

The Value of the Arts

Enriching lives through cultural experiences in Central Florida

Residents and visitors alike have flocked to Central Florida's arts and entertainment venues for decades. According to 2012's *Americans for the Arts' Arts & Economic Prosperity IV* report, an estimated \$264 million is generated by nonprofit cultural organizations and their audiences, and nearly 9,000 jobs are supported by the industry annually. Investment in the arts fosters the betterment of our community above and beyond the economic impact to Central Florida. A study of Florida 12th graders in 2008, 2011 and 2014 showed that students with more arts education had higher test scores, higher GPAs, and were less likely to drop out of school. This holds true regardless of socioeconomic status or ethnicity.

Nowhere is the value of arts education illustrated better than in the impact it's had in developing talent for the creative sector in Orange and Osceola counties. Funded by a generous grant from JPMorgan Chase Foundation, the Orange County Career Pathways for Creative Sector Jobs at Evans High School is a program that draws from partnerships between United Arts, Valencia College, UCF, Orange County Public Schools and the Children's Home Society. The program equips students with the skills needed to secure employment in the high-demand entertainment production industries in Central Florida. Students can earn industry credentials and credit hours toward degrees at Valencia College and University of Central Florida.

The successful program will be replicated in the Osceola County School District supported by a second grant from JPMorgan Chase Foundation. The Careers in Creative Arts program will be developed at a new "STEAM" high school located on the north side of Boggy Creek Road, west of East Lake Elementary School. These one-of-a-kind programs are paving pathways to prosperity for our students in Central Florida.



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Additionally, a \$100,000 grant from Dr. Phillips Charities in 2016 will expand the arts education programs in Osceola County to reach more than 21,000 children in every grade level in the district with more art and creative programming.

United Arts' efforts to increase exposure to arts, science and history extend outside the classroom. Recent efforts to promote diversity and inclusiveness in underserved and ethnically diverse Central Florida communities culminated in the taste-of-the-arts event, *Arts for ALL Day*. This free public event took place on Feb. 4 in Loch Haven Cultural Park in Orlando and included more than 60 local resident arts and cultural organizations. *Arts for ALL Day* was successful in fulfilling United Arts' vision as a fun, accessible, family-friendly experience to introduce new communities to the arts, and served as a tangible kickoff to this year's collaborative *Campaign for the Arts*, which began Feb. 1 and runs through May 2.

With a new year and a new collaborative *Campaign for the Arts* under way, you can show your support for our initiative by heading to our website, www.UnitedArts.cc, and clicking "Give Now" to make a gift for 2017. Each donation enriches our community through exposure to the remarkable arts, science and history programs in our region! **oam**

