

Growing with the Community

The Arts Council of Napa Valley

by Michelle Williams, Executive Director

In recent years, the arts in Napa Valley have exploded. Artists of all disciplines are flocking to the area, new venues are opening, bank lobbies have become art galleries, and art auctions have become a significant element of every major event. Where once there was a string of sleepy, small, agricultural towns, now there is a thriving artistic community literally bursting with talent. It's an exciting time- and also time to bring all artists and art organizations together to nurture and develop our cultural community. The new Arts Council of Napa Valley is working to do just that. One step toward this goal is our

needs can the Arts Council fill? What we continue to discover is an amazingly rich arts and culture scene, filled with painters, poets, dancers, musicians, filmmakers, novelists, actors, photographers, sculptors- every kind of artist that you'd find in a major metropolitan area, bursting at the seams of our collection of small towns, and very much in need of networking and support.

On our newly-redesigned website, we are developing an extensive Artist Registry and Artists Opportunity page. We are rebuilding our Arts in Education program which provides em-

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new partnership with Napa Valley Life Magazine. In this issue you will see an expanded, comprehensive calendar section which includes former ARTscan listings. ACNV is thrilled to be collaborating with Napa Valley Life, and we look forward to developing a new, exciting Arts section with the magazine.

The Arts Council (ACNV) celebrates its 25th year anniversary in 2005. For 24 years, we have brought arts education to schoolchildren, promoted local artists, created artistic opportunities for at-risk youth, and amassed over a thousand members. However, in the last year, dramatic state-wide cuts for arts funding left the ACNV in a financial predicament familiar to many non-profits. In that difficulty, we have managed to find great opportunity. I joined the Arts Council as the interim Executive Director this past July, and we have begun to rebuild our organization and reinvent our mission to be a truly effective, vibrant arts advocate. Rather than scattered artists and organizations competing for funding, space, and support, we envision a collaborative artistic community whose whole is far greater and more effective than the sum of its parts. We will be at the service of all valley artists, in every discipline, working as a voice for individuals and organizations, building and maintaining a sustainable, healthy, and profitable arts community.

The most important first step has been reaching out and asking for input. What kinds of artists do we have in the valley? How can we help bring all the arts to the community? What

employment for local artists and vital arts education to schoolchildren. But some of our most important work is acting as a liaison between the community and local artists. In September, just after graciously hosting ACNV's Open Studios Reception, St Supery's gallery curators asked for our help when their October show fell through. In 24 hours, we put a group of artists together who created "An Eclectic Presentation: Eleven Napa Valley Artists", which had a successful run at St Supery from October 1-25.

Another exciting aspect of the new ACNV is providing staffing with the soon-to-be created Napa Valley Arts and Culture Commission. The Commission will be a body of influential artistic and business individuals, representing all five unincorporated cities, and will advocate on a governmental level on behalf of the artistic community. The Commission will foster community development which will lead to recognition, both internally and externally, of Napa Valley as a center for arts and culture. Once it is fully formed, The Commission will mean a whole new era of possibility for arts in the valley.

ACNV will grow with the artistic community, changing and expanding with the burgeoning arts in the valley. You are invited to join us in our mission! Check out our website at artscouncilnapavalley.org where you can donate, become a member, or find volunteer opportunities. We are thrilled to celebrate our 25th anniversary next year, and excited for the future of the arts in the Napa Valley.