

The BUGLE

Saturday, October 15, 2011

Editorial: Verde Valley leaving cultural footprints

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Modern history books give us a fine view of past generations. The art of past generations, however, tells us how they viewed themselves.

From cave paintings to Martin Scorsese films, art lets us crawl inside the human experience through all the centuries. The arts are imperative.

"We should not be optional. We are a necessity; we are the arts," Patrick Schweiss, director of the Sedona International Film Festival, told an Arizona Town Hall meeting in Clarkdale last week.

With October being National Arts & Humanities Month, it's a good time to look at what culture the Verde Valley is handing down to its children. Some towns are stronger than others when it comes to cultural opportunities, and the economy has limited these still more, but the human need of self-expression through art is apparent everywhere.

Sedona is so ensconced in the arts the small city has its own arts commission. There, the economy is the culture and the natural surroundings. Fine art, performance art, film - it has all impacted everyone from school students to retirees.

Cottonwood's burgeoning cultural scene is mostly in entertainment but also has a steady if quiet art scene.

The community and the school put to good use the auditorium at Mingus Union, the Old Town Center for the Arts has an arresting schedule, and the array of arts and crafts shows throughout the year reveals a lot of hidden talents.

Meanwhile, Clarkdale has one of the best art shows in Northern Arizona every December with its Made in Clarkdale exhibit. Jerome attracts artists and art shoppers with its unique perspective. However, that any arts-related class would struggle to stay on a school schedule (good-bye digital photography) is as sad as it is expected.

Camp Verde has a ways to go if it's going to leave a dramatic cultural footprint for future study. That being said, the number of top-level musicians and artists in town is astonishing. The Fort Verde Days Art Show is Exhibit A. And as was stated just last week, it is amazing how quickly the under-used Multi-Use Complex theater fills up when community members, especially youth, are performing.

The Verde Valley's art scene reveals much of what is going on within the human population here right now. Good, bad or indifferent, it will be an enlightening, necessary study for future generations.



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