portland,” a community portrait shoot, where they took formal portraits of their families, friends and neighbors.
the Urban Jazz Dance Company. Hunter conducted a multi-day dance workshop, then choreographed a piece for two evening performances and another by DACP’s youth company. The festival engaged and empowered disability-art and traditional art enthusiasts and their families, friends, disability service providers and social activists who appreciate even more the ways disability art and culture expand and enhance the intersection of art and community. *(www.oregonculturalaccess.org)*

“Disability art and culture represent important new work, creating spaces that have not previously existed. We are learning as we go, grappling with the complexities of including and embracing all of us. We need and appreciate the time and support to allow our movement to grow.” – Kathy Coleman, Oregon Cultural Access

Portland Taiko/People of the Drum

Portland Taiko partnered with Portland Parks and Recreation and other cultural groups to present *People of the Drum*, interactive arts experiences at Director Park, Mt. Scott Park, the Community Center and the Charles Jordan Community Center. A multicultural collaboration involving the Obo Addy Legacy Project (Ghanaian), Medicine Bear (Native American), Mexica Tiahui (Aztec), and Portland Taiko (Japanese), the works presented celebrated the universal voice of the drum. Animated by the knowledge that drums beat throughout the history and traditions of many cultures, the performances brought the community together to join with and celebrate that rhythm. The four groups shared their individual traditions and songs, then came together as a single ensemble for an extraordinary finale with the audience joining in, dancing to the music. The free public performances were enjoyed by over 1,800 people during summer and fall 2012. “The whole city was shaking because hundreds of drums played together!” commented one young audience member. The $6,300 ABC grant paid for project management, coordination, marketing and artists fees. *(portlandtaiko.dreamhosters.com)*

“The last performance at Charles Jordan Community Center became a very special presentation for the audience and all of us, performers. Obo Addy, our beloved leader of the Obo Addy Legacy Project, passed away just before this performance. Each group performed a traditional piece that honors the dead. The People of the Drum will be remembered for his last public performance. All of us feel very lucky to have spent this time with him.” – Robin Mullins, Portland Taiko
Peter Britt Gardens Music and Arts Festival Association/Jazz Appreciation Month  
Medford

Students in the Illinois Valley in Southern Oregon celebrated Jazz Appreciation Month in April 2012 with jazz saxophonist Hayes Greenfield, thanks to outreach by the Britt Festival. Greenfield’s week-long musical exploration included in-school residencies at Evergreen Elementary, Lorna Byrne Middle, and Illinois Valley High School in Cave Junction plus a free public performance with back-up musicians from the neighboring town of Selma. Greenfield’s signature program, Jazz-a-Ma-Tazz, got kids moving, singing, and playing music - experiencing how fun improvising can be. Hayes made connections between physical activity and visual art forms to enhance the students’ learning: students hula-hooped to demonstrate tempo in music, and explored their own creativity, responding to abstract paintings by artist Jackson Pollock. In addition to his work with students, Hayes held a special workshop for teachers and for the Illinois River Valley Arts Council’s teaching artists who learned how to incorporate jazz improvisation and basic music into their daily curriculum. A $4,500 ABC grant paid artist fees and transportation. (www.brittfest.org)

“We were surprised by the teachers' eagerness to learn about arts integration. We expected hesitation from non-arts teachers using the arts and there was some, but we did not expect such a high level of interest in mastering the skills taught.” – Mark Knippel, Peter Britt Festival

Riverbend Live!  
Winston

The Winston Area Community Partnership, Winston-Dillard School District and ADAPT (Alcohol, Drug Abuse, Prevention & Treatment) collaborated to sponsor Riverbend Live!, a six-week drama camp for children ages 7-17. The program taught not only multiple aspects of theater production and performance but the life skills of cooperation, responsibility, teamwork, and discipline in a drug-free environment. The Winston-Dillard area of Douglas County has traditionally been timber-dependent, with a school population of just 1,500. It is an area with historically high unemployment, low household income and high drug use. “A large number of our students are raised in single family homes or by their grandparents. Approximately 70% qualify for free or reduced meals. Our drama camp provides a safe, drug-free, nurturing setting supervised by caring adults,” said board member Muriel Nichols. The program is free to all students who want to participate. The $4,000 ABC grant supported artistic director fees, lighting and sound, stage rental, other equipment and food served to the student actors during rehearsals and on the night of performances.

“Our community is considerably enhanced as our youth participate in the performing arts while maintaining a healthy, drug-free lifestyle. They and their families learned the value of artistic expression and appreciation as opposed to spending time in front of a television or computer screen.” – Muriel Nichols

Rogue Valley Chorale/Spring Sing  
Medford

Over 2,300 students, teachers and parents from 13 area schools attended the Rogue Valley Chorale’s youth choir concerts, Spring Sing. The two concerts performed in Medford schools were developed to share the joy of singing with students – and to also expose them to choral works performed by their peers. In Southern Oregon, where many schools have eliminated most or all of their music programs, the project helped prevent further erosion of remain-
ing chorale programs through advocacy and increased student and parental awareness of what options remain for singing outside of school. The project was part of the Chorale’s larger initiative to rebuild choral arts programs for elementary students in the Medford Schools and to connect youth with other singing opportunities in the broader community. For some, the response was immediate: 22 children who attended the concerts signed up to audition for the Chorale’s Youth Choruses following the concerts. The Boys and Girls Club and Sonto Community Center in Medford expressed interest in creating new outlets for children to sing. The $3,000 ABC grant was used for busses to bring students to the concerts at South Medford High School, print publicity flyers, purchase music and pay conductors and an accompanist. (www.roguevalleychorale.org)

“When written teacher evaluations spoke to the enthusiasm of the children, and especially their continuation of singing the songs they learned. They said the program was age appropriate, communications were clear, the program motivated students to seek out singing opportunities” – Laura Rich, Rogue Valley Chorale

Salem Art Association/Project Space

The Salem Art Association repurposed a highly visible, empty downtown commercial space to present Project Space, a juried series of group exhibitions and performances by 25 artists that ran throughout summer 2012 in Salem’s Metropolitan Building. The project brought a diverse and new audience of 1,800 to view the work and experience contemporary art in a non-traditional space. All of the associated events were free and open to the public. The Salem Art Association partnered with Willamette University, downtown businesses such as Willamette Music Center, Mary Lou Zeek Gallery, the Art Department, Reed Opera House, Roger Yost Gallery and the City of Salem which provided a second event space for working artists, installations and other events. A $4,500 ABC grant supported artist payments, public receptions, and project administration. (www.salemart.org)

“Once again, it is ever surprising that this full time endeavor happens with the oversight of one half time staff member... It is surprising at how smoothly this project works. Artists, once connected, collaborate and cooperate without oversight.” – John Pattison, Salem Arts Association

Salem Chamber Orchestra/Play Me, I’m Yours

Play Me, I’m Yours, an art project originally envisioned by British artist Luke Jerram, was hosted in Salem by the Salem Chamber Orchestra. Undertaken in more than 30 cities worldwide, the project transformed old pianos into pieces of artwork, then placed them in public locations, mostly outdoors, where the general public was encouraged to play them. The project’s primary goal was to bring the community together through art – both in producing the decorated pianos and ultimately playing them in public spaces. Play Me, I’m Yours aligned with the City of Salem’s efforts to revitalize its downtown, but the other neighborhoods and parks drew audiences to unexpected locations – even a pedestrian bridge over the Willamette River. The community-wide collaboration involved eleven Salem nonprofits. Response was very positive. In addition to playing the pianos, Play Me, I’m Yours encouraged participants to record comments and upload images to www.SalemStreetPianos.com. Over 400 uploads and comments were posted and the site had more than 19,000 page views. One posting by Tom White of Salem indicated, “This was an amazing and delightful experience. I had the best time finding and playing each and every piano around Salem. Thank you!” The $6,300 ABC grant supported piano moving, tuning, and project management. (www.salemchamberorchestra.org)

“What a pleasure at the Wednesday market downtown to stroll along to the sounds (of) live piano music. Several people played while I was there and one, quite good, was doing waltzes. An older woman with a walker put aside the walker for a few minutes and haltingly ‘waltzed’ a few steps, swaying to the music.”

– Carol Mitchell of Salem

Sherwood Cultural Arts Commission/Summer Musical

The Sherwood Royal Academy brought together 40 children as actors and singers, 15 adults as crew and 35 Sherwood volunteers to present an original musical, True Love’s Tale. Using the talents of a local playwright, musicians, actors, and artists, the play and its associated activities help build self-esteem and empowerment while stimulating imagination and building confidence to encourage children to become strong and contributing citizens. The Royal Academy production drew an audience of approximately 200 children and adults. The project was a collaboration of the Sherwood Cultural Arts Commission, Voice for the Performing Arts, the Sherwood Foundation for the Arts and the Robin Hood Festival Association. The $3,000 ABC grant supported the purchase of costumes, art supplies, lights/sound, set, and marketing.

“It was gratifying having residents of all ages stepping up to help us on our mission to build the self-esteem of our children stimulating their imagination and building their confidence.” – Alyse Vordermark, Sherwood Cultural Arts Commission
Well Arts/Beautiful Minds

Well Arts, through its project, Beautiful Minds, offered a series of creative writing workshops and an associated theatre production to assist a dozen individuals with mental illness to communicate with others about the impact of their illness on their lives. Twelve participants, each with a mental illness diagnosis, participated in writing workshops that used creative prompts and storytelling to express a personal narrative. The workshops focused on dialogue and characterization, encouraging the writer to think of what they wanted the reader to understand. Their essays were adapted into a narrative, then performed by actors in a theater setting for an audience of over 200. Audience members reported overwhelmingly that the performances informed their understanding of what it means to live with mental illness. Well Arts is an arts-in-healthcare nonprofit organization that provides writing and oral history workshops that culminate in public performances. Its participants are people with physical disability, mental illness, or social trauma. One participant reported, “I think this is what art is all about, authentic expression. For me it engenders a feeling of community and of belonging.” A $2,300 ABC grant paid for actor and artistic director fees. (www.wellarts.org)

“We learned that the capacity of theatre performance to make the internal external and ‘real’ is one of the most powerful and life-saving tools we have as artists working with this population and our future workshops will focus on these strengths.” – Katie Liljeholm, Well Arts

Write Around Portland/Writing Workshops

Write Around Portland held fifteen 10-week creative writing workshops for 220 in schools, prisons, at social service agencies and in a hospital. Participants wrote together, and shared their writing with one another while receiving and offering feedback. That effort resulted in the publication of Roundabout, an anthology of participants’ writing. Over 300 copies were distributed through local bookstores, Multnomah County Libraries and to each participating writer. 163 volunteers supported the program, twelve of whom were selected to complete a 27-hour formal training which will enable them to facilitate workshops in the future. Volunteers also helped design, edit and produce the book. Almost 30 volunteers staffed the reading. One workshop participant commented, “Write Around Portland has allowed me to become more creative in my life. I have started to write on my own time and even sparked the interest of writing in friends and family.” (www.writearound.org)

“The workshops, anthologies and readings promote respect for diverse groups by sharing the stories of gifted individuals who have been isolated by cultural, social and economic barriers. The participants reported experiencing a greater appreciation of writing with improved listening and writing skills, an increased ability to express themselves creatively, and with greater confidence.” – Robin Seeley, Write Around Portland