

STUDIES SHOW INVESTING IN THE ARTS PAYS OFF

Tears and outrage are flowing from many witnessing the mortal blows to athletics and the arts. I say, “Dry your eyes; go forth and read. Let this enormous error at least be well informed.

The “Arts and Economic Prosperity Study III” of 2005 (AEP III) is one of hundreds of peer reviewed, corroborated, methodologically sound and data rich studies we continue to ignore saying the same thing: Communities need cradle to grave comprehensive investment of themselves and tax dollars in the arts and doing so means serious profits. (Similar data exist for athletics)

Do you know or should you care that City Council is paying talented consultants up to 30K to answer the wrong question? The question asked of the consultant is on the city web site and in their words states, “(we) set a goal to reduce the city subsidy of the Fairfield Center for the Creative Arts (FCCA) operations to approximately \$215,000 within five years... (with) the majority...occurring...short term”.

We have looming budget shortfalls, lousy graduation rates and mediocre academic performance. Crime is still too high; our youth are largely physically unfit and far too few citizens vote. The public sector, who facilitates productivity and creativity and ensures safety, receives compensation and retirement packages far outdistancing the private sector. Entitlements are at all time highs and a minority pays taxes supporting the majority. Amidst this, “they” are cutting athletics and arts. “They” is “we”. It is wrong and time “we” read and lead.

April 27th at 6 pm in the FCCA rehearsal room, the public is being asked if “there is consensus” on the consultant’s plan. How can there be? “We” asked the wrong question and the impact on local groups and the socio economic well being of this community remains unaddressed. Why do we continue to ignore all data saying invest, not divest?

Thus I plead, go forth and read. More than 100 studies and summaries of studies are waiting for you on www.tonydeaf.org

Data, not drama, shows us that strategic comprehensive community investment in the arts and culture industry results in perpetual positive and large net returns. SAT and broad academic performance dramatically increases as do rates of literacy, graduation and college attendance. Property values, retail sales and business retention and attraction rise. Recidivism rates in young offenders fall as do costs and numbers of crimes against property and person. Health care costs fall and the incidence of dementia drops.

The AEP III (imagine adding up “Fairfield’s” who made changes) showed arts and culture industry nationally generated \$166.2 billion, yielding 5.7 million full-time jobs, \$104.2 billion in household income and \$7.9, \$9.1 and \$12.6 billion in local, state and federal taxes. Patrons spent \$27.79 per person, per event-beyond admission.

Surprised? Arts use both sides of the brain, employ multisensory simultaneous tasking, deliver instant rewards and enhance people's thinking and linguistic skills leading to highly developed communication, leadership and collaborative abilities.

Building vibrant communities is both art and a team sport. Demand city leaders invest in professional long term FCCA management. Grant concession licenses. Build an engaged board with artists, growers and vintners, hoteliers, philanthropic organizations, west side HOA's, restaurants, PAL, faith based and arts advocacy groups, all school boards, city leaders and so on. Take the couple dozen web names I gifted the city, build a killer web presence by centralizing everything and become a grant winning force and marketing machine. Explore web based arts sales, arts in businesses, premium memberships, professional consolidated fundraising and audience data analysis and development. Share artistic materiel and warehousing, perfect print at home ticketing and capitalize on our incredible cable TV asset.

Stop sandbagging every time it rains. Build a new and better bridge. That is what leaders and engaged parents do.

Are our dollars and priorities aligned and evidenced based? Institutionalize right leadership, go forth and read www.tonydeaf.org

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