Welcome from the SA F Executive Director

I grew up in an artist’s family – my father, Wes Wyllie, was a well-known local artist – and started to learn to appreciate the value of the arts at an early age. I remember the impromptu art shows in our garage after my Dad and Ralph Baker, another well-known watercolorist, would display their works for my Mom and me after a day of painting at various locations throughout the county.

My appreciation for the arts continued to grow throughout my career as a land-use planner, as I gained an understanding about the importance of the arts not only from an individual’s perspective but at a community-wide level as well. The arts, in the broadest sense of the term, help to bring a sense of completeness to the world we live in. Life doesn’t have to be all about home to work, work to home.

In Tuolumne County, we are blessed by a wealth of opportunities to enjoy the arts, regardless of whether you prefer seeing actors on a stage, a favorite painting or photograph hanging from the wall or a performance by a local orchestra.

That is why we are pleased to present, in this Fall 2013 edition of Giving Voice, an issue that focuses on the arts and the grant assistance that the Sonora Area Foundation provides to enhance the arts in Tuolumne County. You will find that our activities within the arts are very closely tied to our mission to “strengthen the community through assisting donors, making grants and providing leadership.”

I hope that you enjoy this edition of Giving Voice and encourage you to make the arts a part of your world on a regular basis!

If you have any questions about anything that you read in this newsletter, do not hesitate to contact me at 209-533-2596, by dropping me an e-mail at edwyllie@sonora-area.org, or by stopping by our office at 362 S. Stewart Street in Sonora.

Ed Wyllie
Community  Tuolumne County arts thrive with community support

Tuolumne County’s art scene has never been more vibrant.

Music, poetry, theater, film, painting, photography, traditional crafts and more are happening at all levels with thousands of local residents finding ways to participate. The county’s cornerstone arts organizations are celebrating major milestones and embracing ambitious projects while new start-ups have been finding exciting ways to brighten, enliven and engage.

The Sonora Area Foundation has always recognized the role of the arts in a healthy, thriving community, and has invested in dozens of local art projects and organizations from its earliest days.

The Foundation supports scholarships for art students, provides significant grants for local art groups and matches funds for school needs such as band instruments and uniforms.

“The arts are important to the community, to the culture of our county, to our youth - and to the economy,” said Sonora Area Foundation President Jim Johnson. “Our board believes that, and our founder Irving Symons believed in it also. The direction to support the arts has been there from the beginning and that’s important. We’re still honoring his wishes.”

Even with state and national funding lacking, local arts are alive and well.

“I’m very encouraged with all that’s going on,” said Connie O’Connor, executive director of the Tuolumne County Arts Alliance. “When you look at the size of this county and see what’s transpiring, it’s remarkable.”

She cited the dozens of students who will be participating in this fall’s annual Poetry Out Loud contest for high schoolers, the 35th Anniversary season in the works at Sierra Repertory Theatre, an upcoming “artist in residence” program at the Arts Alliance and its George Post Gallery, the recent Mural in a Day project in downtown Sonora, the 61st anniversary of the Mother Lode Art Association, the new film festivals in Twain Harte and Sonora, music festivals and music groups of all kinds, and so much more.

“If you had the time, there is something artistic to do, to learn, share or enjoy every day of the year here. It’s phenomenal.”

Local arts organizations have never had stable funding, and have always had to be self-reliant, resilient and creative to survive. Schools have had to slash arts drastically, but the community is finding ways to make sure that at least some local training and exposure continues.

Retired educator and longtime Foundation Director Roger Francis said that’s critical especially in a rural area like Tuolumne County. “It’s something we can’t let go, and there are a lot of people who are willing to help.”

Johnson and Francis credited local arts leaders for their dedication and their vision. O’Connor agreed.

“A ll of our arts organizations have been through really difficult ups and downs,” O’Connor said, “but we’re survivors and maybe that’s the key. It takes tenacity, it takes dedication, it takes passion...and a dream. Then people who follow can pick up that thread and knit it into this wonderful fabric.

“It’s been wonderful to have the Foundation there for us through it all,” she added. “The founding board of the Foundation was so instrumental in recognizing the arts as an essential part of our community, and that has continued through the years.”

PHOTOS:
Our arts community includes:

(1)InFocus Photography Show
(2) Sierra Rep’s “Sound of Music”
(3) KASA “Celebrate the Arts” event

COVER PHOTO:
Arts instructor Glen Anderson inspires some young watercolorists at the KASA art classes sponsored by the Tuolumne County Arts Alliance in Sonora.
Education Scholarship honors artistic path

Tommy Manson has honored her family’s love of the arts for many years, by awarding a scholarship each spring to a Sonora High School graduate who is going to study art. She and her late husband, Stephen, set up a pair of perpetual scholarships more than 10 years ago – one for a nursing student and one for the arts.

Now age 101, Tommy knows this tribute has helped dozens of young people at a critical turning point. “It’s only $500, but it might buy their books – and it’s an encouragement,” she said. “We’ve always enjoyed the arts, our home was always filled with art – it’s very important and always has been.”

This fall, Tommy enjoyed meeting one of her recipients in person – Peter Leibold, a young Sonora High School graduate who studied theater at UC Irvine. Leibold was awarded the Manson scholarship five years ago, earned his degree in theater from UC Irvine and is now back in Sonora working full time as Sierra Repertory Theatre’s resident lighting designer.

Leibold was able to thank Manson in person, and give her a tour of the Fallon House where he just completed the lighting design for a new production of Harvey. “It was so nice to meet her,” Leibold said. “She’s been helping art students for a long time.”

Tommy, a Sierra Repertory Theatre patron for many years, was delighted. “The arts are so important,” she said. “How can a person live fully without them? You only have to look at how a tree grows to know the difference it makes.”

Project Mural painted in downtown Sonora

Sonora’s farmer’s market is closed for the season, but folks who frequent downtown can still feast their eyes on bustling stalls bursting with fruits and vegetables. The view is in the form of a mural, designed by local artist Judy Grossman and constructed and painted by community members. Spearheaded by Rogers Esper and Laurie Lehmann, the project – called Mural in a Day – brought together children and adults for a weekend of planning, painting and community spirit in September.

“This is what art can do for the community,” said B.Z. Smith, one of the organizers.

The Sonora Area Foundation awarded a grant that funded classes in mural preparation for adults and teens eager to lend a hand. Kai Bannister, 17, a student at Connections Academy, took part in the classes as well as in the weekend of prep and painting. The Columbia teen learned how to project and enlarge an image, as well as how to mix colors and paint with perspective.

“I learned all the steps it takes to paint a mural and become an artist,” said Kai, who now wants to paint a mural on his bedroom door. “The process is more important than the finished product.”

Planning for Mural in a Day started when Rogers and Lehmann came up with the idea to honor Eleazar “Ed” Rodriguez, a market flower vendor who died following a car accident in 2012. The completed mural depicts Rodriguez amid buckets of bright-colored flowers as well as busy market stalls and a Sonora landmark, the Sugg House, in the background.

Profile Sierra Rep celebrates 35 years

When busloads of tourists flock to Tuolumne County, the attraction isn’t always our natural beauty or Gold Rush charm. For some, the draw is live theater, performed by the area’s first year-around theater company, Sierra Repertory Theatre.

The brainchild of five friends from University of the Pacific’s summer stock program, Sierra Repertory Theatre – or SRT – is now heading into its 35th season. Supported through the years by the Sonora Area Foundation, the theater has become much more than a place to see a play.

It’s a cornerstone of the community, giving children and seniors a chance to experience theater at a discount, supporting area non-profits and attracting more than 60 percent of theater-goers from out of town.

“It brings people from all over,” said Tracy Russell, Sonora Area Foundation board member. “They eat at restaurants, they stay in hotels. That’s an important aspect of why the Foundation supports SRT.”

The Foundation recently awarded the theater a grant to continue programs including school matinees, student and senior discounts, benefit previews and other community contributions.

The Foundation has also supported specific projects, including the expansion of the costume shop, purchase of lighting equipment and hiring guest artists. The theater employs 14 full-time workers, a handful of part-time employees as well as guest artists and area craftsmen such as carpenters, seamstresses and the like.

Last year a grant from the Foundation went to study the possibility of a downtown Sonora theater, said SRT Managing Director Sara Jones.

So, where is SRT headed in the next 35 years? “We just want to keep improving the quality of the theater in any way we possibly can,” she said.
**New uniforms for marching band**

The 80-some members of Sonora High School’s Golden Regiment Band will no longer perform in uniforms with frayed hems, broken zippers and fasteners held together with safety pins.

The school’s Band Boosters, a parent group that raises money for the band, started collecting funds last year to replace the existing uniforms.

Parents collected $17,200 toward the $26,400 cost of the new uniforms. The Sonora Area Foundation, through its supporting organization – the Irving J. Symons Foundation for Tuolumne County – will cover the rest.

Parents, who volunteer their time to repair and alter the uniforms each year for a new crop of students, declared the old uniforms beyond repair. Cuffs were shredded, sleeves were worn.

“They have been re-sewn and re-sewn,” said Eddie Garris, Band Boosters president.

Soon the high school’s young musicians will be decked out in new green pants, white shoes and white jackets with gold trim.

“The kids are excited,” said Kim Baker, Band Boosters secretary, who spearheaded the campaign. “It’s a morale thing when you’re wearing a uniform you have to hold together with safety pins.”
Poetry Out Loud lauds young artists

The Tuolumne County Arts Alliance is once again gearing up Poetry Out Loud, the national program in which high school students immerse themselves in poetry. Students study a selection of poems, then perform on stage in competitions. Helping judge this year will be Jonathan Bermea of Sonora High, second runner up in last year's state contest. This program is an example of how donor funds held by the Sonora Area Foundation can be granted to local non-profit organizations to support a variety of programs, including the Arts Alliance.
SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS
Irving J. Symons Foundation for Tuolumne County
Symons Family Fund

SCHOLARSHIP FUNDS
Aaron Baker Memorial Scholarship  -  Sonora High: athletics
Andy Fredericks Memorial Scholarship  -  Fire fighting programs and scholarships
Aronos Women's Research Club Scholarship  -  Columbia College attendee
Bill Gerber Memorial Scholarship  -  Summerville High: athletics
Black Oak Casino Scholarship  -  Employees and dependents of Calaveras - Higher education
Bret Laws Memorial Scholarship  -  Columbia College: fire science
Brockman Family Scholarship  -  Sonora High: education
Bruce Paxton Memorial Scholarship  -  Tuolumne County high schools: music
Class of 1946 Scholarship  -  Sonora High: academics
Community Scholarship  -  Tuolumne County high schools - higher education
Cory D. White Memorial Scholarship  -  Continuing education
Dan Imfeld Scholarship  -  Tuolumne County high schools - higher education
David Paul Grant Memorial Scholarship  -  Tuolumne County high schools: law enforcement - EMT - Fire science
Doc Curtice Memorial Scholarship  -  Sonora High: academics
Earl and Mary Purdy Memorial Scholarship  -  Sonora High: music or physical education
Elaine Symons Baker Scholarship  -  Sonora High: academics
Eva Schicke Memorial Scholarship  -  Nursing or fire science
Firefighter Michael Chad Harris Scholarship  -  Columbia College & Napa College: fire technology
Frank Saley Youth Fund  -  Benefit Tuolumne County youth
Front Porch Scholarship  -  Tuolumne County High Schools: math, engineering, computer science
Gardella Fund  -  Sonora High: interest in local government or politics
Gilbert Poulter Scholarship  -  Sonora High, Summerville High and Columbia College: higher education
Gina Marie Gardella Memorial Scholarship  -  Sonora High: Agricultural intention
Harry A. Riedinger Memorial Scholarship  -  Sonora High: academics
Harvey H. Ulh Scholarship  -  Sonora High: Trade schools or higher education
Highland Oaks Agricultural Scholarship  -  Columbia College: agriculture & natural resources
Homer Latimer Scholarship  -  Sonora High and Summerville High: academics
Jeff Sanders Memorial Scholarship  -  Bret Harte High: academics
Jeff Vassallo Memorial Scholarship  -  Summerville High: Friday Night Live
Jennie Evans Memorial Scholarship  -  Tuolumne County high schools: business
Jerry Ryder Scholarship  -  Tuolumne County high schools: Korean War Veterans' relatives
Jessica Elizabeth Jager Memorial Scholarship  -  Sonora High: academics
Joe Martin Family Scholarship  -  Sonora High: natural resources
John Greeno Memorial Scholarship  -  for Children of fallen Wildland Firefighters
John E. Kelley Memorial Scholarship  -  Mother Lode Round-Up Queen
Kathleen Celestini Memorial Scholarship  -  Tuolumne County high schools: Sonora Elementary graduate
Kristi Francis Memorial Scholarship  -  Sonora High: academics
Larry and Virginia Reed Twain Harte Rotary Scholarship  -  Summerville High: vocational
Leadership Tuolumne County Scholarship  -  Past Participants of YLTC: academics
Lil Dawson, Winifred Black, Big Oak Rebekah Lodge # 259 Scholarship  -  Tuolumne County high schools: academics
Lyle R. Scott Scholarship  -  Vocations/trades education
Lynn Gates Nursing Scholarship  -  Columbia College: nursing
Martha Barnes Scholarship  -  Summerville High: females, non-traditional fields
Martin and Bethel Liljedahl Scholarship  -  Sonora High: agriculture
M.L. Interagency Training Officers Scholarship/Bass Family Fire Fighters' Memorial Scholarship  -  Tuolumne and Calaveras high schools: public safety
Mother Lode Stanford Club Scholarship  -  Tuolumne County high schools: Stanford University attendee
Mt. Springs Women's Golf Scholarship  -  Scholarships for women in golf
Myers Family Fund  -  Tioga High: vocational education
Past American Legion Post 300 Scholarship  -  Tioga High: general academics
Paul and Jackie Mierop Memorial Scholarship  -  Tuolumne County high schools: Sonora Elementary graduate
Pearl Segerstrom Memorial Scholarship  -  Sonora High: academics
Pecchinino/Sylva Scholarship  -  Sonora High: academics
Perricone-Hobbin-Hodge Scholarship  -  Tuolumne County high schools: University of California
Ralph and Dottie Francis Memorial Scholarship  -  Sonora High: athletics
Richard A. Franco Memorial Scholarship  -  Sonora High: academics and leadership
Rockwood Scholarship  -  Sonora High: art
Ross Jones Memorial Scholarship  -  Tuolumne County high schools: fire sciences or law enforcement
Sgt. Bobby Rapp Ski Scholarship  -  Dodge Ridge Ski Race Team
Shaws Flat Scholarship  -  Sonora High: academics and vocational
Sierra Music Scholarship  -  Tuolumne County student: classical music lessons
Sierra Quilt Guild Scholarship  -  Tuolumne County high schools: academics
Sonora Elementary Memorial Scholarship  -  Sonora High: Sonora Elementary graduates
Sonora Lions Varvandakis Scholarship  -  Sonora High male: academics
Stephen H. Manson Scholarship  -  Sonora High: art and nursing
Teresa Mary Thors Scholarship  -  Secondary education for disabled students
Terry Campbell Loshalegro Award  -  Summerville High: academics
Ticket Out Scholarship Fund  -  Sonora and Summerville High - attending Columbia College
Tuolumne County Community Tennis Scholarship  -  High school students involved in tennis or the arts
Tuolumne County Farm Bureau Scholarship  -  Tuolumne County high schools: agriculture industry
Tuolumne County Sheriff’s Posse Scholarship  -  Tuolumne County students: agriculture or related field
Tuolumne County Women's Network Scholarship  -  Women's education
Tuolumne Medical Auxiliary-Connie Leonard Nursing Scholarship  -  Columbia College: Nursing
Tuolumne Sunrise Scholarship  -  Summerville High: academics
Twain Harte Chamber of Commerce Scholarship  -  Summerville High
Vicki White PEO Memorial Scholarship  -  Sonora High Alternative Ed.: vocational/trade, college or university education
Wally Berry Memorial Scholarship  -  Sonora High: academics
Wes and Ruth Wyllie Memorial Art Scholarship  -  Summerville or Sonora High: art
William and Doris Morris Memorial Scholarship  -  Sonora High: academics
Wilma Lindberg Memorial Scholarship  -  Summerville or Sonora High: elementary teaching

Stage 3 in the spot light(s)

Theater-goers are experiencing the effects of new lights at Stage 3 Theater Company in downtown Sonora.

The Sonora Area Foundation, through its supporting organization – the Irving J. Symons Foundation for Tuolumne County - recently funded the purchase of lighting equipment to replace the company's lights, some more than 40 years old.

The company rolled out the equipment during its summer production of “The Diviners,” a show with a minimal set that relied on the new lights to convey time, place and mood.

Stage 3 lighting director, Matt Leamy, with new lights
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