The Arts | An Economic Driver in the Valley

When we think of the Arts in the Lehigh Valley, our thoughts generally turn to the bounty of high-quality artistic venues, outstanding museums and symphonies, and the vibrant theater scene. Residents of the Lehigh Valley have access to the arts in a way that is not always available in similar-sized regions. Festivals, community celebrations, and concerts that lighten our spirits and add to the quality of life in our community are plentiful.

But it is important to think beyond the pleasures we receive as a result of this bounty. It’s important to also recognize the tremendous economic value of the Arts in the Lehigh Valley. Whether it’s the thousands of daily visitors from outside our region, or we as residents ourselves attending events, much-needed revenue is created and spent here in the Lehigh Valley region.

A recent Lehigh Valley Arts Council study pegs the nonprofit arts/culture sector as a $186.4 million industry in the Lehigh Valley—one that supports 6,908 full-time equivalent jobs and generates $18.8 million in local and state tax revenue.

“When the Community Foundation supports arts and cultural organizations, we know that we are not simply helping these organizations, but rather we are making an important investment in the economy of our region.”

So, whether you’re interested in attending a concert at Miller Symphony Hall in Allentown or at Levitt Pavilion in Bethlehem, or appreciating the wonderful collections at the Sigal Museum in Easton, by supporting the Arts of the Lehigh Valley you are adding significantly to the economic health of our community. We invite you to contact us to learn more about the vibrant Lehigh Valley arts and cultural organizations and how we can partner to maintain these high-quality programs and economic investments.

Bernie Story  
President and CEO  
Lehigh Valley Community Foundation

LVCF Visits ArtQuest’s Levitt Pavilion Concert Featuring Folk Rockers Donna the Buffalo

LVCF is a sponsor of the 2019 ArtQuest’s Levitt Pavilion Summer Concert Series featuring more than 50 free shows at the Levitt Pavilion, located at the base of the iconic Bethlehem Steel blast furnaces on the city’s south side.

The Community Foundation is a sponsor for the Donna the Buffalo concert on Thursday, August 29, at 7:30 p.m. LVCF’s Erika Riddle Petrozelli, associate vice president of philanthropy, will welcome the crowd and introduce the band to kick-off the show. Learn more...

LVCF and Two Rivers Health & Wellness Foundation Partner to Fund Nonprofit Effectiveness

LVCF and Two Rivers Health & Wellness Foundation are teaming up to expand the Nonprofit Effectiveness Pilot. In 2018, LVCF established the program that targets support to strengthen governance, management, and operations of nonprofit organizations.

Two Rivers has joined with LVCF and will fund two additional organizations next year in Northampton County to participate in the initiative and expand funding for two others already part of the pilot program. Learn more...
What the Freddy Awards Mean to the Lehigh Valley

On May 22, 2003, the State Theatre Center for the Arts made history by becoming the first performing arts center in the country to produce, along with broadcast partner WFMZ Channel 69, a three-hour, live television show to recognize and reward outstanding achievement in local high school musical theater. It was an extraordinary triumph for creator and executive producer Shelley Brown and her dedicated staff. Regional high schools from the Lehigh, Northampton and Warren County, NJ region now had their own TONY®’s – The FREDDY© Awards.

A Conversation with Shelley Brown, Executive Producer

What does the Freddy Awards mean to the performing arts students and their families in the Lehigh Valley?

The Freddy program means so much to our whole community, but especially the kids that participate. Before the Freddys, there was no official recognition of high-school musical theatre participation and the teamwork that it entails. You could visit a school and see a trophy case full of academic, sports, and band trophies but nothing for theatre. That empty space was our original motivation for starting the program—now it has grown into so much more.

Thanks to the television exposure provided by WFMZ Channel 69, the whole community has benefited from seeing so many performances live on-air. This has increased the attendance at all of the high school plays in the region, and supported the fundraising efforts of the schools.

Schools and individual students have received scholarships and awards totaling well over $1.5 million through the program.

And, so far, eight area students have been awarded full, four-year scholarships to college (thank you West Virginia University) each valued at $94,000.

Those awards have changed lives for our participants and their families forever. But, even more than that, the community that has been created by the participation of the theatre students is astounding. The support that the kids receive from each other—the recognition of excellence peer to peer—is an amazing thing to watch. It changes lives. We see it.

What has the Five-year Community Partnership Grant from LVCF meant to the Freddy Awards Performers?

The State Theatre has benefited from the five year commitment of the Lehigh Valley Community Foundation through the community partnership grant. We are dedicated to the program and the fact that we could count on the grant enabled us to focus firmly on the student experience. We know that the students are counting on us to provide this amazing creative outlet for them, and knowing that regular funding was secure for five seasons, with the expectation of excellence, was a blessing.

How important is a thriving arts scene on the vitality of life in the Lehigh Valley?

One of my favorite aspects of the Freddy program is how the program ultimately affects us all. Yes, it is an arts program. It is creative. It is that creativity, that ability to imagine more than the obvious, that colors a community. Some of our participants will go on to a career in theatre or the arts. Most will not. What they will do is be the next generation to make decisions in the Lehigh Valley, to run businesses, to take care of people—and being healthy, happy people matters. To have experienced the joy of teamwork and camaraderie can only benefit us all.

What would you say to those potential donors who might wish to help support the Freddys?

There is no greater resource to the Lehigh Valley than our children. They are our hope for the future. Anything we can do to support and inspire them and help shape how they view the world is not only the right thing to do, but also is in our own self-interest. Getting along with others, working as a team, is the most important way to get things done. We need that more than ever.

Shelley Brown
President & CEO
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