Cleveland Public Theatre’s education programs are using theatre to transform lives and launch a civic dialogue.

Prior to her current job, Christine Seibert considered herself a writer and a performer. Today, she is just as likely to describe herself as a collaborator.

As Education Director at Cleveland Public Theatre (CPT), Seibert collaborates with traditionally underserved groups to create and perform original theatre pieces. According to Seibert, the chance to give people who do not traditionally have access to an audience leads to better art: “With more people participating, more is brought to the table.”

CPT prides itself on raising consciousness in the community, so it may not be altogether surprising that it has been attempting to invite underserved Northeast Ohio residents to the table for years. But what started as a simple series of workshops at a shelter for runaway children has turned into a well-developed group of programs that are becoming increasingly visible in the community.

Today, CPT offers four community-based education programs, all of which seek to empower participants to gain self-respect and confidence in their ability to succeed. Brick City provides after-school theatre programs for children living in public housing. STEP (the Student Theatre Enrichment Project) employs high school students, many of whom live at or below the poverty level, to write, produce and perform original plays. The Women’s Voices Project encourages formerly homeless women residing at the Elyria YWCA to create and tour original performances based on their own experiences. The Y-Haven program works with formerly homeless men in the production of an original play that is presented at treatment centers and educational centers throughout the region.

Despite difficulty in maintaining funding for these efforts, CPT is committed to offering the programs. According to Executive Artistic Director Raymond Bobgan, “These programs are not a side thing. They are central to our mission.”

All evidence suggests that the programs are fulfilling CPT’s mission: to raise consciousness and nurture compassion through groundbreaking performances and life-changing educational programs.

Education program participants continue to create plays that are strongly attended. Since its inception, Y-Haven has expanded from performances at one site to...
Cleveland Public Theatre... continued from front

a tour of 6-8 sites. **STEP performs its work in Cleveland parks throughout the summer and draws sizable crowds at each offering.** Theatre artists increasingly attend the educational programs because, according to Bobgan, “They recognize that what we spend years trying to learn and emulate, the educational program participants already have because it’s real for them.”

But even beyond audience numbers, the programs have been extremely successful. Seibert recalls a woman calling to thank her for changing her son’s life. Before Brick City, the woman was afraid she would lose her son, who was constantly away from home and having problems in school. The woman explained that because of his participation, he was inspired. As Seibert explains, “It completely changed his attitude about life and his expectation of himself.”

Benjamin Horton, an 11th grade student at the Ohio State School of the Blind and a 2006 STEP participant, credits the program with giving him a new sense of confidence: “The program has allowed me to learn about myself and how to be comfortable with interacting with different people. Through acting, I have to study each character I play, which allows me to better understand people and situations I may find myself in. STEP dares me to be different.”

Horton plans to pursue an acting career and believes CPT’s staff has given him the tools to prepare himself for success as an actor.

These stories are far from isolated. CPT staff maintains contact with many of the program participants and has seen Brick City participants come back to participate in STEP. CPT has even hired a number of Y-Haven alumni for positions ranging from custodial to videography work.

The impact does not end with the participants. Bobgan notes that because the work produced in the educational programs tends to be based in real-world experience, the plays encourage a “very frank dialogue in the community”, while Seibert says that audience members “begin to understand the position of the people on stage.”

Perhaps most notably, the programs have an impact on CPT itself. According to Seibert, **“These programs remind our staff and board why our work is important.”**

About Cleveland Public Theatre

Since 1982, CPT has been presenting and producing challenging works of theatre in an effort to increase consciousness and compassion within Greater Cleveland.

Community Partnership for Arts and Culture
The Convention and Visitors Bureau of Greater Cleveland (CVB) is helping to turn Northeast Ohio’s tremendous arts and cultural assets into an even stronger economic engine.

Nationally, cultural and heritage tourism is a growing segment of the overall tourism market. According to the President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, historic and cultural tourist trips increased 13% between 1996 and 2002.

This is good news for Northeast Ohio. As the CVB’s Vice President of Marketing Tami Brown explains, the “ingredients are already here.”

“We don’t have to build or create the arts and cultural assets. It’s just a matter of harnessing that energy to recreate Cleveland.”

Brown and other members of the CVB staff, including Director of Arts & Cultural Tourism Emilie Poua, are capitalizing on this energy to increase the benefits of arts and culture to our local economy.

The CVB formally launched an Arts and Cultural Tourism Initiative in February 2005. Since then, the organization has:

• Coordinated three major arts and cultural marketing campaigns, as well as a number of smaller campaigns
• Organized quarterly meetings of the marketing directors of local arts and cultural organizations
• Initiated conversations between arts and cultural organizations about their biggest upcoming events
• Encouraged local hotels and restaurants to offer arts and cultural packages
• Launched Ctix (ctix.org), a website that provides individuals with access to discounted tickets to arts and cultural events

These efforts are already paying dividends. When the Cleveland Film Society secured $30,000 in grant funding for the first regional marketing effort in the 30-year history of its Cleveland International Film Festival, it turned to the expertise of the CVB.

Arts, Culture and Our Future

“Arts and culture makes Cleveland a big city. But it goes beyond that. Arts and culture contributes to our region’s economic development, to brain gain, to education for our children.”

Tami Brown, Vice President of Marketing, Convention and Visitors Bureau of Greater Cleveland

Arts and Culture Sector: The initiative helps arts and cultural organizations develop new audiences and new opportunities for revenue.

Private Sector: Arts and cultural tourism supports the local hospitality industry, as visitors use area hotels, restaurants and transportation providers.

Public Sector: Exposing visitors to Northeast Ohio’s outstanding arts and culture sector leads to additional tax revenue and a more positive reputation for our region.

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The Convention and Visitors Bureau...

“They were very helpful in assisting us with determining where to target our regional marketing,” says Marcie Goodman, executive director of the Cleveland Film Society. The CVB also assisted the Film Society in locating a firm to help them with these efforts, a referral that turned into what Goodman describes as a good partnership. And once the campaign was underway, the CVB was able to monitor the Cleveland Film Society’s marketing efforts in Pittsburgh, Columbus and Akron through its ongoing relationships with other convention and visitors bureaus and tourism organizations.

The CVB is committed to continuing and expanding the Arts and Cultural Tourism Initiative in years to come.

“Arts and culture are so important to the fabric of our community,” remarks Brown. “Strategically promoting the incredible arts and culture we have in greater Cleveland is a one-in-a-million opportunity.”

About the Convention and Visitors Bureau of Greater Cleveland

The CVB works to bring conventions and tourism visitors to Cleveland. The CVB has identified arts and culture as one of four primary areas where the organization will focus its marketing efforts.

About the Cleveland Film Society

The Cleveland Film Society’s flagship program, the Cleveland International Film Festival, is reputed to be the most significant film festival between Chicago and New York City and annually generates more than $2 million in economic activity. Goodman reports that a number of visiting filmmakers described the audience as one of the “most sophisticated, most enthusiastic audiences of any film festival in the world.” In May 2006, Time recognized the festival as being “renowned for its diversity and inclusiveness.”
Young Audiences of Northeast Ohio (YANEO) is using arts and culture workforce training to prepare high school students for the demands of the career world.

Matar Gueye was on summer vacation following his junior year of high school when a workforce development program challenged him to photograph a life-sized chess game, to silkscreen the resulting work onto t-shirts and to sell the shirts. Today, he is preparing to attend Kent State University as a journalism and communications major.

Gueye is one of dozens of alumni of ArtWorks, an arts- and culture-based workforce development program designed and implemented by YANEO. The program is modeled after Gallery37, a highly successful Chicago-based program that has also been modeled in 15 other American cities to date.

In Northeast Ohio, the program grew out of a desire to comprehensively address the needs of high school students through arts education opportunities. The organization also wanted to do something that would prepare these students for entering the workforce.

“We wanted to expose students to the arts within a framework of skill-based training,” says Marsha Dobrzynski, executive director of YANEO.

ArtWorks provides just such a framework, showcasing the arts as a credible vehicle for job training. The summer program gives pre-screened participants a structured full-time job working with established local artists to create art and to explore potential careers. This all takes place inside a tent in the center of Shaker Square, a highly visible location in the densest neighborhood in the City of Cleveland.

Participants do not necessarily come from an arts background; students were selected through a process that mirrors a traditional hiring process. Interested students submitted an application and essay and participated in a job interview for entrance into the program. ArtWorks also sets minimum performance standards akin to professional job performance. Artists regularly evaluate student work to ensure that it is of sufficient quality, and while students are paid $7 per hour, they do not receive funds when they are late or miss work.

ArtWorks brings together a cross-section of students. As Dobrzynski explains, it serves young adults of “diverse socioeconomic, racial and cultural backgrounds.

“...I was really surprised how the students were able to grasp the concepts of art and relate them back to their everyday life.”

Donald Black, Jr., ArtWorks instructor and professional photographer

Arts and Culture Sector: The program raises awareness in the community that arts and culture programming can be a successful workforce development strategy.

Private Sector: ArtWorks creatively exposes students to the nuances of the career world. The program increases students’ enthusiasm about future employment, increasing the likelihood of productivity in their chosen field.

Public Sector: The program provides interactions between high school students and the residents of Cleveland’s densest neighborhood. This facilitates cross-generational dialogue and increases positive perception about Northeast Ohio youth.
“The program is designed so that students learn how to work together.”

The program provides opportunities for participating students to take leadership roles in large-scale arts projects. Visual arts students were commissioned to do a project at Cleveland Hopkins International Airport. Performing arts students created guerilla street theatre performances on the corners of Shaker Square and secured permission to do some performance work in Dave’s Supermarket. Photography students made head shots for the other two groups and also silk-screened t-shirts, for which they were responsible for securing orders. Throughout the program, students are also given access to a range of speakers from the public, private and arts and culture sector. Towards Employment, a local nonprofit workforce development organization, also assists students in developing resumes.

Ultimately, the program seeks to excite students about potential careers, whether in the arts and culture sector or not. YANEO plans to work with schools to evaluate the program’s impact on student performance and access to college.

But for Dobrzynski, the impact is already visibly clear through interactions with participants. For some students it represents the first paying job that they have ever held. One of the program’s theatre students was so enthusiastic about the notion of being paid for doing work that she enjoys that she hopes to come back to the program as a college assistant to the artists.

As for Gueye, he enjoyed the program immensely: “The teachers were great, the location was ideal and I really learned a lot.”

Today, he is preparing to attend Kent State University as a journalism and communications major. But not before convincing his younger sister, a freshman at his alma mater (the Cleveland School of the Arts), to apply to the ArtWorks program.

About Young Audiences of Northeast Ohio

YANEO works to enrich the lives of children and promote creative learning by uniting arts and education. The organization coordinates arts education programming at every grade level. Since launching ArtWorks in 2005, YANEO has grown the program from a 2-week pilot to a 5.5-week program serving more than 50 students.
The Lake County Visitors Bureau Arts and Culture Fund is helping arts and culture organizations to build successful community events ... and to translate these events into tourism dollars.

When Kathy Purmel took the helm of the Lake County Historical Society in 2000, she and her peers in other Lake County arts and culture organizations faced a bleak financial situation.

“The stock market was down, the economy was bad and donors weren’t giving,” recalls Purmel. “The days of 30% earned revenue was long gone.”

It was around this time that a group of arts and culture administrators approached the Lake County Board of Commissioners to make the case for providing financial support to the local arts and culture sector.

The commissioners formed the Community Arts and Culture Taskforce, a group comprised of civic, business, religious, and arts and culture representatives. With help from the Lake County Planning Commission, the taskforce generated a county-wide arts and culture economic impact study; even using a most conservative methodology, the study showed that the arts and culture sector annually had a $36 million economic impact. The taskforce presented the study to the commissioners, who subsequently included arts and culture funding as a component of a bed tax increase and charged the Lake County Visitors Bureau (LCVB) with overseeing the funds.

The LCVB Arts and Culture Fund was not only an important source of revenue for local arts and culture organizations, it was also a milestone in Northeast Ohio history. It represented the first dedicated public revenue stream for the region’s arts and culture sector.

Since the fund’s establishment, the LCVB has worked to create what Charles Lawrence, a member of the LCVB’s Arts and Culture Fund Committee, calls a “comprehensive and transparent” process for distributing the funds. According to Lawrence, approximately 70% of funding is distributed through a competitive grant process; the remainder of funding supports workshops and training for arts administrators, business training for artists and broad marketing of Lake County arts and culture amenities.

Arts and culture organizations apply for grants on an annual basis and are judged

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on project quality, management quality and anticipated impact the project will have on Lake County tourism. A panel of arts and culture professionals and economic impact specialists review the applications in a public meeting, score the proposals and make recommendations about how grant monies are awarded. Since the grant program began, the LCVB has awarded 43 grants totaling $214,070 to Lake County organizations.

The grants can be lifelines for arts and culture organizations facing a challenging local economy. For the Lake County Historical Society, a $3,000 grant awarded in 2007 helped them to hold the Good Ole Time Medicine Theatre.

The Good Ole Time Medicine Theatre is a collaboration between the Lake County Historical Society, Rabbit Run Community Arts Association and Cater to You (which provides the food). Together, the partners create an event that exposes audiences to the vaudeville atmosphere of a mid-1800s traveling medicine show.

“We had a great idea,” says Purmel, “but with scarce resources, we had no money for production costs. Without the seed money [from the Arts and Culture Fund], the idea would have died in the ground because there was no money to water it.”

In its pilot year, the Good Ole Time Medicine Theatre exceeded all attendance expectations, including a sizable audience from outside the county.

The Arts and Culture Fund does more than just support arts and culture organizations, however. It encourages organizations to strategically market their events to increase tourism expenditures. Perhaps even more importantly, Lawrence believes the program has given Lake County arts and culture organizations a better understanding of their own sector.

“We’ve strengthened alliances and community within the arts and culture sector. [Organizations] now think about how the total sum of arts offerings in the county can collectively draw people in.”

About the Lake County Visitors Bureau

The Lake County Visitors Bureau is a nonprofit agency that works to promote tourism within Lake County.

About the Lake County Historical Society

The mission of the Lake County Historical Society is to collect, preserve, interpret and present the heritage of Lake County, Ohio.
Three University Circle organizations are breaking down barriers, sharing resources and changing the way arts and culture organizations carry out their work.

No actual fences separate the signature cultural institutions of Cleveland’s University Circle. But all kinds of metaphorical ones are being taken down now that the Cleveland Cultural Collaborative has museums and other Circle-based organizations working together in earnest.

Officially started in October 2006 by the Cleveland Museum of Natural History, the Cleveland Botanical Garden and the Western Reserve Historical Society, the collaborative has already begun to prove that sharing services and partnering on promotions not only reduce costs, but also better serve patrons and the public. “It’s good for all of us,” says Laura Kleinman, who directs the collaborative.

Though finding common ground among the institutions can be a challenge, Kleinman says, she has so far led the collaborative’s members into shared office-supply purchasing, marketing efforts, telecommunications service and a museum-hopping program that allows a visitor who buys a ticket to one member museum to get discounted admission to the other two museums. Kleinman has also begun to examine the possibility of shared payroll and recycling services, training programs and ticket operations, she says.

Going in together has helped the museums save money and operate more efficiently. The community benefits from thriftier, more tautly run museums because their improved financial health ensures that these valued cultural organizations will survive and continue to enhance education and quality of life for area residents. But above all, collaboration means being able to give visitors a better, more enjoyable experience in the museums, says Natalie Ronayne, executive director of the botanical garden. “The benefits to us have been very tangible,” she says of the collaborative’s first efforts. “We’re just seeing the tip of what this could be to us.”

In the collaborative’s next year, Ronayne foresees a focus on making transportation, parking, one-pass admission cards – “all those things that matter to the visitor” – more available and easier to use. But in the meantime, she says, the collaborative has shown that “just a little bit of extra time and a little bit of extra effort” can result in a bottom-line advantage.
Three University Circle Organizations ...

That advantage includes the 30-percent savings Kleinman got on telecommunications services for the group and the 27-percent savings on office-supply costs. The museum-hopping initiative may have generated as much as $10,000 extra for the collaborative members, she says.

Overall, the first year of the collaborative resulted in savings of about $95,000 on warehouse space, shared personnel, office-supply purchasing and local and long-distance phone service. Kleinman hopes to triple that figure in 2008. Though leaders of the member organizations say that more data need to be gathered and analyzed to document the good that collaboration has done these museums, they are sure they perceive benefits. “You can’t put a number on visitor satisfaction,” says Bruce Latimer, executive director of the natural history museum. But he adds, if little else is measurable yet, “just the communication in [Wade Oval] is better.”

Ronayne detects more than that. She calls the results “really great numbers for the first year” of the collaborative: double the number of seniors taking part in the senior citizens’ program; double the number of ticketed museum-hoppers. The key to successful collaboration, she says, lies in enlisting the support of cultural organizations’ staff and benefactors alike by explaining how sharing will help them do their jobs and fulfill their missions. All of the University Circle organizations used to contract with vendors, hire people and plan promotions on their own, but “those days are over,” Ronayne says.

Kleinman, who came to the collaborative with experience in community and economic development, including work with Shore Bank’s nonprofit affiliate, sees potential for involving all of University Circle’s organizations in its shared services and programs. The more institutions band together, the greater the leverage she’ll have to develop cost-effective, visitor-pleasing, institution-strengthening strategies. It takes time to get everyone on board. But, Kleinman says with a smile, “We’re getting there.”

About the Cleveland Cultural Collaborative Members

The three member organizations of the Cleveland Cultural Collaborative have a strong history of providing high-quality access to history and science to the residents of Northeast Ohio and beyond. The Cleveland Botanical Garden was founded in 1930, the Cleveland Museum of Natural History in 1920 and the Western Reserve Historical Society in 1867.
A public library’s arts and culture programming is drawing citizens from throughout Northeast Ohio, from a potentially unlikely location in the economically challenged city of East Cleveland.

Greg L. Reese started out using small jazz concerts to introduce young black men to the public library. Decades later, Reese and the library’s gleaming new performing arts center are introducing the world to East Cleveland.

For 23 years, Reese has served as director of the East Cleveland Public Library, an independent institution in one of Northeast Ohio’s poorest, least-educated cities. Because the library could offer so much to residents with little other access to educational materials and services and a safe, richly cultural environment, Reese knew he needed a way to make the library enticing and somehow ease East Clevelanders through its doors.

He found his answer in the arts. By providing programs ranging from the jazz concerts to boxing films and arts-outreach performances for children, Reese has exposed young and old alike to mind-expanding artistry. He’s also given East Clevelanders – especially the elderly - what he calls “a great outlet” for socializing in a protective and stimulating place. As a result, area residents have become familiar with the library’s resources. They use them enthusiastically, too: The computer room is packed with users all day; the school district sends groups of youngsters to the library children’s room for shows and talks.

Many individuals have benefited. “They have a ball,” says Reese of the families and older East Clevelanders who love the free or low-cost concerts and the chance for a night out in an easy-to-get-to neighborhood spot. He adds that the jazz events also introduce younger folks to the music of artists and eras they might not otherwise get a chance to hear. The library’s school arts programs delight an even younger set. “They just loved it,” says Jeanne Lyons, music specialist at East Cleveland’s Chambers Elementary School, who took third-grade students to a library performance of “Peter Rabbit” presented by Opera Cleveland on Tour. Library arts programs are “very beneficial, because our children don’t have field trips right now” due to financial constraints, Lyons explains. “So at least they’re being exposed. This is the only thing we have going on right now.”

Important as arts at the library have become to East Cleveland citizens personally, Reese sees another, even bigger goal the arts can help him reach: turning East Cleveland back into the attractive, successful community it once was in the early 20th century. That’s where the library’s new performing-arts center comes in. Reese had for 17 years presented his jazz concerts in a small, homey auditorium in the library’s basement. Their popularity and reputation had been growing steadily, attracting the
A public library’s arts and culture ... continued from front

interest of more and more of the jazz world’s noted artists. The concerts and the
public they served clearly deserved a bigger, better venue. So in 2001, Reese and the
library began raising over $3 million for a three-story addition that would include
a 243-seat auditorium, as well as a new computer room, children’s room, and other
amenities.

Since its opening in 2005, the stunning concert hall – which library officials chose
to name the Greg L. Reese Performing Arts Center – and the enthusiastic audiences
it draws have proved so thrilling to major artists that Reese can now book performers
with the star power to pull listeners in from a much wider geographic area. He even
has to turn people away from sellout shows. “The arts are introducing this place to
a lot of people who would never have come” to East Cleveland before, says Reese.
For probably the first time in quite a long time, excellence is within reach of East
Clevelanders. The library’s affordable arts programs clearly benefit the community
and its image and may someday result in measurable economic impact on the
library’s neighborhood.

The Tri-C JazzFest has long recognized the library’s value. Nationally known and
one of Cuyahoga County’s major annual arts events, the JazzFest has booked a
festival performance at the library each spring for 15 years, even before the concert
hall went up. With the new hall, the cachet of East Cleveland is growing among the
jazz cognoscenti, says Beth Rutkowski, JazzFest managing director. The festival’s
first show in the hall featured renowned pianist Geri Allen. “We have been able to
present artists of that caliber because of the new facility and its pristine acoustics.
She walked away saying that concert at the East Cleveland Public Library was one of
the highlights of her career,” Rutkowski notes. “There’s some kind of magic that
happens in that space. That audience, they know jazz. They come in knowing the
artist. It’s just different.”

Rutkowski calls the library and its outreach “essential” to the JazzFest’s success.
“It’s part of our mission that the JazzFest extend out into the neighborhoods with
every festival,“ she says. At the library, “they bring world-class performers to
the neighborhood. It makes them completely accessible.”

About the East Cleveland Public Library

The East Cleveland Public Library provides a range of programming beyond the
traditional functions of lending books and multimedia materials to the public. The
library provides access to 150 online research tools and resources; coordinates a
wide range of programming, such as book clubs, children’s field trips, computer
classes and early literacy programs; and delivers materials to homebound patrons.
Recent concert performances have included Skip Gibson & Finesse, as well as The
Sean Jones Quintet (Jones has been nominated as Trumpeter of the Year by the Jazz
Journalists Association).
Case Western Reserve University’s “triple-threat” theatre graduate program is spreading the word of Cleveland’s talent.

Together, Ron Wilson and Mark Alan Gordon have a reach like Plastic Man. As they educate local graduate students, their shared superpower kicks in, helping them aid the wider community and teach the whole nation about Cleveland – all at the same time. But don’t look for capes or tights unless you’re in the audience at one of their classical play productions.

Wilson and Gordon serve as director and associate director, respectively, of the Case Western Reserve University/Cleveland Play House MFA Professional Actor Training Program in theater. It’s the 12-year collaboration between their well-known institutions that has fueled their special power of outreach by teaming their resources and broadening their scope. The thriving partnership has turned the Case/CPH graduate program into what theater people call a triple threat – an entity with three equally strong abilities – making it one of Cleveland’s most effective educational assets.

The program works like a teaching hospital because of the way knowledge is shared and benefits are returned to the community, says Wilson. First, by offering combined academic study and professional-track training, as well as an outstanding financial package, the program pulls gifted students to Cleveland from the surrounding region and the rest of the nation – a brain gain. Second, as the students master their art, they pass along their knowledge to Cleveland-area children through in-school performances, Cleveland Play House-based children’s theater shows and summer community programs. And as they move on to professional careers, from coast to coast their skills win attention and admiration for the city where they were trained.

Wilson notes that when the program’s most recent graduating class of six students went to New York last year for a showcase audition with industry professionals, every one of the students won representation from a top agency. Program graduates such as Rich Sommer of TV’s “Mad Men” and the film “The Devil Wears Prada” have achieved success that reflects well on Case/CPH and on its hometown, Wilson says, adding that some casting agents know Case/CPH as “the Juilliard of the Midwest.” These days, “when [students] go out and say they studied in Cleveland, people snicker a little less,” says Gordon.

Created in 1996, the MFA collaboration became in 2003 a conservatory program based at the Play House, where students spend three years intensively studying acting, movement, voice and speech, as well as dramatic literature, with distinguished faculty. They also get to work with the theater professionals and guest actors involved in Play House productions, serving as understudies, helping to stage children’s shows and...
new-play readings, and presenting their own full productions of classics.

For serious young artists who envision a career in acting, the attractions of training at a large, famed, union-contract regional theater like the Play House are obvious. So is the appeal of the financial package offered by Case/CPH: a full tuition waiver and an $11,000-per-year stipend for each student. “What’s made us nationally known and comparable to Yale [University] is that financial package,” Gordon explains. “I can’t think of a more criminal thing than to graduate an artist in debt.”

But Cleveland itself offers incentives to these excellent theater students that they would have trouble duplicating elsewhere. At the top of the list is the rest of the city’s arts and cultural community, from world-class museums and live-music groups to other theater companies. Here, the students’ access to the best can hardly be equalled. Playhouse Square Center, Cleveland’s downtown collection of palatial restored theaters that is second only to New York City’s Lincoln Center in square footage for live performances, routinely calls Gordon to offer master classes with visiting stars to the Case/CPH students, he says. “That’s not gonna happen in Chicago,” Gordon adds. “That’s why Cleveland is the perfect setting for this program.”

Tom Degnan and Nathan Gurr think so, too. Though Degnan comes from New Jersey and Gurr is native to Northeast Ohio, both of these third-year Case/CPH students have found Greater Cleveland to be an outstanding incubator of talent. The two young men are clearly eager to share their skills – and their admiration for the program and city – with the rest of the world. Gurr, who has worked in other local theater troupes and outreach efforts says that Case/CPH has allowed him to help kids who are hungry for arts involvement – something he’d like to continue doing by someday starting a local arts program that teaches urban children in a beautiful country setting. “I could do that the rest of my life,” Gurr says.

Degnan, who plans to head for New York when he’s done at Case/CPH, says he would like to revisit the Play House to help out, just as movie actor Tom Hanks has returned for a benefit at Great Lakes Theater Festival, where he got his professional start. No matter where he works, Degnan knows he’ll be talking up Cleveland. “Wherever you go,” he says, “you take something with you.”

About the MFA Professional Actor Training Program

The collaborative MFA Professional Actor Training Program between The Cleveland Play House and Case Western Reserve University is a three year program which is housed in the Play House complex. This intimate program is designed to train a theater artist capable of performing skillfully in a variety of roles from contemporary to classical genres, and to provide both technical skills and an aesthetic sensibility for a successful career in professional theater.
Cose has made its health care and professional development resources more accessible to the arts entrepreneurs of Northeast Ohio.

You’re alone, or nearly so, working in one place all day again. You don’t know anybody else in the same situation well enough even to have coffee with, much less ask for advice, and the demands of what you’re doing keep you chained to your chores all the time. How are you going to find out if there’s a better way to do things?

Artists – like college freshmen, new stay-at-home parents and small-business owners – can feel cut off from the support structure and resources they need to perform their tasks well. But who would think to plan the equivalent of mixers, play-groups or business associations for local artists? Only Greater Cleveland’s Council of Smaller Enterprises. When COSE executive director Steve Millard realized that designers, musicians and filmmakers often face the same business issues as small-scale restaurateurs, car-repair-shop owners and manufacturers, he decided COSE had to help.

“We knew that we needed to have a unique service in-house,” says Millard, who wanted that service to strengthen arts businesses, create jobs, build the artistic community and benefit the local economy. The idea arose after COSE began collaborating with the Community Partnership for Arts and Culture (CPAC) on the Artist as an Entrepreneur Institute, which teaches best business practices to artists. To help develop more comprehensive business resources for artists, CPAC applied for a grant from Leveraging Investments in Creativity (LINC). LINC was seeking to improve artist resources around the nation as a result of a study by the Urban Institute showing little infrastructural support for artists across the U.S.

With the grant, CPAC and COSE set out to establish a special network for artists much like the ones COSE had already created for specific industry sectors, such as technology businesses and home-based businesses. By tailoring its regular small-business services and resources for Greater Cleveland’s arts entrepreneurs, COSE was able to launch its Arts Network in spring 2006.

Throughout the national arts-services community, “People are really amazed at what we’ve been able to accomplish through what is essentially our chamber of...”
COSE has made its health care... continued from front

commerce,” says CPAC vice president Megan Van Voorhis.

The only program of its kind in the nation, the COSE Arts Network has offered arts-related small businesses access to affordable health insurance, business advice, seminars, meeting rooms, discount buying and business-development events.

But perhaps most important, it gives arts-business people access to each other and to the 15,000 other types of small-business owners who make up COSE’s general membership. For P.J. Doran, that’s been invaluable. “I definitely met some contacts who helped me out really well,” says the arts-network member, whose business, A Piece of Cleveland, designs furniture from reclaimed materials. “I think there’s a lot of people who aren’t aware that other people are working in the same field.” Abby Maier, leader of the COSE Arts Network, laughs when asked how people initially reacted to the idea of comprehensive business resources shaped for watercolorists and guitar players. “I think that, about eight months to a year ago, people started to not look at me as if I were crazy,” says Maier, who is also a degreed fabric artist. “I think the word is out.”

Her impression has been reinforced by the fact that the arts network has grown to 500 members in its first 24 months. Maier thinks that Greater Cleveland will benefit from being known as a community that supports individual artists and their small businesses, because of the talent it will attract and the stronger, more diversified economy it will help develop. Joan Perch agrees. A longtime owner of Cleveland arts-businesses and currently chairwoman of the arts network’s advisory committee, she says COSE has answered “pretty much all” the kinds of needs she experienced as an entrepreneur heading two successive commercial art galleries. “Artists are a little bit different from your average business person,” notes Perch. “The COSE arts network is a safe spot and a safe entry for them” into the business world.

About the COSE Arts Network

The COSE Arts Network, in partnership with the Community Partnership for Arts and Culture (CPAC), creates an opportunity for the arts and business worlds to intersect through educational and networking events, access to resources and unique promotional opportunities.
An arts-education exchange between Cleveland and Turkey through the Council of International Programs USA (CIPUSA) begins to address the problems of youth across the world.

Lisa Purdy has seen some of the most exotic peoples and remote cultures on earth. But what really surprised her was something she found at home: an arts community ready to collaborate on international projects.

As president and CEO of the Council of International Programs USA (CIPUSA), a 52-year-old, Cleveland-based, educational exchange program, Purdy was looking in 2006 for some help in training artisans from Kyrgyzstan how to price, market and sell their crafts. When she discovered the Cleveland resources she needed in the Artist as an Entrepreneur Institute run by the Community Partnership for Arts and Culture, she also discovered a wealth of internationally inclined Northeast Ohio artists and organizations that she had never tapped. “I just never saw it before,” Purdy confesses.

Through the entrepreneur institute, which CIPUSA's visitors from Kyrgyzstan attended, Purdy entered a network of eager-to-help artists. “The next thing we know, we’re down in Medina selling crafts” at a fair, Purdy recalls. The Kyrgyz artisans made $1,500 the first day.

Purdy’s revelation about local arts has led to CIPUSA partnering with Cleveland arts groups on its first arts-based program, a 2008-09 arts-education exchange between Cleveland and Turkey. Funded by the U.S. Department of State, the program aims to assist Turkish arts-educators and social-service professionals in learning how to involve marginalized youths in arts activities and so motivate them in positive ways.

A cross-section of Cleveland artists, arts-educators and programming experts was selected to travel to Turkey in spring 2008 to see exactly what kind of help the city of Istanbul needed. The Americans had some learning of their own to do. “I was curious to understand whether what we had to offer was unique or not,” says Kathleen Cerveny, arts and culture program director for the Cleveland Foundation. Though Istanbul and its schools clearly enjoyed a lot of arts activities, “none of us at this point understood how this would attend to the population meant to be addressed.”

Arts, Culture and Our Future

“It shines a light on Cleveland as a city that excels. Not only in the arts, but in how the arts positively impact children’s development.”

Kathleen Cerveny, Arts and Culture Program Director, The Cleveland Foundation

Arts and Culture Sector: CIPUSA’s efforts are further cementing the region’s arts and cultural sector as a leader in the industry nationally and internationally.

Private Sector: The international presence of Northeast Ohio’s arts and cultural sector, combined with its connections with the local business community, can lead to new global business relationships that further the economic prosperity of the region.

Public Sector: An international exchange of ideas and cultures unites global communities while establishing and refining new methods for improving education, the economy and quality of life.
An arts-education exchange... continued from front

But when the group met with the Turkish minister of education, they heard hard facts about problems and a frank request for help. The Americans had an epiphany: Their counterparts in Istanbul were clearly open to learning and finding new ways of helping their youths.

The sharing of ideas began in earnest. One of the first things Raymond Bobgan realized was that the Turks could not duplicate the STEP theater program for at-risk teens he had created at Cleveland Public Theatre, where he is executive artistic director - the Istanbul schools didn’t have an experienced theater director on staff to lead the effort. “They didn’t understand this is an artistic discipline,” Bobgan says. “Slowly, they figured that out.”

He saw that if his group could give Turkish educators the right tools and the right support, they could do it their own way. Cerveny recognized that Istanbul school activities already incorporated lots of traditional folk arts, but that teachers were having trouble introducing youngsters to contemporary fine arts.

When the Turks visited Cleveland a few weeks later, they had their own revelations. Under a Young Audiences (YA) tent on Wade Oval, Arzu Soysa took a break from working with Cleveland teens to say that she has come to understand the value of partnerships among artists, schools and other groups. “Like the work of the YA here, we can have summer school back there and engage teenagers or children at risk to work with others,” Soysa says. “This gives them a sense of worth.”

School counselor Sherpil Shmutz says that, after coming here, she believes arts education will help the children in Turkey: “I saw you can reach easily the kids using arts. It changed me. If I can change, they can change.”

Cleveland is benefiting from the collaboration, too. Says Cerveny, “It shines a light on Cleveland as a city that excels. Not only in the arts, but in how the arts positively impact children’s development.”

About The Council of International Programs USA

The Council of International Programs USA is committed to promoting international understanding through professional development and cross-cultural exchange. Since their beginning, CIPUSA has brought over 10,000 international professionals from 147 countries to the U.S. for practical training in an array of disciplines.
Sparx in the City, adopted by Downtown Cleveland Alliance is providing easy access to art in the community while advancing careers and perceptions of local artists.

Few actual barricades went up or came down. But in 2003, a kind of street revolution took place in Cleveland that put artists where people could see them. Called Sparx in the City, the monthly summer series of free sidewalk events showcased performers and visual art displays on downtown corners, where strolling crowds could look and listen while enjoying a sense of being someplace exciting.

Five years later, Sparx has grown in scope and in effect: The more and livelier the street-art events, the more people have come seeking them. Cleveland, its businesses and the artists themselves have benefited from the easy and increasing contact with the public. Sparx gives the city “a vibrant street life. We think that has tremendous value for us,” says Joe Marinucci, president and CEO of the Downtown Cleveland Alliance, a nonprofit advocacy group for downtown growth that now runs the Sparx program. Sparx aimed for that vibrancy — and the economic impact it has created — from the beginning, says Susie Frazier Mueller.

An artist and activist who founded the program and who produced it for several years, Frazier Mueller took Sparx from a small, neighborhood-artists’ effort to a citywide celebration of art and urban life that included an annual fall tour of Cleveland art galleries complete with comprehensive guidebook.

Getting people to work together wasn’t easy. “Our community is splintered … one of the big barriers to how we’re going to progress,” says Frazier Mueller. But Sparx succeeded. By 2006, the program had won awards from the U.S. Conference of Mayors and the Dominion Foundation. Sparx in the City’s Urban Gallery Hop, a weekend-long event run in conjunction with the program, generated a return on investment of 29-to-1, nearly $2 million in disposable personal income and 43 jobs for Cuyahoga County residents.

The results proved to doubters that artists weren’t beggars, but savvy entrepreneurs who were “promoting a city that others had stopped promoting” Frazier Mueller says.
Sparx in the City...

City leaders began to recognize artists as important to the neighborhoods and arts activity as important to the development of the city. Eventually, the Downtown Cleveland Alliance adopted the program because “we wanted to improve the pedestrian situation downtown and Sparx is the perfect vehicle for that,” says Marinucci. “Some of our suburban counterparts are trying to duplicate the program.”

It isn’t just merchants benefiting from it, either, says Meredith Camp, president of Meredith Camp Events and a consultant to the DCA on Sparx. The DCA has started getting great feedback from the artists about the additional work they’re getting from local venues, the CDs they’ve sold and the contacts they’ve made thanks to exposure from their Sparx appearances, she notes. “This was not necessarily a known goal when the DCA took it over, but now they’re psyched about it,” Camp says.

When the DCA adopted Sparx, Frazier knew she had effectively made her case for the community value of artists. Not only was the DCA’s interest an endorsement of the arts-related changes Sparx intended to bring about, it was also a sure sign that business leaders thought the program and its results were worth building on.

Their involvement is helping Sparx achieve its ultimate purpose. Says Frazier Mueller, “The goal is, give people access.”

About Sparx in the City

Sparx in the City is an award-winning downtown marketing initiative that leverages the creativity of artists to stimulate commerce and street life in the core neighborhoods of Cleveland. Its mission is to impact the local economy while creating a compelling downtown experience for visitors, residents and workers of Cleveland.

About Downtown Cleveland Alliance

Downtown Cleveland Alliance is the not-for-profit organization dedicated to building a dynamic downtown. It is committed to making downtown Cleveland the most compelling place to live, work, play and visit in the region.

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Art Is Education is providing flexibility to Cleveland arts educators after district changes forced Young Audiences of Northeast Ohio (YANEO) to change direction in their programming strategy.

Luck handed Marsha Dobrzynski lemons. So she made a Cezanne. No, her answer to adversity wasn’t literally a painting, but it was a work of art: a creative new plan for educating a whole community in, and with, the arts. In the process, Dobrzynski and her school-system collaborators saved their partnership and invited a lot more people to join it.

As executive director of Young Audiences of Northeast Ohio, Dobrzynski had worked with local school systems for many years on artist-in-residence programs, in-school performances and other arts-related enrichment. But in 2004, she and her staff were elated over the potential of a new approach they were devising for integrating arts and language skills in a long-term literacy program throughout the Cleveland Municipal School District.

Funded in part by a $250,000 grant from the Ford Foundation, it was going to provide specific methods for reinforcing children’s reading, vocabulary and speech skills, offer ways for children to demonstrate their understanding through visual artistry and introduce teachers themselves to the arts basics in which many of them were not trained. And the arts instruction would be interwoven with a fundamental, curriculum-based program that wasn’t likely ever to be eliminated. “So we were very excited,” says Dobrzynski. “I can’t tell you how excited we were.” And then the school district got a new chief executive. He decided to adopt a new literacy curriculum. Dobrzynski takes a deep breath. “So we adapted.”

How? By continuing to work with district leaders, Young Audiences has been able to build on its preexisting Cleveland school program, ICARE (Initiative for Cultural Arts in Education), turning its narrow, labor-intensive, one-arts-group-and-one-teacher-at-a-time approach into a whole-school menu of arts choices.

Because many more arts organizations will now be involved, teachers in all grades will find more disciplines and more types of programming available, from in-school performances and short-term or long-term residencies to field-trip packages — even an entire program aimed at the third grade. As a result, many more students will enjoy the benefits of arts education. Andrew Koonce calls it better, more comprehensive, efficient and consistent. “This will be a nice way …
Art Is Education is providing flexibility...

continued from front

to have a more collaborative approach to the arts,” says Koonce, who is principal of the Cleveland School of the Arts Lower School. “You’re going to see children more interested in school.”

The new program, which has the working title Art Is Education, will allow faculty members to customize enrichment according to their needs, interests, budgets and the grades they teach, says Annie McNally-Dienes, Young Audiences’ associate director of education.

An extra advantage to Art Is Education’s diverse programming, she hopes, will be the ability to involve larger arts organizations such as Opera Cleveland and the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum, whose education-outreach packages had not fit into ICARE’s structure.

Kids aren’t the only ones who will benefit from this smorgasbord: A program for parents will involve them in school arts activities, too, further enriching their children’s experiences and deepening family support for arts education, Dobrzynski says.

In the long run, Art Is Education may well have a positive impact on overall achievement. But even though studies show that participating in arts activities often goes hand-in-hand with higher test scores, the goal of Art Is Education is not improving performance in other academic subjects – it’s teaching young people how to process what they know and feel, says Karen Clark-Keys, visual arts and arts education curriculum manager for the Cleveland school district. “It helps them to use that knowledge in a unique, creative way” and develop 21st-century skills, she says. It can also make school more fun. And when families get involved in education, when children enjoy going to school and learn well, the whole community benefits socially and economically, Dobrzynski says. “Arts aren’t the panacea, but they can be part of the solution,” she adds. “We hope to begin to create a movement here in Cleveland.”

About Young Audiences of Northeast Ohio

YANEO works to enrich the lives of children and promote creative learning by uniting arts and education. The organization coordinates arts education programming at every grade level. Art is Education envisions a public school system where every student will receive the highest quality education that includes continual immersion in a comprehensive, arts-infused curriculum.
Develop financial and other resources to sustain and grow the arts and cultural sector

Cuyahoga Arts and Culture (CAC) general operating support grants are helping the many arts and cultural institutions of Cuyahoga County survive and grow.

People all over the world know about the great Cleveland Orchestra. Art and theater lovers everywhere admire the Cleveland Museum of Art and the Cleveland Play House. And residents of Cuyahoga County are proud of that. But they can be proud of themselves, too: By voting in 2006 for a cigarette-tax increase to fund a new public grants source called Cuyahoga Arts and Culture (CAC), they are helping their many fine cultural institutions, large and small, survive and grow.

Without the $1.8 million general-operating-support grant the Cleveland Orchestra received from CAC this year, “our structural deficit would be double what it is and that would plunge us back into a significant financial struggle,” says orchestra executive director Gary Hanson. CAC grants are that important. “It’s about sustaining the institution, it’s about keeping the doors open,” Hanson says. And because of the outreach services the orchestra offers to citizens of all ages, “it’s all about sustaining music education in the community.”

CAC board member Santina Protopapa says first-year recipients have been thrilled with the difference the grants are making to their organizations. The money has meant a livable salary for the leader of one group, more street fairs for the neighborhood of another – the list of positives affects every corner of the county. “That’s been really exciting,” says Protopapa. “It’s giving organizations the opportunity to do what they do well,” especially small and mid-sized groups. As a result, “more and more citizens of Cuyahoga County are getting the opportunity to actively engage in arts and cultural activities,” she says. “I think ultimately, it will help increase student achievement.”

It took years of research, planning and advocacy on the part of county leaders from every sector to bring about CAC in a community that had never before supported public-sector funding for arts and culture. The work intensified as the county economy weakened in 2005-06, endangering the survival of county cultural groups and thus threatening the educational resources and attractive quality of life those groups provided to the community.

But what finally moved voters to approve the cigarette-tax increase to fund CAC
was less the promise of economic impact than the sheer pride they took in their famed cultural treasures, says CAC executive director Cathy Boyle. Voter polls showed “even if they don’t go to the orchestra, people are proud those institutions are here.” They also recognize the value of the arts to education, Boyle notes. Like the orchestra, many county arts and cultural organizations large and small have deep commitments to community education and CAC grants make their work even more effective.

Receiving $20,000 in CAC general operating support funds has allowed the modest-sized Artist Archives of the Western Reserve to afford critical heating and cooling expenses for its facility, hire more staff and stay open for regular hours, says executive director K. Roy Goerg. Not only does that allow works by local artists to be properly preserved and shown, but also to be available for research and study by members of the community. “Otherwise, their work might be lost. It might end up on tree lawns,” Goerg says.

With CAC helping arts and cultural groups impart such knowledge through events, collections, classes and school programs, “people are seeing the direct, tangible impact” of their vote, Protopapa says. “They can see what a difference it makes.” They and the rest of the planet can also see the glow that outstanding art and culture impart to Cleveland and Cuyahoga County – a glow that enhances quality of life, attracts visitors and new residents and boosts civic self-esteem.

“There are very few cities in this country that can legitimately claim to have an institution that is the best in the world,” Hanson says of the orchestra. “Cleveland can do that.” And, he adds, CAC funding is central to that world-class orchestra’s core services.

**About Cuyahoga Arts and Culture**

Cuyahoga Arts and Culture (CAC) is a Regional Arts and Cultural District in the State of Ohio. It is the result of many years of planning and research. A primary purpose of CAC, established by the Board of Trustees through adoption of its by-laws in April 2007, is to make matching grants to not-for-profit organizations located in Cuyahoga County that have a primary mission of arts or culture and that have a proven history of arts or cultural programming.