



ARTS COUNCIL OF
PRINCETON

Neighborhood and Community Report Report April 2012



Introduction

We are pleased to present this report on the Arts Council of Princeton's activities related to the Witherspoon-Jackson (W-J) Neighborhood. This report covers the year since the presentation of our last Neighborhood Report in April 2011.

This past year has been one of continued growth for the Arts Council of Princeton (ACP). Through an increase in fundraising activities promoted by the documented need for expanded programming and access for the diverse population of the immediate community and the greater region, the ACP staff and board developed a new strategic plan in June 2011. This plan provides a roadmap for program development and increased marketing, based on the ACP's core mission of building community through the arts. The results have been excellent. For the third consecutive fiscal year we have been able to expand event participation, student enrollment and membership, resulting in a positive projected year-end balance. We are proud that once again the ACP has been awarded a Citation of Excellence by the New Jersey State Council on the Arts and we have been designated a Major Arts Organization for the state. In addition, we received a Governor's Award for Excellence in Arts Education and the Discover Jersey Arts' People's Choice Award for "Favorite Art Gallery."

In spite of our recent successes, however, the ACP still faces financial challenges. These include the ongoing challenge of sustaining our free programs given the decrease of foundation and government grant funds; and the more immediate burden of a mortgage debt. Our “Burn the Mortgage” Campaign, started in early 2011 to raise \$2 million to retire the mortgage, is not yet complete. This financial challenge must be met in order for the ACP to attain the financial stability necessary to continue programmatic expansion – especially in continuing to provide the free and low cost programming that is so important for the W-J Neighborhood and the local community. The remaining balance to achieve our \$2 million goal is \$750,000 and we are focusing our development energy on this goal.

The location of the ACP’s Paul Robeson Center is ideal to serve to W-J neighborhood and the history of the location is relevant and important to keep present and alive. This is accomplished through the permanent exhibit “Neighborhood Portrait” which includes the W-J Neighborhood Quilt, created by Gail Mitchell with the assistance of a committee of neighborhood residents. A photography display of historic pictures from the archives of the Historical Society of Princeton was curated with the assistance of Shirley Satterfield and Eileen Morales. An additional photograph was added by a contribution from Henry Pannell. Finally, a plaque in the Barbara Sigmund Lobby now provides information about the legacy of Paul Robeson, with a statement by Shirley Satterfield.

The importance of the arts and quality arts education for a community cannot be underestimated. National studies conducted over the past twenty-five years substantiate that the arts provide one of the most effective methods of increasing academic achievement and literacy in all students. With that important fact in mind we have continued to provide free afterschool and in-school educational opportunities for 120 to 150 students per week through our partnerships with Princeton Nursery School, Princeton Young Achievers, local schools, and HomeFront.

The arts also function as a powerful engine for economic development. National studies by Americans for the Arts indicate that the arts nationally are a \$166.2 billion industry. To determine the exact amount of economic activity generated by local arts in the Princeton economy, the Arts Council engaged the local arts community in the Arts and Economic Prosperity Study. With support provided by Princeton University and the Princeton Regional Chamber of Commerce, the study is nearing its final phase and a report of the results is anticipated in June.

As reported previously, the ACP has also worked to establish an endowment fund to ensure the future stability of our programs. The cornerstone contribution for our endowment was a \$250,000 Legacy Grant awarded in late 2007 by the J. Seward Johnson Sr. 1963 Charitable Trust which produces income specifically for W-J Neighborhood programs. In early 2011 we received our second major endowment grant of \$100,000 from the Charles Evans Foundation. The income is designated specifically to fund scholarships.

W-J Neighborhood Representation

During the past year, in spite of economic challenges, the ACP has managed to continue to provide consistently excellent and exciting programs that enhance and benefit the Princeton community. During the year we focused on increasing our capacity to serve local Princeton residents, particularly to members of the Witherspoon-Jackson Neighborhood. In order to be responsive and relevant to neighborhood needs we currently have three neighborhood residents serving on our board of trustees: Gail Everett, Orlando Fuquen, and Jim

Floyd, Jr. In addition we have re-formed our Neighborhood Advisory Committee with members Shirley Satterfield, Minnie Craig, Chip Fisher, Mr. Floyd and Ms. Everett. Furthermore, we are pleased to count three current and former neighborhood residents as staff members. Maria Evans, a long time ACP employee and neighborhood resident, serves as our Community Arts Manager, organizing and coordinating community events and outreach programs. Stephanie Nazario, the ACP Financial Manager, grew up in the neighborhood and continues to live just a few blocks away. Our newest staff member, Kim Webber, who has now worked for the ACP for over a year, grew up in the neighborhood and continues to live on Clay Street. In addition, regular volunteer shifts are worked by several neighborhood residents who volunteer at the ACP's reception desk, help at events, and assist in classrooms. Volunteers earn "ACP Bucks" which can be used towards class tuition and event or concert tickets. Many neighborhood residents take advantage of it.

Although this report is designed to primarily cover our activities as they relate to the W-J Neighborhood, we also deem it relevant to include a number of important achievements that positively impact the entire Princeton Community.

Summary of Activities: May 2011- April 2012

During this past year the Arts Council produced numerous events, and many of them were well attended by neighborhood residents. We attribute much of the success in event attendance to placing announcements in local church bulletins, actively participating in local groups such as the Youth Concerns Committee, the Black History Month Planning Committee, and by producing some of our flyers in Spanish as well as English. Funding for our free programs for the W-J Neighborhood was provided largely by income received from the investment of the Johnson Charitable Trust grant. This funding allowed for us to partially cover the expenses of the "free" programs listed below and allowed us to offer free admission to W-J Neighborhood residents for ticketed concerts. Over thirty residents were able to access concerts during fall and winter, including dynamic performances by Jazz4Soul featuring Grace Little, PU jazz program director Tony Branker and a Paul Robeson tribute concert by Anthony Brown (which featured former mayor Jim Floyd, Sr. as narrator). Additional funding for free community programs was provided by Target and Novo Nordisk.

ArtReach: During the past year we continued our ArtReach programs, providing free in-school and after-school arts education programming to up to 140 students at the Princeton Nursery School (funded by PNC Foundation) and partnering with Princeton Young Achievers (funded by Tyco, Horizon Foundation, NJ and Janssen) to provide Creative Friday art programs for students at PYA learning centers and at the Paul Robeson Center. At the Princeton Nursery School artist Libby Ramage worked with 40 – 50 students two days per week. Four artists worked with 75 – 90 PYA students per week in our Creative Fridays program.

We also continued to offer programs for PYA youth beyond traditional visual arts. We provided jazz, world, classical and blues music workshops through the Robeson Community Music Series, supported by Wachovia Wells Fargo and ET Cone Foundation grants. During the summer we provided a week long intensive poetry and music workshop series for teens.

"Kids at Work: Discovery through Art": During the school year, over 200 local elementary students came with their teachers for gallery tours and art-making sessions in our program "Kids at Work: Discovery through Art". In these workshops school classes visited our gallery exhibitions, learned about the significance of the artwork, and engaged in hands-on art activities

to make work based on what they saw in the gallery. Kids at Work is funded through a grant from the Gartenberg Family Fund. The students mostly came from Community Park and John Witherspoon Schools (some classes also came from Riverside, Little Brook and Johnson Park).

Annual Community Play: Collaborating with Stone Soup Circus and Princeton Theatre Experiment, the Community Play put on four public performances of an original play titled "On Air" and used local sponsors for funding such as small world coffee, Jazams Toy Store, Ace Hardware, Halo Pub and more.

PHS Community Service Group: For the third consecutive year a group of 15 – 20 high school students volunteered at many of our events throughout the school year

Witherspoon Middle School Tours: In September, for the fourth year, in partnership with the Princeton Public Library and John Witherspoon Middle School, we provided tours of the Paul Robeson Center for over two hundred 6th grade students from John Witherspoon Middle School. This tour program is now a regular activity designed to introduce students to the facilities and programs offered by both the Arts Council and the Library.

Solar Tree Project – Artist in Residence I Rein Treifeldt: Also in partnership with Witherspoon Middle School, sculptor Rein Treifeldt completed his spring 2011 residency working with an after school group made up of twelve members of the art, science and environmental clubs who learned about art, science, engineering and solar energy while working on art projects with the artist.

El Dia de los Muertos (Day of the Dead): In early November we celebrated not only with our annual art and music party, but also mounted a full exhibition in our Taplin Gallery to celebrate Mexico's Day of the Dead. A diverse crowd of over two hundred, including dozens of families with children, enjoyed music, food and art making.

Cinco de Mayo: Our annual Cinco de Mayo celebration was offered again as a collaboration with the Princeton Public Library. Hundreds came out to celebrate Mexico's Cinco de Mayo with art making and folk dancing with Princeton University's Ballet Folklorico de Mexico dance troupe.

Black History Month: Our annual February programming was organized in collaboration with local schools, The Princeton Public Library, and our Neighborhood Committee. During the month we offered a concert featuring Jazz4Soul and "Amazin" Grace Little along with art making workshops celebrating African American culture.

Martin Luther King Day: Once again our annual collaboration for MLK Day was offered as a partnership with KidsBridge of Trenton, and The Historical Society of Princeton. We provided activities that taught tolerance, civil rights history, and the lessons of Dr. King for all ages. The afternoon of free art-making attracted over 250 people including dozens of neighborhood children.

September Open House at the Robeson Center: Our annual Open House event featured art making, dance performances, circus entertainers, refreshments, and music -- all free to the public. The event showcased our programs and provided residents with ways to get involved, including information on scholarships.

Neighborhood Committee: In the fall the W-J Neighborhood Committee was re-formed to meet and discuss programming ideas for the neighborhood. This group assists in posting flyers at local churches and inviting friends and neighbors to get involved with the Arts Council.

Hometown Halloween Parade: In October we held our annual parade through downtown Princeton featuring the Princeton University marching band. We partnered with the Princeton Public Library and the parade marched from Palmer Square to Hinds Plaza where the Library had created a haunted house in their community room. In addition, the YMCA screened a scary movie. We had a huge crowd of over 1500.

Artist in Residence – TJ Erdahl: During fall 2011 our Artist in Residence, TJ Erdahl, worked with a group of local students to create a wall installation of ceramic skulls for the Day of the Dead exhibition. He also created new ceramic sculpture based on Princeton African American history – specifically creating a portrait of “Spader – the Peanut Man.”

“What’s up Princeton” Programs for Teens: Now in its third year, the Arts Council, along with the Princeton Public Library, HiTops, Corner House, and the Recreation Department, has partnered on "What's Up Princeton," a collective effort to increase programs for teens. Recently the Arts Council hosted a teen open mic night in which numerous high school students shared their talents by performing. Coming up on June 1 What’s Up Princeton will present the third annual Battle of the Bands on Albert Hinds Plaza. Collaboratively we plan quarterly teen events hosted by the Arts Council, the Library and the Recreation Department.

Programs for Seniors: The Arts Council received a Church and Dwight Employee Giving Fund grant to establish a program, Art for Caregivers, designed to assist family members and professional caregivers with creative projects specifically for seniors. With a grant from the NJ State Arts Council we also began a program for seniors in partnership with Brandywine, Elm Court, and Stonebridge Assisted Living residences. Some of these programs were highlighted at last year’s Alliance for Arts in Healthcare conference at Grounds for Sculpture. New this year we are sending artist Eva Mantell weekly to work with seniors in the Acute Care for the Elderly Unit at the Princeton Medical Center. And, earlier this year we were host to a training session for over fifty artists in partnership with the National Center for Creative Aging (a Washington DC agency funded by the National Endowment for the Arts). Additionally the ACP partnered with the Senior Resource Center last May on events to celebrate a month of “Creative Aging.”

COMMUNIVERSITY Festival of the Arts: On the last Saturday in April we once again produced Princeton's annual festival of the arts in downtown Princeton. Organized by the Arts Council and the students of Princeton University, it had an estimated attendance of close to 40,000. The festival featured over 200 artists, musicians, performers, crafters, merchants and food vendors, nonprofit and student organizations, and numerous free activities for children. A highlight was a Bollywood style “flash performance” organized by ACP instructor Uma Kapoor.

Scholarships: During the summer we provided scholarships for W-J Neighborhood children so they could attend summer art and drama camp, which we held offsite at the Princeton Junior School. The campers’ artwork was featured in an end of the summer exhibition at the Robeson Center. During the summer and through the school year the Arts Council provided scholarships to 133 students with a total value of \$21,847 (about \$3,000 more than the previous year). Eight students from the neighborhood received scholarships valued at \$1,225. Scholarships were funded through our George Dale and Waxwood Scholarship Funds and by a grant from the Shepherd Foundation. As reported last year, we received a \$100,000 grant from the Evans

Foundation to establish a scholarship endowment fund that provided high school students with free art classes during the year.

Summer Concerts: We had another successful Courtyard Concert Series at the Princeton Shopping Center. Free concerts were presented every Thursday from mid June through the end of August with audience sizes ranging from 150 to 600.

Street Party: In September the Arts Council again participated in the annual Jazams street fair. We made crowns with the kids and had a photo booth, which was a huge hit.

Additional Community Activities at the Paul Robeson Center: In addition to the activities listed above, the Arts Council was host to a wide range of events from meetings to non-profit benefits. Included were: Princeton Area Arts and Culture Consortium bi-monthly meetings; Monthly Youth Concerns Committee meetings; Christmas Eve Caroling on Palmer Square; Classic Comedy Cavalcade afternoon of vintage films; Behind the Music event with the Princeton Symphony; annual Valentine's workshop; and a series of concerts, films, and exhibition openings. Additionally, throughout the year community groups and families used our facility for meetings, benefits and events including: HiTops, Habitat for Humanity, Princeton Symphony, a community Christmas party, a bridal shower, baby shower and much more. We are also pleased that the Saving Our History: African Americans in Princeton project, organized by Princeton native Yvonne Wooten Hill, now a visiting scholar from the Cultural Heritage Center in Florida, continued in 2011. Residents bring historic family photos/documents to the Robeson Center to be scanned to an electronic format.

Arts and Economic Prosperity study: In partnership with Princeton University, and members of the Princeton Area Arts and Culture Consortium, the Arts Council has engaged in an economic impact study through Americans for the Arts. This study, to be completed in 2012, will provide crucial data about the amount of economic activity generated by arts and cultural events in Princeton. Surveys provide the means through which we will learn the spending habits of our audiences in stores, hotels and restaurants. We'll know how many people are employed and what kind of economic activity occurs through arts organizations doing business in the community through printing, purchasing of supplies, marketing, insurance, legal services, catering and all other financial activity. When the study is completed, Princeton will be one of 200 communities in the nation to be fully analyzed, which will help significantly with fundraising and organizational development.

Conclusion

This has been another year of improvement and growth for the Arts Council of Princeton, as well as a time to strategize in the face of economic challenges. The ACP has successfully managed to maintain a high level of service to the community while working to stabilize the organization's operations. We look forward to improving and expanding our programs for the Witherspoon-Jackson Neighborhood and to continuing to serve the greater Princeton community.

Submitted by: Jeff Nathanson, Executive Director
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