

INSIDE THE



The Arts Get a Head Start on Anti-racism

by Kathy McAuley

Terms like “diversity,” “inclusion” and “racism” invade our consciousness, leaving us with grand aspirations to change, yet they also bring with them an unanswered question: How do we eliminate the Lehigh Valley’s entrenched racism and produce a truly inclusive community?

This question was on the minds of a group of Lehigh Valley leaders who are holding community-wide meetings to explore ways to increase diversity. The result will be a seven-year “Strategic Plan for Diversity and Inclusion,” a plan of “strategic investments” to be made in the region. The initiative, called “Color Outside the Lines,” was recently announced by a leadership committee mustered by Alan Jennings of the anti-poverty organization, Community Action Committee of the Lehigh Valley (CACLV).

“What is the most important thing we can do to affect racism?” Jennings asks. “I have my own ideas, but we want to get input from the public at large. We don’t want to limit our scope in our search for ideas.”

Not doing a good job

The Lehigh Valley Arts Council will join those conversations, reflecting its ongoing concerns about the survival of the arts in a changing society. Executive Director Randall Forte said growth in attendance at arts functions was steady until 2015 which then showed a decline of 1.4 million people, a loss of 28 percent.

“We’re not doing a good job of reaching out to everyone,” he said. “We are at risk for losing some arts organizations who are not taking the opportunity to be more inclusive.”



WHO’S WHO?

Some of the players in
“Color Outside the Lines”

- **Winston Alozie**, CEO, Boys & Girls Club of Bethlehem
- **Don Cunningham**, CEO, Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corp.
- **Randall Forte**, Executive Director, Lehigh Valley Arts Council
- **Bill George**, Co-founder Touchstone Theatre and co-producer Festival Unbound 2019
- **Kumari Ghafoor-Davis**, Director, the Campaign for Racial and Ethnic Justice, CACLV
- **Alan Jennings**, Executive Director, CACLV
- **David Jones**, health benefits consultant and three-term Lehigh County commissioner
- **Vivian Robledo**, Director of Student Services and Minority Affairs, BASD
- **William Spence**, CEO, PPL Corporation

(Anti-racism...continued on page 3)

Young at Art Returns

The Lehigh Valley Arts Council has begun preparing for the annual Young at Art expo on **Saturday, March 14, 2020**, at Penn State Lehigh Valley from 10:00am to 2:00pm. With attendance averaging more than 600 parents and children a year since 2016, Young at Art is back for the 5th consecutive year and promises to be another fun-filled day of discovery.

Public engagement

Young at Art is a child's creative playground that allows them to try out being a dancer, actor, musician, or visual artist! Parents will witness how the Arts ignite their child's imagination, while also gathering valuable information about camps, classes and other educational offerings by local organizations. One of the most popular activities for kids is the Treasure Hunt, a self-guided map of each vendor's location. Children are encouraged to fulfill an activity at each vendor's booth in order to 'fill up' their map and receive a prize.

Exhibitor benefits

For exhibitors, the expo provides an up-close and personal way to interact with their intended customers. This year, the booths are larger and allow for greater ease to promote their arts education programming.

- **Visual Arts Booths** (18 ft. X 7 ft.) are located in the Lobby and Cafeteria areas and feature (2) 8 ft. tables with skirting, six chairs, signage, and electricity. A 16 ft. horizontal span of the two tables allows vendors to more easily converse with parents and also engage kids in an arts activity throughout the day
- **Performing Arts Booths** (12 ft. X 10 ft.) are located in the Multi-Purpose Room and feature (1) 8 ft. table, two chairs, signage, and electricity. Performing Arts groups are invited to select a 15-minute time slot to perform on the performance stage.

All vendors will receive a free organizational listing in the Young at Art program book, which is distributed to each household. They are also invited to attend Best Booth Ever, the pre-expo marketing seminar that highlights best practices from having an effective display area to capitalizing on every interaction. Go to <https://www.lvartscouncil.org/what-we-do/young-at-art/> for more information.



Exhibitor's Price: \$225
Deadline: January 15, 2020

Exhibitors must be Organizational Members of the Lehigh Valley Arts Council (For membership information visit www.LVArtsCouncil.org)

Exhibitors will have their choice of table location on the expo map.

Please indicate your requests on the Exhibitor Registration Form. Reservations will be held once payment is received. Space is limited, and available on a first come, first served basis.

Compare audience loss to the 12.5 % increase in minority populations in the last five years and it becomes obvious that reaching out to diverse audiences is both philosophically and financially imperative if the arts are to survive. In Lehigh County, nearly half of the population under 18 years is reportedly children of color. In Northampton County, it's a third. Children are the future, and the future looks like what today we call a "minority."

David Jones, a health benefits consultant who is co-chairing the CACLV project, said racism is "the most divisive issue of our time." He added by 2030, people of color will be in the majority in the Lehigh Valley, 10 years ahead of the rest of the United States. The question is will the Lehigh Valley be ready with a truly inclusive community?

"Color Outside the Lines" is seeking groups and individuals willing to be part of the eight-month conversation it is hoped will answer that question. Any group or individual interested in participating should contact Kumari Ghafoor-Davis, 484-893-1033 or kghafoor-davis@caclv.org.

The Arts Council has a head start on an inclusion project after successfully executing the multi-year "Arts & Access" program designed to increase participation among persons with physical, sensory, or cognitive limitations. Recently, it held Champions of Inclusion, a trade fair to promote the inclusion programs already being done by a dozen local arts and social service organizations.

Not being heard

Maintaining and growing a diverse audience is the principal problem of nearly every arts organization in the Valley. "They've been and not felt welcome," Forte says. "They don't see people of their own kind working there, let alone attending, and that doesn't send a message of inclusion."

Generating ideas for inclusion is what the community conversations are supposed to be about, so here's a head start on some thoughts about the role the arts can play.

- Put representatives of racial minorities on arts boards. Modify the idea that board members must all be able to bring in large contributions ("give, get or get off")
- Convince institutions to open their facilities at low or no charge to groups that don't have their own space.
- Charge less or nothing for tickets sold through minority cohorts.
- Remove the sense of "exclusivity" from arts activities such as classical music and museum patronage.
- Cast racial minorities into roles that have no particular racial identity

- Require that arts groups factor diversity into their programming in order to receive grants

The arts scored another early win with October's "Festival Unbound: Celebrating Our 21st Century Village" billed as "Ten days of original theatre, dance, music, art and conversation to celebrate and imagine our future together."

The play "Hidden Seed" by Touchstone co-founder Bill George and Lehigh University professor Seth Moglen, engendered discussions about inclusion and the importance of having our stories include various perspectives, in this case European, black and native American.

"People feel like their story is not being heard, that they're invisible," said George. There was a very dramatic and emotional exchange between the three women as they attempted to tell the story of the city in a way they can all accept.

Children are the future

Vivian Robledo of Bethlehem Area School District, pointed out that schools and youth organizations should be on the front line of anti-racism programs because racial difficulties begin at a very young age. She said young children are already exposed to two racial traumas: their personal racial and cultural differences and a perceived difference she called an "implicit bias."

At the Boys & Girls Club of Bethlehem, Winston Alozie works with more than 450 young people varying in age and race, with about 85 % at or below the poverty line. He incorporates the arts into many of his programs but says arts institutions could help make the effort easier.

Alozie says some scheduled arts events are simply not culturally relevant to young minorities. "It's not news that kids may find a symphony boring," he said. Kids need to be part of the program, be allowed to touch the instruments and see them being played up close.

"We should be bringing in artists that look like the kids. Wouldn't it be great to have donors send their dollars for artists who are from Botswana?" he asks.

To welcome more diverse audiences, Alozie suggests that arts organizations...

- Make programs available at night or on weekends so working parents can bring their children.
- Make programs free or affordable to low-income parents.
- Schedule programs that encourage participation such as dancing, singing or drumming.

28 Arts Activities Given Grants

ArtsCOUNT 2019 Photo courtesy Marco Calderon



Advocates of arts and culture in the Lehigh Valley gathered this past October at the Sigal Museum in Easton, PA for our annual arts rally, **ArtsCOUNT**. At the event we honored 28 recipients of PPA Project Stream grant funding from the region. Pictured above is a group photo of the grantees. **For more photos visit our Facebook page @LVArtsCouncil.**

The Pennsylvania Partners in the Arts (PPA) program is a statewide initiative by the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts. The Lehigh Valley Arts Council is an independent contractor and administers grant applications in Carbon, Lehigh, and Northampton counties. Grants are given to help produce unique, community-based arts projects in the coming year.

Curious to find out who and what was funded?

Visit our website (www.lvartsCouncil.org/lv-ppa-project-stream-grantees) to view the complete list of grantees with descriptions and dates of their arts activities.

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- When museums show artifacts that interest kids, allow touching and schedule accessible programming around the exhibition.
- Introduce kids to artists who are passionate about their art and willing to let kids watch them or help them create.
- Have “meet the artist” opportunities after concerts or demonstrations.

“Something we don’t often talk about is the elitism that is brought on by the spaces our art is in,” Alozie said, such as museums and concert halls. “We are taught to be reverent around art, and that shouldn’t be. It doesn’t always have to be stuffy.

“Kids loving things does not mean they are sitting quietly.”

How to Color Outside the Lines

If you would like to be a moderator or participant in a discussion group, contact
Kumari Ghafoor-Davis
484-893-1033
kghafoor-davis@caclv.org

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Our Mission:
To promote the value of the arts, foster collaboration in the community, and encourage arts engagement for all people in the Lehigh Valley.

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GET INSPIRED

“You can't use up creativity. The more you use the more you have.”

~ *Maya Angelou*



BE A VOICE FOR THE ARTS

I began as a dancer when I was eight, but I didn't know how important it was to me until I was a freshman in high school. I was having a lot of social problems with my friends and felt like an outcast. But at dance I found a family. I became so much closer to my dance friends and

I looked forward to dance class. I also loved how I could pour myself into dance. My skill was something I could control: if I worked hard I would get better. Dance was a constant for me in a time in my life where everything was unsure and lonely.

Kayleigh Scott,
Allentown, PA

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ONE LAST THOUGHT

Greater Diversity Nurtures Greater Relevance

The Lehigh Valley has never had a regional cultural plan and the absence of “a larger world view” reinforces a pervasive dynamic: duplication + limited resources + increased competition = instability—all leading to an overabundance of cultural nonprofits at risk. Adding to these challenges is the reality that the Lehigh Valley is becoming increasingly diverse but our cultural institutions (their staff, Boards and programming) do not proportionately reflect the changing demographics.

Solutions to these challenges should come from varied voices that bring new ways of thinking. The Arts can have a significant role to play in shaping those conversations about the future, but before we start building we must first acknowledge, then address, the lack of diversity already existing in the arts in the Lehigh Valley. In the face of continual capital expansions and multi-million dollar campaigns, How can cultural nonprofits guarantee equity and inclusion without a proven track record? How can we help our cultural organizations become more inclusive? The Arts are more than entertainment and parking revenues. During this time of upheaval and division in the nation, they can serve as a platform to advance civic dialogue and address serious issues like racism, global warming and social justice.

Randall Forte

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