

APPALACHIAN THEATRE OF THE HIGH COUNTRY

Arts Education and Community Outreach Strategy and Inventory of Arts Education Resources

*“Arts are fundamental to our humanity.
They ennoble and inspire us – fostering creativity, goodness,
and beauty. The arts help us express our values,
build bridges between cultures, and bring us together
regardless of ethnicity, religion, or age.”*

-Americans for the Arts

The Importance of Arts Education and Outreach

Beyond the critical *social* and *economic* roles the arts play in our communities is the *learning* and *human development* that takes place through the arts.

A 2002 report by Americans for the Arts cited numerous ways in which the arts promote cognitive, motor, language, and social-emotional development. According to that report, “The arts nurture important values, including team-building skills, respect for alternative viewpoints, and an appreciation of different cultures and traditions. When teachers encourage children’s spirit of creative play through singing, dancing, drawing, and role-playing, they are laying the foundation for — and even helping wire children’s brains for — successful learning. **The arts play a crucial role in improving students’ abilities to learn because they draw on a range of intelligences and learning styles, not just the linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligences upon which most schools are based.**”

Studies show that students with an education rich in the arts have higher GPAs and standardized test scores, lower dropout rates, and even better attitudes about community service – benefits reaped by students regardless of socio-economic status. Students with four years of arts or music education in high school average 100 points better on their SAT scores than students with one half year or less.

For adult learners, the presence of art forms such as music, dance, theatre, visual arts and literature in their daily lives plays an important role in enhancing quality of life. Whether it’s the joy that comes from listening to music, the inspiration derived from reading great works of fiction or the powerful experience of attending live theatre or a museum filled with great art— the impact is real and profound. For most adults, the arts elevate their spirits and “transport them,” emotionally and intellectually, while broadening their worldview and shaping their perspective. **All of these elements reinforce and contribute to the life-long learning process that most adults define as central to their sense of fulfillment and happiness.**

Arts in the High Country: Rich in Heritage and Tradition

High Country residents and visitors currently enjoy an abundance of arts education and outreach programming. School performances and residency programs, music and dance classes, visual arts workshops, summer camps, theatre/drama programs for adults and children, choral groups and poetry clubs offer a rich diversity of year-round programming for audiences of all ages.

The Need for Communication and Coordination for Arts Education

Despite the availability of these resources, the effective delivery of arts education programming in our community is compromised by the fact that there is currently little coordination among the various organizations conducting arts education and outreach activities. **Service providers report that programming is often duplicated, and that scheduled activities often conflict, because there is no**

avenue for communication and facilitation of services. As a result, potential recipients and target audiences for arts education programming are not able to take full advantage of the available programming. If arts education activities were coordinated, those same audiences might participate in multiple activities, and experience a broader array of unique services and resources.

Providers of arts education and outreach programs further report that the Appalachian Theatre could fulfill this important function in facilitating existing programming, serving as a “clearinghouse for arts education and outreach programs” for our community. In doing so, the Appalachian Theatre would support and strengthen the activities already taking place in our region, rather than duplicating efforts.

Growing out of increased communication and facilitation is a longer-term benefit to our community: innovative arts education programming that is likely to result from organizations working together, rather than in isolation from one another.

One example identified by arts education providers is the idea of an annual Children’s Theatre Festival in which multiple community-based theatre companies work together to establish a weekend-long, annual theatre festival geared to young audiences. Each of the participating theatre companies would do what they do best -- presenting their own unique brand of children’s theatre -- and audiences would have the opportunity to enjoy the work of multiple companies presented in *one space* (the Appalachian Theatre) and as part of *one festival*. Each company would create and present its own performances, with the Appalachian Theatre providing administrative facilitation and “presenting” the festival.

This is just one example of what might be possible when organizations begin to work together and build on each other’s strengths... demonstrating the age-old adage that “the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.”

Efficient and Effective Delivery of Arts Programming

By serving as a catalyst for creative partnerships, the Appalachian Theatre will support the **efficient and effective delivery of arts programming**, while fostering **innovative collaborations that build new audiences for the arts**, thus **showcasing the finest artistic talent and cultural traditions of our region**.

A Community “Hub” for Arts Education and Outreach Programming

Another critical need among existing arts education organizations and programs across our region is physical space. Many of the organizations presenting arts education activities do not have access to the space they need, and are not in a position to rent facilities. Whether it’s space for a weeklong summer camp, a visual arts workshop, a dance class, or the high school’s “Open Mike Night” for poetry enthusiasts -- The Appalachian Theatre is uniquely qualified to fill these needs.

The Appalachian Theatre would establish itself as an important community “hub” for arts education and outreach programming designed to serve our entire region. A goal of the Appalachian Theatre is to help subsidize, through free or discounted facility rental rates, the cost for organizations providing arts education activities.

The Arts: An Engine for Economic Development in Watauga County

When used in conjunction with other economic development engines, the arts can greatly contribute to the revitalization and economic development of downtown areas. National studies have indicated that a high concentration of arts in a town leads to higher civic engagement, more social cohesion, higher child welfare, and lower poverty rates.

A vibrant arts community beautifies and animates towns, provides employment, attracts residents and tourists, complements adjacent businesses, enhances property values, expands the tax base, helps attract and retain well-educated employees, and contributes to a creative and innovative environment.

The Arts Benefit Our Local Merchants

Event-related spending by arts and culture audiences in Watauga County totaled \$6.5 million in 2010 (excluding the cost of admission). The typical arts attendee spent \$29.88 per person, per event – not including the cost of admission – on items such as lodging, meals, parking, and souvenirs. Attendees who live outside Watauga County make up 57% of our arts patrons, and they spent nearly *three times* as much as our local residents (\$41.74 vs. \$13.70), which is a valuable revenue stream for local businesses and the community.

INVENTORY OF ARTS EDUCATION RESOURCES

Last updated on September 19, 2014

This partial inventory is not intended as a comprehensive listing. It merely reflects the arts education efforts we are aware of—most of which are focused on Watauga County. Despite these limitations, it is clear that there is broad diversity of arts education programming available to residents in the immediate community served by the Appalachian Theatre of the High Country.

MUSIC

- **Boone JAMS:** The Town of Boone and Downtown Boone Development Association's weekly music lessons program at the Jones House Cultural and Community Center in downtown Boone. The program features Boone Junior Appalachian Musicians, focused on passing down local and regional traditional string band music to local youth; Adult music lessons open to players of all ages; and the Weekly Jones House Old-Time Jam, a free jam session featuring local old-time and bluegrass musicians every Thursday from 7:30-11:00 p.m. Lessons take place on Thursdays between 4:30-7:30 p.m.
- **Regional Junior Appalachian Musicians, Inc.** is an organization that affiliates programs across a four-state region, with programs in Ashe, Surry, Alleghany, and Caldwell Counties at present.
- **The Community Music School at ASU** provides non-credit music instruction for children and adults in our local community as well as surrounding Western NC counties. The program combines university expertise with area teaching artists to provide outstanding musical training. Classes include individual lessons for various instruments, group piano, and the Appalachian Youth Chorale, a choral ensemble for 3rd through 8th grade students with unchanged voices.
- **Cannon Music Camp** at Appalachian State University provides a comprehensive, 3-week summer camp for high school students based on intensive college preparatory work in music, with emphases on solo, chamber, and ensemble performance, and music theory. Public performances by Cannon Music Camp ensembles, soloists, and chamber ensembles provide culminating experiences during the camp's third week.
- **ASU Opera** provides operatic performances for the community, including regular educational outreach programs for area public schools. One-act operas or scenes programs are usually produced in late fall, and a full-length, fully staged opera is a highlight of the spring performance season.

DANCE

- Dance instruction and performance opportunities offered by a variety of local dance studios, including **Northwestern Studios, Studio K, The Cadence Dance Studio at Harvest House, and High Country Dance Studio.** Some of the studios offer community workshops and summer camps as well.

THEATRE/LITERARY ARTS

- A **Children's Theatre Company** associated with Blue Ridge Community Theatre.
- **Appalachian Young People's Theatre productions by university students who take shows out to schools across the region,** creating access to theatre programming for underserved communities.

- **Invisible Theatre Company's literature-based education programs, new plays, dramaturgical essays for high school students, and study guides.** Company is also interested in the NEA's "**Big Read**" Program, in which an entire community reads the same book, with community-wide activities planned around the book. (This could be tied into ASU's Summer Reading Program for incoming freshmen).
- **Crea8tive Drama Workshop at ASU:** Drama camp for ages 5- 17, offered as part of the Theatre & Dance Department. Program uses a teacher-training model, in which students gain invaluable experience as arts educators. In addition, students in theatre education often teach workshops to local public school students.
- **Star of the Sea Studios** is a theatrical production company based in the foothills of South Eastern Appalachia. We produce ceremonial theater in celebration of nature with fantastical puppets, masks, costumes, projected imagery and music engaging both the talents of professional and community performers alike. The company also leads workshops designed to inspire and support creativity. Projects emphasize process over result, exploration over arrival and are focused to encourage inner exploration, instinctual creativity and joyful discovery through the theater and visual arts."
- **Ensemble Stage:** Based at Blowing Rock Elementary School, this professional theatre company creates and produces its own plays. They have sponsored after-school programs and offer two summer camps annually, each of which runs for two weeks. Age groups served: 7-15. Each camp group has a theme, and the kids work with that theme to create original theatre works that they also perform.
- **Blowing Rock Community Foundation:** Sponsors theatre-related activities for kids on Saturdays, and during the summertime.
- **BeanStalk Little Theatre:** Local community theatre producing plays for the High Country for families, by families. BeanStalk produces two plays each year: one in the summer and one in the winter.
- **Poetry Groups:** The WHS Poetry Club is seeking a venue for student-written poetry readings. There is also an ASU group, "LYRIC" (a slam poetry group) which performs student work and is currently trying to squeeze an audience into the upstairs room of the Espresso News.
- **Poetry Writing and Book Club,** with meetings at the Jones House.

VISUAL ARTS

- **Children's programs and summer camps offered by BRAHM** (Blowing Rock Art and History Museum) focusing on art and history, as well as field trips for children.
- **Elkland Arts School activities, including community parades, workshops** on community building (by making art), **puppet shows** for schools, festivals and libraries, and **documentary videos** on matters that are important to the community.
- The Community Art School at the **Turchin Center for the Visual Arts: year-round visual arts workshops for children and adults of all ages.**

- **Blue Ridge ArtSpace, administered by the Watauga County Arts Council**, oversees art galleries, creative classes, and a gift shop, in partnership with the Michael Patricelli Craft Enrichment Program at ASU.
- **ArtMart and Academy** in downtown Boone, offering workshops, and other events.

MULTI-ARTS

- **Watauga Education Foundation:** Presents “Shooting Stars” each spring, a talent show extraordinaire that showcases students’ achievements in the performing and visual arts.
- Arts education and outreach programming by **ASU’s Office of Arts and Cultural Programs**, which employs a full-time Director of Arts Education and Outreach. Program components include a **K-12 Performing Arts Series for students in the nine surrounding counties** (offered in conjunction with ASU’s Reich College of Education)—with matinee performances scheduled at the Schaefer Center throughout the school year. Other related activities include: **Curricular Connections Resources** (educational resources and study guides related to performances and exhibition programs presented by the Performing Arts Series and the Turchin Center), **Arts Integration Training for teachers** (university and K-12, focusing on the new legislative mandate in NC), a “day on campus” tour for kids attending matinee performances), and **artist visits/residencies for ASU students and in K-12 schools**.
- **The AppCable Alliance, administered by the Beasley Media Complex at ASU:** This initiative, presented by ASU Channel 21, features a program entitled “You Gotta’ Have Arts” for cultural not-for-profits and “AppCable Reaching Out” for non-arts-related groups. ASU Cable Channel 21 is a prospective partner for ATHC in offering live broadcasts of performances and other events directly from the stage.
- **Watauga High School:** In addition to their very active **drama/theatre program serving high school students**, WHS is the venue for the 1-week theatre summer camp offered by the Watauga Arts Council and conducted by the **Missoula Children’s Theatre**. WHS also supports and participates in **school performance matinees**, when available, and hosts the **“Open Mic Night” Club**, which could be presented at some point in the Appalachian Theatre.
- **Watauga Arts Council:** Has sponsored **Missoula Children’s Theatre** (summer art camp mentioned above) since 1993, and anticipates continuing this program. **Other activities of the Arts Council are geared to both children and adults— and are not theatre-focused, but focused on other art forms.**
- **The Children’s Playhouse:** In partnership with the Turchin Center for the Visual Arts (TCVA), the Children’s Playhouse sponsors a juried exhibition of children’s art, entitled **“Children’s Art of the High Country.”** The organization also offers affordable, high quality music, movement, art, and drama classes for infants through elementary school age kids.
- **Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute:** Offers an “Extreme SuperSummer Camp” for kids, offering a wide range of summer activities revolving around art, theater, and dance, as well as science projects and sports.
- Sub-committee member Sarah Long noted that as a teacher, she often created arts education experiences for her students, drawing on her own resources. **Teacher-initiated projects** are an important part of the “mix” of arts education services.