

ARTS GRANT PROGRAM IS A SHINING JEWEL IN FAIRFIELD'S CROWN

Do you grow misty eyed with memories of when you strung a sheet across the garage door or first wore your favorite superhero costume or dance tights?

How about those days of wailing karaoke with reckless abandon, painting your first masterpiece in crayons on the dining room table cloth or getting an Oscar nod for your incredible imitation of a drama queen? Oh, well perhaps that was only me.

How about this? Remember your first play, your first musical, and the first art gallery of any kind or the first time you heard a symphony or got up close and personal to any instrument?

They all had that special zing where dreams and imagination become melodies, words become lyrics and librettos, and pictures and portraits of human creativity take shape.

Why have arts flourished since antiquity? It's in our wiring; how we are made.

The arts are an umbilical connection to the world around us and as a species we are healthier when we choose to create, and in some manner, perform on the grand stage of life rather than die languishing in the mezzanine.

The arts are pivotal for a vibrant, happy and well-educated community.

They not only offer enjoyment, but “stimulate critical thinking, increase cultural understanding, preserves ethnic heritage, encourage personal and community creativity and pride, and contributes to lifelong learning in adults and the well rounded education and development of children while strengthening local economy.”

The arts also flourish in Fairfield owing to you – the taxpayer. Fairfield has a jewel in its crown. It's big, it's beautiful, it's rare and it is well tended.

It is the Cultural Arts Awards Program (CAAP) and the article by Ben Antonius in the March 23 Daily Republic thoroughly tells a tale that all of Fairfield should know.

There is a lot of grant money annually budgeted by our little burgh for the arts are we are one of very few cities with such a history. Over twenty-one years, \$2.5 million dollars has been awarded to more than fifty projects and groups ranging from the local symphony, choral societies, dramatic and musical theater, dance, opera and the visual arts.

You, a generation of leaders, devoted, hard working and talented citizen volunteers on crucial commissions and committees and an admirable strong and innovative community services department are to thank for this.

A bit more than \$100,000 is available for what are referred to as the larger CORE grants which are intended to either develop a significant artistic project or assist in the organizational development of promising production companies.

Later in the year, there will also be about \$5,000 available for SEED grants intended for smaller projects and/or not as yet well-established artists. A mandatory help workshop to apply for funding is April 3.

I have had an opportunity for some time now to watch the machinations of both the city government and talented citizen stewards in developing and administering these grants.

We taxpayers are fortunate that such an exemplary process exists for doing what seems right in a responsible and comprehensible manner.

This is no pork barrel enterprise. The process of cultivation of professionalism of artists and business entrepreneurs, while providing a vibrant and diverse artistic climate and maintaining good stewardship of community funds is solid.

The guidelines for this process are on the community services web site and I believe the city council is still looking for one more city resident to join the team.

If you have a notion to start a project, develop an artistic organization or a dream, there are a people and a process in this city available to help you.

There are many ways to get engaged, whether it is asking to join the team, attending and supporting the rich artistic menu made possible in part with your tax dollars or letting producers, artists and city staff know what you like.

To learn more, call Maureen Lillemoe at 428 7538.

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