

Pendleton Arts Center  
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Pendletonarts.org

February 18, 2013

To: House Committee on Rules  
Fr: Roberta Lavadour, Executive Director

Chairman Garrett, Members of the Committee, guests – thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today on House Bill 2470 to extend the sunset for tax credit for contributions to the Oregon Cultural Trust.

My name is Roberta Lavadour and I've served as the Executive Director for the Pendleton Center for the Arts for the past six years. We are a community based non-profit organization serving Pendleton and the surrounding areas. I appreciate the opportunity to tell you what we do out on our side of the state and to share information about how the Cultural Trust has impacted us.

Pendleton is a city that both lives up to and defies its reputation.

Much of our western heritage is expressed through fine craft and the idea of art and fine craft as economic development. Within three blocks of the Arts Center you'll find working saddle makers, rawhide braiders and people making fine custom hats. There's also an art gallery and the studio of a contemporary painter. A bit further out there are a wide range of other artists doing textile work, twining plateau baskets, making beadwork and jewelry, and just about anything else you can think of.

In the 60's and 70's renowned ceramicist Betty Feves was a force in the region and helped to forge a strong arts community. She taught art and music and set a very high bar for the delivery of services. She didn't just bring the Suzuki method of violin instruction to Pendleton - she brought Mr. Suzuki to Pendleton.

Our Arts Council is the second oldest in the state, gaining non-profit status in 1974. In 1998 the Council raised \$2 million to renovate the Carnegie library building and today we have an Arts Center that would rival any in the northwest. It's a beautiful facility.

But my job there is not to focus on displaying beautiful things in a beautiful building. My job is to encourage the infusion of creativity, innovation and art making into the personal family culture of everyone in our community.

The projects that the Oregon Cultural Trust has funded are some of the most effective of all our programming.

Art Rocks Teens (A.R.T.) provides free art and music classes three days a week after school and during the summer for teens 13 to 18 years old. Kids come to explore everything from guitar and ukulele to drawing, ceramics, skate board design and more. If you visit us between 3:30 and 5:00 pm you'll see an incredible mix of students engaged in a buzz of activity. As part of the program, about 80 teenagers also attend a free week-long Rock and Roll Camp in the summer, where they form bands with a range of instruments representing every brass, string and percussion tool you can imagine. They write music and lyrics and perform on Main Street on Friday evening before a couple thousand people. Last year we had twenty-two bands perform in two hours.

Our Art Zoom program is helping us use technology to connect with place-bound students in the region. Art Zoom premieres this month and we'll be Skyping with high school students in Heppner who receive no art instruction in their curriculum. 15 students in the after school art club will get a tour of the current exhibit and be led through a hands-on project using supplies we've mailed to them. Second graders at a local school will follow, along with a home-school family. In March and the following months we'll expand to even more audiences around the state.

The Trust has also supported our Saturday morning FREE for All classes, which provide a 45 minute art experience for young kids and their families. Teaching this class is one of the best parts of my job and it is a constant reminder of why we're here. Watching a child gain confidence in her or his own creative ability is a powerful thing. We work with the most basic tools and techniques, and have surprisingly sophisticated discussions about the creative process. Parents and grandparents tell me how much they look forward to having time to sit and make something together, and about fun things they've made at home to build on what they've discovered in class.

Offering free classes provides a melting pot where families who regularly seek out enrichment opportunities and those for whom tuition would be an insurmountable barrier spend a time getting to know one another. With all of our differences, I truly believe that class divides us most. Children growing up in a culture of poverty often aren't exposed to art and creativity.

As you know, providing these experiences and a place to encounter art takes money. I often wonder about the additional good work that could be done if we didn't have to spend so much of our time raising money.

And while our local business community has been extremely supportive of the non-profit cultural organizations in Pendleton, sponsorships and contributions are getting harder to secure. Our local businesses have been holding it together for a long time now, enduring an extended down-turn while trying to be as supportive as they can. It is just in this last year that we've seen that people are simply tapped out. And in terms of individual giving, we are working to cast a wider and wider net for small donations because the model of the wealthy art patron has become a thing of the past.

We collaborate with a residential addiction treatment center to provide volunteer opportunities, and one of their clients said something to me that I always try to keep in mind. She entered the Arts Center, looked around, and said that she didn't think she deserved to be in such a beautiful building. That's a mindset that's difficult for most of us here to wrap our brains around. Support for the Oregon Cultural Trust communicates the fact that we ALL deserve to experience the power of art, culture and creativity – that it's our right, and that it is part of being an Oregonian.

