
State of the Arts

City of Grand Junction Commission on Arts and Culture

~February, 1995 ~

Annual Report to the City Council~1994~The Commission's Year in Review

COMMISSION HIRES ITS FIRST CULTURAL ARTS COORDINATOR

In June of '94 the GRAND JUNCTION COMMISSION ON ARTS AND CULTURE opened its own office and hired a new half-time Cultural Arts Coordinator. Allison Sarmo, a charter member of the Commission from 1990-1993, and chairperson during that time, was chosen from twenty-five applicants. Former Commission Chair Sandra Brown and other members spent a great deal of time working with the City Council and City Manager to gain approval for this position and lay the groundwork for the new office.

The Coordinator's main tasks include providing staff assistance to the Commission, acting as communication link between the City and the Commission, and working to accomplish the agency's various projects, including a cultural events calendar, assessments and surveys, the Business in the Arts Award, annual roundtable meetings, workshops for local artists, grants to local arts organizations, informational services, and more.

Even with half-time staff, many Commission members still function as a working board, volunteering their time toward ongoing projects and planning new programs.

In January of '95 the Commission, along with the Downtown Development Authority and the Mesa County Riverfront Commission, moved into new office space at the C. D. Smith Building, which had been purchased by the City Council for the Museum of Western Colorado. The Museum is currently using part the building for storage and offices and eventually plans to remodel and expand the facilities into a 75,000 square foot complex.

COMMISSION PUBLICATIONS

The Source: A Directory of Grand Junction Area

Artists and Arts Organizations first published in 1992 was revised and reprinted this past year, thanks to the untiring efforts of Commission member Michael Smedley. The directory now lists over 500 local artists, both amateur and professional, and over 80 local arts and cultural organizations, and arts-related businesses. Copies are available at the Art Center and through the Commission (243-5885).

In September a new quarterly *Community Cultural Calendar* was first compiled and published. The idea for doing a cultural events calendar was one which Commission members have worked toward for several years. Commissioner Karen Kiefer produced the first calendar brochure and

subsequent brochures done by Coordinator Allison Sarmo have followed the

same format. The calendar for Spring, 1995 just arrived from the printers and will be distributed to a growing mailing list, as well as through City Hall, the Parks and Recreation office, the Mesa County Public Library, the Art Center, the GJ Symphony office, the Museum of Western Colorado, Mesa State College, School District 51, Jitters, and several other retail outlets.

GRAND JUNCTION BUSINESS IN THE ARTS AWARD INSTITUTED

Business support for cultural endeavors is strong in the Grand Valley and in recognition of this the Commission instituted the first annual Business in the Arts Award as a cooperative venture between the Commission, the Grand Junction Chamber of Commerce and the City Council. Commissioner Richard Leinaweaver was instrumental in bringing about this program patterned after a statewide Business in the Arts Award given by the Colorado Business Committee for the Arts.

Arts organizations and individuals were invited to nominate a business which showed outstanding commitment and support for arts and culture. Norwest Banks was the 1994 winner, chosen for their support of Art on the Corner, the Avalon Theater, their commission of the Shakespeare statue at Mesa State College, and sponsorship of the GJ Symphony's free summer concert in Lincoln Park. An award ceremony was held last July and Mayor Mantlo presented Norwest President Bill Petty with a plaque and a sandstone sculpture by Palisade artist Lyle Nichols, which has just been installed outside the rear

During 1994 the number of requests from local arts and cultural organizations for financial assistance increased significantly, and as a result the Commission doubled its sponsorship of community arts projects and programming, without overspending their annual allocation from the City Council. The largest recipient of funding was the After School Art Experiences for Children Program, which received \$2000 for the '93-'94 school year and \$3000 for the '94-'95 school year to provide art classes after school to students of three elementary schools, with local artists as teachers. Plans are to increase the number of participating schools in 1995.

The Western Colorado Center for the Arts received \$2000 to pay for a new sign above the newly remodeled entrance to the Center. The Commission underwrote the \$1000 performance of Su Teatro, a Hispanic theater company, at the recent Chicano-Mexican Youth Conference, and also underwrote the \$650 Mesa Repertory Dance Company's free summer dance performance at Mesa State College this past August.

The Commission gave \$750 to the newly formed Marsha Thomas Memorial Chamber Music Festival Committee for organizational start-up

entrance of the downtown bank at 4th and Main.

Nominations are currently being solicited for the 1995 award and this year there are two separate categories: large businesses and small businesses. Committee members Leinaweaver, Paula Andrews, and Jeanne Killgore have chosen sculpture works by Summer Wisel as this year's awards. The winners will be announced in May.

SUPPORT OF ART ORGANIZATIONS

costs aimed at producing a chamber music festival the Saturday after September, 1995. Small chamber groups will perform throughout the downtown area and under a tent set up beside Two Rivers Convention Center. The Downtown Development Authority received \$585 to help with Avalon Theater mailings and other arts promotions.

Several groups received grants of \$500, including the Missoula Children's Theater Company who brought in "The Wizard of Oz" and cast 58 local children to perform the play and plan to return again in '95, the Shumann Singers, a local choral group who perform throughout Western Colorado, and the DooZoo Children's Museum. JABOA (Just a Bunch of Artists) received \$96.80 to fund the promotion of their January exhibit at Mesa County Public Library.

A Brief History of the Commission

1990 ~ The GRAND JUNCTION COMMISSION ON ARTS AND CULTURE (originally called the Arts Commission) was appointed by the City Council and charged with reviewing and assessing the state of the arts in the Grand Valley, defining what the needs are, prioritizing those needs, providing information, promoting cooperation and collaboration among arts and cultural groups, and maximizing resources available to the arts. The agency spent the first year organizing, writing by-laws, and inventorying and surveying all local arts and cultural organizations. They presented the Council with a report of the survey data and a list of arts organizations.

1991 ~ The Commission developed the *Grand Junction Strategic Cultural Plan* utilizing a \$7500 grant from the Colorado Council on the Arts and help from a twenty member Cultural Plan Steering Committee. The plan talks about what can be done to enhance community cultural development, provide more and better cultural activities and experiences for residents, and meet some of the needs of local artists.

A community-wide meeting was held in January to kick off the planning process. In February a focus group of twenty met to define cultural needs and issues for the plan.

A random sample telephone survey of 225 households was done in April to learn people's attitudes and activities

with regards to arts and culture.

In May a broad-based citizen steering committee was formed, which included several Commission members, to address the various issues. The Cultural Plan Steering Committee met during the summer and compiled a draft plan which was reviewed and revised by the Commission. During September and October the *Draft Strategic Cultural Plan* was circulated to numerous local organizations and two hearings for public comment.

In December the City Council formally adopted the *G J Strategic Cultural Plan* and allocated funding to begin its implementation.

1992 ~ The Commission undertook to accomplish many of the recommendations in the cultural plan including: 1.) Updating the list of local arts and cultural organizations and publishing this information in a pamphlet, 2.) Compiling and publishing *The Source: A Directory of Area Artists and Arts Organizations*, 3.) Compiling and publishing a pamphlet listing arts educational opportunities, 4.) Producing a day-long workshop for local artists on the business of being an artist, 5.) Researching and presenting two reports to City Council: *The Economic Impact of the Arts in Grand Junction*, which showed a \$3 million impact to the local economy annually, and *Public Funding for the Arts*, outlining options for on-going City support of arts and culture, and 6.) Producing two public service announcements on the benefits of the arts which aired extensively on local television.

Consultants Hammer, Siler, George were hired to complete a comprehensive cultural facilities feasibility study. One of the major recommendations of the study was that a new performing arts facility was needed and that the most practical option was purchase and renovation of the Avalon Theater. The Commission worked with the Avalon Theater Committee, the City Council, and the Downtown Development Authority to help with this project.

The Commission also help put together the first Grand West Performing Arts Festival in the summer of '92, underwriting festival expenses of \$5000 to showcase performances by Mesa State College, Art Center Theater, the Western Colorado Chorale, Colorado West Ballet, and others. In November the Commission hosted the second annual Arts Roundtable meeting which brought together board members and staff of local arts and cultural groups to discuss issues of mutual concern.

1993 ~ Implementation of the cultural plan recommendations was still a priority and the Commission hosted two workshops for local artists on how to document

art work and artists' networking opportunities. They sponsored the production and promotion of a children's play at the Avalon Theater, "The Frog Prince" and again underwrote some of the expenses of the second Grand West Performing Arts Festival that summer. A slide presentation was developed and given at a Rotary Club lunch detailing arts and cultural activities in the Grand Valley.

The Commission provided funding to help start the Art Experiences for Children Program which provides art classes after school at several elementary schools. They also hosted the third annual Arts Roundtable meeting for arts organizations.

News From Other Arts Organizations

WEST. CO. CENTER FOR THE ARTS

There's a new opening at the Western Colorado Center for the Arts since the Center completed an extensive \$80,000 remodeling project which included a new larger, more accessible entrance, along with two new signs, an expanded and relocated gift shop, additional exhibition space in what had been the lobby, and improvements to the stage. Funding for this project came from many Center members and patrons, grants by the Gates, Boettcher, and El Pomar Foundations, and the Commission on Arts and Culture. The expanded gift shop now features a wide variety of art work, unique jewelry and gifts by regional and national artists.

The Center continues to offer numerous art classes and workshops for adults and children, from drawing to batik to drama, and class enrollment is up significantly. Art Center Theater attendance is also up this season following the production of Neil Simon's "Lost in Yonkers" last November, and "The Long Farewell" by local playwright Louise Anderson. Agatha Christie's popular mystery "Ten Little Indians" will be performed March 17-18 and 24-25, with a dinner theater being offered March 17.

New exhibits by the Western Colorado Watercolor Society, Ernest Porps, and Andy Burns open March 3, and the second annual Fashion Gala fundraiser will be held March 31 and April 1 at the Hilton Hotel.

MUSEUM OF WESTERN COLORADO

The Board of Directors of the Museum of Western Colorado and Museum supporters met numerous times recently with the Mesa County Commissioners to discuss funding for the Museum system, which includes Dinosaur Valley, Cross Orchards Historic Site, the Main Museum, Rabbit Valley, Riggs Hill, and other sites. The County has now allocated a full one mill (\$516,000) for the Museum in 1995. Now that the Museum has settled its relationship with the County and, after three years of uncertainty, is once again part of the budget process, the capital campaign for the new museum is back on track.

Recruitment for a new development officer is underway with that person in place as staff fund raiser by mid-April. Scheduled opening of the new museum is spring, 1998, depending upon raising an additional \$3 million between now and the end of 1996.

Currently the Main Museum is showing a new exhibit on the history of the Boy Scouts from 1942 to 1995. It features uniforms from each decade, memorabilia, and

lectures by local scouts. Historian Dave Fishell just completed a series of classes entitled "Hands Up! Infamous Outlaws and Daring Hold-ups of Western Colorado." Fishell has also been busy signing copies of the second edition of his book *The Grand Heritage: A Photographic History of Grand Junction*. He will teach a five week course on Grand Junction history in March and April.

GRAND JUNCTION SYMPHONY

The Grand Junction Symphony has two concerts still to come in their '94-95 season. March 11 the symphony orchestra will be joined by the symphony chorus and the Grand Valley Children's Choir to present "Carmina Burana" by modern composer Carl Orff.

April 25 the symphony will perform along with renowned pianist Angela Cheng. This summer the symphony and the Centennial Band will again present their free concert in Lincoln Park, a gift to the community through the sponsorship of Norwest Banks. Three thousand people attended last year's summer concert, and this summer promises to be outstanding.

AVALON THEATER

The Avalon Theater project made great strides this summer when the City of Grand Junction and the Downtown Development Authority purchased the Avalon Theater building for use as a performing arts facility. To date over \$800,000 has been raised to complete Phases I and II of the needed renovation. Phase I will address code issues in order to make the entire inside of the building open and usable to the public, remodel the restrooms, provide handicap-accessible restrooms, and upgrade the mechanical systems throughout the structure. Phase II will completely reconstruct and restore the original 1923 look of the building's front facade.

Ed Chamberlin is the architect and project manager. The theater will be closed from mid-May until the end of August to complete construction. Currently the theater is in use almost every weekend for various types of productions and events.

DOO ZOO CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

The Doo Zoo Children's Museum recently completed a \$30,000 renovation thanks to a grant in that amount from the Gates Foundation. The museum now has several new exhibits as well as a new half-time executive

director, Kirk McConnell. McConnell, a graduate of Mesa State College, plans to expand the theatrical offerings in the Doo Zoo's Roz Olson Theater beginning with the play "James and the Giant Peach" by Roald Dahl, which opens April 21 and continues every Saturday and Sunday through June 18.

McConnell has formed the Grand Junction Children's Theater Company, a division of the Doo Zoo, and plans an annual theater season as well as continuing the summer children's theater workshops.

WEST.COLO.BOTANICAL SOCIETY

The Western Colorado Botanical Society has opened its first office and hired its first half-time coordinator,

Debra Gore, who will oversee the first phase of the botanic garden construction during the next few months. Groundbreaking will occur by the beginning of March. Phase I will include the compost demonstration site, the Weddle Native Colorado Garden, featuring plants native to the state, and the Xeriscape Garden, featuring an innovative water conserving irrigation system for the entire garden.

In the fall construction will be started on the Butterfly House and the greenhouse. The botanic garden is being built on a site purchased by the City of Grand Junction and being leased to the society for twenty years. It is located at the south end of Seventh Street, just north of Watson Island.

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Paula Andrews
Ursula Hemmerich
Karen Kiefer
Jeanne Killgore

Richard Leinaweaver
Ron Maupin
Ann Sanders
Allison Sarmo, Cultural
Arts Coordinator
