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Research Update::April 2005

Awaken Your Agency With Art

By Gaylene Carpenter
 Edited by Mary Parr, Ph.D

Arts and cultural programming need to have a place in recreation.

We often see media and research attention given to specific segments of leisure programming. It is not unusual to find that outdoor pursuits and sports are more frequently reported upon and researched than art and cultural programs. However, one cannot assume that because arts and culture may be less visible, that people don't appreciate the bene- fits of these programs.

State and City Arts Programming

In addition to programs in recreation and leisure, arts managers working in a variety of for-profit and not-forprofit arts and cultural organizations, provide a wide array of arts and culture opportunities that offer benefits to individuals and societies. Participation in the arts occurs in a variety of contexts including museums, galleries, community arts centers, art fairs and festivals, and performance venues.

There are an increased number of arts education programs designed for both children and adults offered by arts organizations. The arts and culture sector has become more visible in part because of administrative initiative to provide art and cultural experiences, and in part because arts managers have been responsive to the need for more options of things for people to do during their spare time. Successful arts participation-building efforts have resulted from restructuring by small non-profit and community-based arts organizations, and large non-profit and commercial arts institutions (Mc- Carthy and Jinnett, 2001), and these efforts have contributed to the growth.

As we know, arts and cultural programs also take place in recreation settings as part of the comprehensive recreation program offerings. The provision for arts and cultural experiences has been a long tradition in recreation and leisure settings. Fifty years ago, Meyer and Brightbill (1956) advocated that arts and crafts, dancing, dramatics, literary activities and music activities were standards for a comprehensive recreation program.

Arts and cultural recreation opportunities continue to be both a part of public agencies' responsibilities to their citizens, and viable offerings in terms of self-support programs. The importance of arts and cultural programming in recreation and leisure agencies is illustrated with examples from Oregon and Philadelphia.

Oregon

Community recreation organizations will often partner with communitybased arts organizations, thus expanding the arts and cultural experiences that can be offered to the public. Six years ago, a successful model of an arts program partnership was implemented in Eugene, Ore. The partnership involves the city of Eugene's Recreation Division at Amazon Community Center and the University of Oregon's Youth Enrichment Program. By combining their particular resources and assets, program organizers are able to provide a full slate of arts- and culturerelated classes from pre-schoolers to adults throughout the academic year, and camps, workshops and classes that extend through the entire summer.

Program supervisors throughout the state of Oregon, who were also members of the Oregon Recreation and Park Association, participated in a study that identified the number and types of arts and cultural programs offered during the summer of 2003 (Carpenter, 2004). Most organizations reported providing arts experiences for youth and adults throughout the summer months.

The visual arts (i.e., arts and crafts) were most frequently offered, and were followed by performing arts programs (i.e., dance, movement, music and theater). Special events featured various arts camps and summer concert series, while non-traditional programs included literary and culinary experiences, as well as cultural-based touring opportunities.

Philadelphia

The Philadelphia Department of Recreation has a long and well-developed arts and culture program that includes historic buildings (e.g., Atwater Kent Museum, Betsy Ross House, Camp William Penn, Olde Fort Mifflin), arts and cultural recreation programs for a variety of settings and demographic groups (e.g., after-school, camps, individuals with physical or mental disabilities, teen centers, senior citizens), specific performing arts programs (e.g., dance classes, dance festivals, music, neighborhood concerts, young performers theater camp) and the visual arts (e.g., arts and crafts, ceramics, painting pottery, art show, art camp, special events, etc).

Though the recreation department offers art and culture programs that we might expect to see operating given adequate interests and resources, the department also offers a number of innovative experiences. For example, the Creative Resolution Theatre program uses interactive theater to help children and adults move from conflict to creative resolution in a fun, safe and supportive environment; the Mural Arts Program involves city residents in the creative process and has yielded more than 2,300 indoor and outdoor murals throughout the city; and one of America's oldest folk art traditions, the Mummers Parade that takes place every year on New Year's Day.



Interestingly, the population served in the Philadelphia example (approximately 1.5 million) represents about half of the citizens in the entire state of Oregon (approximately 3 million). Together, both examples illustrate the importance of arts and cultural programming implemented through public park and recreation agencies.

Exploring the Benefits

According to contemporary sources of information, the benefits of arts and cultural programs can be found to contribute to the economy, to the human experience and to social interests.

Economic Benefits

Economic impact studies show the importance of arts and cultural activities to communities throughout North America. Information generated by various studies shows that when community leaders invest in the arts, they also invest in the economic health of their local communities. According to the President and CEO of Americans for the Arts, Robert L. Lynch, the nonprofit arts industry generates \$24.4 billion in federal, state and local government revenues annually, but those same government entities, collectively, provide less than \$3 billion in support for the arts each year.

Private sector businesses and organizations also benefit from activity-related spending through attendees who spend money on eating, transportation services and overnight lodging. According to the National Governors Association, cultural activities attract tourists and spur the creation of ancillary facilities such as restaurants, hotels and the services needed to support them. Cultural facilities and events enhance property values, tax resources and overall profitability for communities. In doing so, the arts become a great contributor to urban and rural revitalization (Americans for the Arts, 2002).

The Americans for the Arts (2002) and Statistics Canada (2000) make it a practice to report findings associated with the economic impact of arts and culture participation. Including:

- The total economic activity in the non-profit arts industry in the United States was \$134 billion, which included the total spending by organizations (\$53.2 billion) and spending by arts audiences (\$80.8 billion).
- Two-thirds of American travelers included a cultural, arts, heritage or historic activity or event while on a trip of 50 miles or more, one-way. Cultural tourists spend more and stay longer than other types of U.S. tourists.
- Non-local U.S. arts attendees (e.g., attending performances, festivals, etc.) spend almost twice as much as local attendees (\$38.05 compared to \$21.75).
- In 2002, 39.4 percent of American adults attended at least one live arts event such as jazz, classical music, opera, musical, play, ballet or art museum.
- There has been a 22 percent increase in the number of not-for-profit performing arts companies (theater, music, dance, opera) across Canada through the last decade (N=625). Canada has more than 2,300 heritage institutions (e.g., museums, art galleries, archives, historic sites).
- Tourists spent an estimated \$760 million on cultural activities while visiting Canada during 1998.
- Canadian festivals experienced a 12 percent decrease in government contributions yet generated \$86.2 million in 1997-98.
- Figures for the visual arts sector (e.g., painting, sculpting, drawing, crafts, photography) show that 52,000 Canadians list their occupation as visual artist and another 89,000 as artistic designers and workers in related occupations. In the same year (1997-98), the government spent \$57.6 million on the creation and production of works of visual arts and crafts, presumably for those not employed in the visual arts sector.

Human Benefits

Art and cultural activities not only contribute to the economic health of communities, they also create leisure opportunities that enrich peoples' individual lives and relationships with others. Positive outcomes can be realized through both individual and group cultural activities.

Happiness may be found in full engagement in the present through involvement in creative endeavors, or may occur in repose or peacefulness. To become happy, one needs to open oneself to the delights of pleasure and the many wonderful things to enjoy in the world, such as food, art, poetry, music, science and adventure (Estes & Henderson, 2003, pp 24).

Use of one's creative abilities and potential is an influential motivator for those who participate in arts and culture experiences. When involved in expressive activity, we feel in touch with our real self (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

Arts participation by adults is likely to influence participation in the arts by children as well. If parents enjoy playing music, for example, it is more likely that their children will find similar activities challenging (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). We know that early exposure to recreation experiences will establish roots from which future recreation pursuits re-emerge during adulthood (Iso-Ahola, 1980, Kleiber, 1999). In his studies on creativity, Csikszentmihalyi (1996) noted that the role of the parent should be to provide opportunities, taking in the child's interests, and then supporting the child's involvement.

Csikszentmihalyi acknowledged that motivational, personality and cognitive were important factors contributing to creativity. In addition, he urged parents and educators (to which we would add recreators) to encourage opportunities for both solitude and gregariousness, and flexibility about gender roles. Arts and culture experiences that enable individuals to be both inward and outgoing, such as song writing and group singing, and experiences that allow children of both genders to develop orchestral-conducting skills and handicraft sewing skills, can be seen as nurturing creativity.

The arts add excitement and joy to our lives, and arts-related experiences are said to create an understanding of and appreciation for the arts that will lead us to participate more as adults (Orend, 1989). Through the years, studies have shown that older people who have leisure activities that they consistently participated in throughout their lives, will display positive attitudes toward their leisure through time and lead to a more balanced lifestyle (Kelly, 1997; Kleiber, 1999).

Social Benefits

The concept of social capital, advocated by Putnam's research (2003), is relevant to those recreational

professionals who see that the provision of public-based recreation experiences contribute positively to community development. Art and cultural leisure experiences are particularly advantageous because they create environments conducive to the development of social capital. Three examples will illustrate this. Researchers in Philadelphia found that local cultural activity had a dramatic influence on neighborhoods (Stern & Seifert, 2002). Their findings showed that:

- cultural activity drew new residents into communities, reducing poverty and increasing population;
- cultural participation and diverse communities are mutually reinforcing and tend to promote gradual growth rather than rapid gentrification;
- culture creates a positive social environment resulting in greater civic participation, lower truancy rates and lower delinquency rates; and
- cultural participation builds bridges across neighborhood, ethnic and class divides in ways that many other forms of civic engagement do not.

The Oregon Alliance for Arts Education noted that the arts increase cooperation, tolerance and understanding of cultures past and present; improve self-esteem and increase self-awareness; enhance student creativity and increase creative thinking and problem-solving abilities; are key to connecting what students learn in one subject with what they discover in another; and prepare students for jobs, and enhance the quality of life in schools and in the community at large (Lane Arts Council, 2004).

The social benefits of community festivals have recently become an area of interest and lend additional credence to the importance of the individual, group and community in arts and culture (Delamere, Wankel, & Hinch, 2001). Motivated by their desire for professionals to be able to report social benefits along with economic benefits, the works of Delamere, et al., are important because they help arts and culture advocates bring intangibles associated with leisure experiences, into policy-driven discussions.

All This--and Healthy Too


By examining successful arts and cultural programs, and identifying specific benefits associated with participation, it becomes clear that such programs contribute to the missions of most recreation agencies. When it comes to arts and cultural programs, neither geographic size, (e.g., the state of Oregon), or the population size, (e.g., the city of Philadelphia), matters; professional leadership and organizational initiative does.

When arts opportunities are available to citizens, the community reaps the economic and social capital benefits. People participating in a study assessing the health effects of participating in music, art, dance and poetry programs are also healthier and happier (Trafford, 2004).

Writing for The Washington Post, Trafford reported on a study sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Institute of Mental Health and other organizations. The study is taking place in three cities across the country, Washington, Brooklyn and San Francisco. Though the study is still in progress, preliminary findings show that those individuals who were participating in cultural programs, were healthier than they were when the study began and reported less depression, less loneliness and higher morale. Older adults in the study reported better overall health, fewer doctor visits, less use of medications, as well as fewer falls and hip damage.

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