

THE *Independent*

Newspaper & Magazine

Volume XLI, Number 12 Circulation 46,000 - Thursday, March 18, 2004

Arts Groups Collaborate On 'Belief Statement'

The arts groups of the Tri-Valley are in the process of creating a “belief statement” concerning the value of the arts in the community.

It’s hoped the statement will lead ultimately to an action plan to strengthen community support of the arts.

Sponsored by the Pleasanton Cultural Arts Council (PCAC), the project to date has involved three workshops led by Sabrina Klein of the Julia Morgan Center for the Arts in Berkeley. The workshops, which were organized by PCAC’s David Wright, were conducted under the title “Creating Public Value for the Arts.” The members of a number of local arts organizations participated. The groups included the Livermore Valley Opera, Valley Concert Chorale, Valley Dance, Pleasanton Art League, Livermore Art Association and others.

The third and final workshop took place last Saturday in Pleasanton, with some 20 persons participating. They produced a draft belief statement, which says:

“We believe that a core value held by residents, businesses and visitors to the Tri-Valley area is the creation and celebration of a rich, vibrant community of individuals who are connected to their own humanity and to the humanity of others. The arts in all its various forms and expressions connect us to our pasts, our futures, our fears and our hopes, and give meaning and balance to life. Each of us are enriched and strengthened when we experience individual and collective art expressions in a thriving community. Every person and every community has the right to make and participate in these experiences in order to give voice to a community discourse that calls on us to reflect upon and act upon our deepest held values. We therefore believe that the arts are an essential part of a healthy and equitable society to which all those of all ages and backgrounds have a right to access, and are committed to creating and supporting arts institutions, experiences, facilities and opportunities for the enrichment of the Tri-Valley area.”

“This has been a very exciting process. Now the real work begins,” reports Cynthia Lait, Pleasanton Art League (PAL) president.

According to Lait, the process will shift to discussions within each organization. Workshop participants will take the draft statement to their groups, seeking support. Changes of wording will be made. What specifically must be done to bring “social change,” i.e. greater community support of the arts, will be discussed.

When these discussions are completed, the organizations will get together again, possibly later in the spring.

City council presentations will be made eventually, but not until the belief statement has the arts community’s solid support and is accompanied by a tangible action plan, Lait says.

“If we went straight to the city councils with the statement, they wouldn’t know what to do with it,” she observes.

“We believe that if the process is to be effective, it must come as part of a groundswell from the bottom up. We need to first build up support at the grassroots level before making any presentations to the city councils.”

The process has inspired Lait’s group, PAL, to create its own belief statement. It says:

“The arts are an essential element of a rich and vibrant community. PAL believes that the arts are fundamental for developing individual potential. In this endeavor, PAL supports facilities, education programs and events that enable people to share ideas, display artwork, connect and dialogue with each other. PAL is dedicated to making the visual arts an integral part of the fabric of life in the Tri-Valley area, and encourages an environment that embraces creativity and its expression.”

A paper by Sabrina Klein that describes the process in detail may be read at the California Arts Council website, <http://www.cac.ca.gov/ami/pdfs/SMarticle.pdf>.

Valley Shakespeare, Pleasanton Art League, Pleasanton Civic Arts Commission, Pleasanton Cultural Arts Council, City of Livermore, Livermore-Amador Symphony Association, Livermore Art Association, Livermore Cultural Arts Council, Livermore Valley Opera, Valley Concert Chorale, and Valley Dance Theatre.