



creative community news

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Imagination Takes Center Stage

By Andrea Rahardja

"I thought I was going to be a computer wiz," says Harold Steward, performing arts coordinator at the South Dallas Cultural Center. "And then I took my first theater class, and it was from that moment that I was like, 'Oh, there's going to be a career change.'"

For the past year, Mr. Steward has worked at the center, a place which he credits in part for nurturing his love of theater and the arts. As a teenager, Mr. Steward used to visit the center to attend movies and shows. It was at those performances that he first began to make profound cultural connections through the arts. His first interaction and understanding of apartheid, for example, came as a result of attending a theater performance.

"I just remember having this cultural lesson through arts," he says of the production.

Once involved in the arts, Mr. Steward attended Booker T. Washington High School, an arts magnet school in the Dallas Independent School District. It was "a very nurturing place," he says, where he not only broadened his horizons about art, but also culture.

"Booker T. was simply amazing. For the first time I was exposed to different cultures other than black, white and Hispanic; it was kind of like a mini New York City. And it was the first time I was exposed to all of the other art forms. In my four years at Booker T., I never saw my house because I was at school in the early morning and late at night because we absolutely loved that place."

Mr. Steward said that he's learned that talent in the arts is worthless without hard work and focus.

"I'd like to let [children] know that art without discipline is nothing," he says. "Theater is not just a superstar mentality. There are a lot of talented people in the world, and a lot of talented people who don't work so you'll never know their potential."

Mr. Steward says that theater gives his creativity an



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avenue to explore his imagination and that art has served as a therapeutic outlet in his life.

"I draw my inspiration from my culture," he says. "I'm definitely, definitely inspired by those who have come before and the work they have done to make it so easy for me to access the things that I can access. This last presidential election...the thing that did it for me was the work [of our ancestors] that made it so it could be possible. I'll always be mindful of [our ancestors'] work."

Mr. Steward recently launched Soul Children's Theatre, which will produce youth-oriented shows at the South Dallas Cultural Center. The mission of the theatre is to create high-quality performances to cultivate appreciation for the African Diaspora.

"I have always been one to say 'What is my contribution going to be to the culture?' There are a lot of people [in the Black theater community] doing

a lot of the same things. While that has its place, there's also room for something different," he says. "So I kind of wanted to figure out: 'What is the void in the black theater community?' And since I was gaining this love and respect for children's theater and exposure to it, that's where the interest came. The more and more I saw this as a possibility, the more I decided that this was my calling."

Mr. Steward says that he's very inspired by children; they remind him of his own creativity as a child.

"I would like [children] to let them know that not only do they have a right and equal access to art and culture, but also they have the responsibility of it," he says. "The responsibility is to build upon the strong legacy and to make anew."

Andrea Rahardja and Serena Anis are students at Greenhill School

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The Art of Helping Others

On Dec. 4, fifteen high school students from Greenhill School, a pre-k-12 private school located in North Dallas, converged on the South Dallas Cultural Center to volunteer with Big Thought as part of their school's service learning day.

They arrived at the center, eager to jump into the day's activities. After an overview of the organization and a tour of the cultural center, the group then split in two, with half heading to Oak Cliff's Hampton-Illinois library to assist in producing materials for the library's "The Polar Express"-themed Library Live! event. Those that remained had the opportunity to interview local artists and artistic directors who are among the hundreds of individuals that make Thriving Minds programming possible in our local communities. After receiving a crash-course in journalism and photography, the students interviewed and photographed their subjects and, under a tight deadline, produced the profiles featured in this issue of the Creative Community Newsletter.

For the students, these projects were eye-opening experiences on the important role that creativity, imagination and art play in everyday living.



calendar of events

south dallas

St. Phillip's School and Community Center
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., Dallas, 214-421-5221

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214-421-5221

St. Phillips School offers an afterschool care program open to its students and those in the surrounding community. Children can participate in activities ranging from art, music and dance to technology, finance and science. Sports also are offered.

South Dallas Cultural Center
3400 South Fitzhugh, Dallas, 214-939-2787

Act One: A Child's First Theatre Class
Saturdays; 9-10a.m.

Ages: 3-5

The class uses African/African-American literature as the foundation for playmaking, as a tool to teach acting techniques, and a means to provide education, history and culture.

West African Dance

Saturdays; Beginners 2-3p.m.;
Intermediate/Advanced 3-4:15p.m.

Ages: All

Students will learn traditional West African dance, including proper stance, rhythmic movement, dance class protocol, and historical/social significance of dance.

Don't You Want to Be Free? Presented by Soul Children's Theatre and The South Dallas Cultural Center
Feb. 5-8; 7:30p.m. Thurs- Sat and 3p.m. Sun

Cost: \$10 Adults; \$7 Students/Seniors
Directed by H. J. Steward, "Don't You Want to Be Free" is an impressionistic play that uses Langston Hughes' lyrical and rhythmic poetry and black music to capture the scope of Negro history from Africa to America.

dallas

Dallas Theater Center
3636 Turtle Creek Blvd, Dallas, 214-252-3918

DaVerse Lounge

Jan. 9; Feb. 27; April 17; 7:30-10p.m.

Cost: Free

Ages: All; 21 and under only on the mic
DaVerse Lounge is an open mic, spoken-word poetry event for teens presented by the Dallas Theater Center. Hosted by award-winning performance poet Will Richey, the event is an opportunity for area youth to showcase their talents. In addition to sharing their own works, participants are treated to performances by Richey and other guest artists.

Angelika Film Center & Cafe
5321 Mockingbird Lane, Dallas, 214-824-2100

KidFilm Festival

Jan. 12-25

The 25th Annual KidFilm Festival offers a diverse lineup of programs that feature beloved literary works come to life, and gives families an opportunity to see and discuss great films together.

Creative Arts Center Helps others Find their Inner Artist

by Ryann McMurry and Cat Hobbs

Diana Pollack, executive director of the Creative Arts Center of Dallas (CAC) in far east Dallas, once knew a stockbroker who walked in her doors looking for an activity to de-stress her life. After taking a variety of art classes at the CAC, the stockbroker decided to quit her job and work as a teacher at the CAC. Ms. Pollack's face lit up as she described a person whose life was changed by art.



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Although Ms. Pollack does not consider herself an artist, her mission, and that of the CAC, is to bring art back into the local community. "It's rewarding to see people express themselves through an art form they have never tried before," she says.

Before Ms. Pollack joined the CAC, she studied public relations and journalism. After taking an interest in

nonprofit art programs, however, she has become a staple in the arts community.

The CAC was founded 44 years ago as a sculpture school, and today offers more than 300 classes and workshops ranging from two-dimensional art to stone carving. The CAC accommodates more than 1,500 student—mostly teenagers, adults and senior citizens wanting to further their arts education or to explore a completely new field. The center also caters to younger children through its community outreach efforts.

Last summer, through its partnership with Thriving Minds, the CAC launched a project called Camp Metalhead in which Dallas high school students learned to weld. Welding provided the students with

a new artistic outlet as well as a job skills training. In addition to cultivating new skills, students in CAC programs are able to exhibit their art, allowing them to think of themselves as "real" artists.

Ms. Pollack believes Dallas has great potential as an arts-oriented city. However she expresses her frustration about the lack of knowledge about the CAC and other arts facilities. "A lot of people don't know about the opportunities available because many times they are off the beaten path," she says. "The problem with hidden gems is that they're hidden."

Despite these setbacks, Ms. Pollack maintains that she loves her job and hopes to continue to bring art to those who need it most. Ms. Pollack currently is planning the CAC's next major event, a spring lecture series that in which artists will share their unique forms of art.

Ryann McMurry and Cat Hobbs are students at Greenhill School

Theater Director Inspires Young Talent

By Marisa Breitfeller

Teresa Wash is a dedicated woman who helps mold the futures of a new generation of artists. As the executive artistic director of Oak Cliff's TeCo Theatrical Productions, she is in charge of directing various theatrical performances for the community. She has a passion for the theater, which has been a major part of her life since she joined a touring company and founded TeCo in Georgia as a means of bringing theater to her local community.

Ms. Wash became interested in the theater when she joined a company of performers after finishing college in her home town of Albany, Georgia. She enjoyed performing in the plays and meeting other artists, saying she "loved being around the creative process."

She took a course in screenwriting at Georgia State University, and spent the next 18 years writing plays.

Her plays were performed by a touring company and she eventually grew tired of writing and touring. This led her to create a community theatre, which eventually evolved into TeCo.

It is her passion for theater that inspires her to work as hard as she can every day. "Seeing a little germ of an idea develop and mushroom into something that I never thought could exist, seeing it breathe...is the utopia situation," she says.

Ms. Wash also works to help younger artists strengthen their talents. TeCo hosts an annual "New Play" competition where six one-act plays written by local playwrights are performed for audiences. The audiences then vote on the best one. The winning playwright receives a thousand dollars and two round-trip plane tickets. Apprenticeships are also provided for young people interested in theater. For four months, the apprentices learn about different aspects of theater and stage a full production on their own at the culmination of the program.



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Ms. Wash enjoys helping young artists pursue their interest in theater. She has seen for herself the way theater can change a person's life, redirecting negative energy to help people have better lives. "This is the reason why I'm in this business," she says. "It's why I wake up in the morning."

Marisa Breitfeller and Kelly Drumm are students at Greenhill School