



Big-Business Marketing for Small- and Mid-sized Arts Nonprofits

This summer the Lehigh Valley Arts Council will launch a Cultural List Exchange Co-Op (CLEC), a Lehigh Valley arts community database that will foster collaboration, improve marketing intelligence, encourage and simplify mailing-list exchanges, and expand audiences. This regional initiative was built upon arts research, the Arts Council's leadership in uniting the nonprofit sector, and the securing of broad funding towards the first three years of the program. Ten cultural nonprofits (Act 1, DeSales University Theatre; Allentown Symphony Association; America on Wheels; Bach Choir of Bethlehem; Baum School of Art; Historic Bethlehem Partnership; Muhlenberg College Theatre & Dance; PA Shakespeare Festival; Touchstone Theatre; and Zoellner Arts Center) have signed on to participate in the first phase of this program; by the end of the third year, the goal is to have forty-five organizations on board.

The cultural landscape is changing. The recent economic impact study, "Arts & Economic Prosperity IV," demonstrated that the region's nonprofit arts industry is a major economic contributor and rose 23% from \$169 million in 2005 to \$208 million in 2010. However, nationally there was a 20% decrease, coupled with a serious decline in public, foundation, and corporate arts funding—all of which raises serious concerns about future sustainability.

According to Arts Council Executive Director Randall Forte, "We cannot expect growth will continue without deliberate, collaborative marketing initiatives. Nonprofits need to increase their earned income to remain relevant and viable. CLEC offers a means to meet the challenges."

CLEC provides cultural nonprofits the training, tools, and expertise to grow customers and revenues through streamlining access to substantial, targeted arts patron data. Target Resource Group (TRG), the nation's leading provider of data management and consulting services, will house the data for CLEC and provide training for participants. Once an organization has uploaded its segmented patron lists, TRG's user-friendly eMerge interface allows the user to manage and analyze those lists in powerful ways. The program is also permission-based, so organizations retain 100% control of their data. A few of the immediate benefits are:

- Helping to keep patron data current by cleaning the database each quarter (for free) through the National Change of Address.
- Helping to identify the best organizations for partnering. Cross-penetration reports can help create successful partnerships, such as list trades, program ads, and collaborative events.
- Making the process of building direct mail lists easier than ever. With one-click trade requests, automatic merge/purge functionality, and nearly infinite filtering possibilities, creating mail lists is no longer the chore it used to be.
- Gaining a deeper understanding of arts patrons by using the geographic, demographic, and psychographic information that is appended to households.

TRG reports that communities that organize a network benefit from greater stability and larger audiences for their cultural organizations. The Lehigh Valley's unique geographic location provides additional opportunity for access to a bigger marketplace through regional exchanges. Nationally, TRG currently manages twenty community partnerships, including the Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance and ArtPride New Jersey / Discover Jersey Arts. Once CLEC is firmly established, the marketplace opens up to these neighboring co-ops.

CLEC is an engine for economic development, and local governments, corporations, and regional entities understand the value of investing in the future growth of our cultural sector. Discover Lehigh Valley was the first and largest supporter of CLEC because it believes in a co-op's ability to attract a broader audience. Nonresidents spend nearly 50% more per capita than residents, as demonstrated by the 2010 impact study. Moreover, there was a 52% increase in attendance by nonresidents; 1.7 million of them spent an average of \$30.77 per person. Now is the time to leverage and build upon the momentum of current growth in visits by nonresidents and meet the need to fill the increasing number of hotel rooms.

Additional funders for CLEC include the Century Fund; City Center; counties of Lehigh and Northampton; Harry C. Trexler Trust; Lehigh Gas Corp., Lehigh Valley Partnership; and Sylvia Perkin Perpetual Charitable Trust.

Urban/Suburban Connection

On Wednesday, April 24, 2013, thirty students and their families gathered at the Allentown Public Library to celebrate the students' involvement in the Urban/Suburban Connection program. Administered by the Arts Council, Urban/Suburban Connection is an after-school program designed to improve literacy, foster tolerance, and connect middle school children from the Allentown and Southern Lehigh school districts through the arts.

Beginning in March 2013, students from Raub Middle School and Southern Lehigh Middle School met with theatre artist Patti Carlis and faculty to address the theme "My Story, Your Story, Our Story." Faculty participants included art specialist Lynn Yocum and language arts specialist Holly Walker from Southern Lehigh, and art specialist Darlene Crouthamel and reading teacher Deana Young from Allentown's Raub Middle School.

During the eight-week residency, students incorporated creative dramatics and journaling to investigate and illuminate their family heritage. They explored precious objects that held special meaning for them as prompts for writing and creating an "altered book" of their dreams and heritage.

Urban/Suburban is funded through the Earned Income Tax Credit program and acknowledges the generosity of Capital BlueCross; National Penn Bancshares, Inc.; and PPL Susquehanna LLC.

Make an Entrance

Make an entrance at our spring membership event, *Getting in on the Act*, on Thursday, May 30, 2013. Join the festivities from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at Moravian College's Hauptert Union Bldg. Arena Theatre in Bethlehem (Main St. campus). Grab a friend and come to play. The excitement of creating a theatrical moment is the theme of the evening, with improvisation the centerpiece. Bring your creative energy—for both the inane and the serious—and sign up for a stand-up comedy scramble or a horror-ific makeover.

The featured guest of this year's event is Clay Western, vice president of Smooth-On, Inc., an Easton-based company and leader in the realm of theatrical effects and makeup.

Smooth-On creates specialty props and makeup for stage and screen, and its credits include the *Harry Potter* films and *Pirates of the Caribbean*. Mr. Western and his staff will be transforming willing attendees into zombies as part of the revelries.

Beginning at 6:30 p.m., acting troupes from area theatres, including Allentown Public Theatre, Lehigh Valley Charter High School for the Arts, Pennsylvania Playhouse, Pennsylvania Youth Theatre, and Touchstone Theatre, will improvise five-minute plays with involvement from the audience.

Generously underwritten by lead sponsor PPL, light food will be provided. Wine and beer will be available on a cash basis. Members attend for free; nonmembers pay \$10. Reservations are required; please call the Arts Council at 610-437-5915. Nonmembers may pay their registration online at LVArtsBoxOffice.org. Supporting sponsors include Baldrige Asset Management and CISS, Ltd.



Clay Western models zombie effects.

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Our Mission: To promote the arts; to encourage and support artists and their development; to assist arts organizations; and to facilitate communication and cooperation among artists, arts organizations, and the community.



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THE INSIDE TRACK

Lisa Fedon has just published her first book, *Sculpture Speaks*, which traces the stages of her

creative life through years of making metal sculpture. Arts Council Executive Director Randall Forte wrote the forward.

Dr. Roland Kushner contributed the eighth chapter, "Cultural Participation and Cultural Enterprise Formation in America's Counties," in *Creative Communities: Art Works in Economic Development*, published by the Brookings Institution.

Concord Chamber Singers conductor Dr. Jennifer Kell has written a book about women composers, *In Her Own Words: Conversations with Composers in the United States*, due out in June 2013.

Best wishes to Cannon Russell Jackson who, after twenty years at the Cathedral Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, has accepted a new job as director of music at St. Luke's Episcopal Church in San Antonio, Texas.

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ONE LAST THOUGHT

Get in on the act! Your membership in the Lehigh Valley Arts Council gives you access to the arts in so many different ways:

Make an entrance at our spring membership event on May 30. Bring your creative energy and come play at the region's most unique and fun-filled event.

Want to make an impact on the community through the arts? Learn about the PA Partners in the Arts Project Grant application process at our community workshops on May 16 and May 21.

Rub shoulders with the creative process! Arts Alive 2013 is a three-event series for members and their friends who are eager to engage their minds and spirits. Coming up on May 7: "An Evening of Swing!"

Membership provides you with special deals on arts services. Check out the enclosed flyer with discount coupons to Dan's Camera City.

For more information on these and other benefits of membership, visit our website, LVArtsCouncil.org. Get your art on!

Randall Forte