

Small Community Arts - United States of America Small Community Arts

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**THE  
ARTS  
IN  
THE  
SMALL  
COMMUNITY  
A NATIONAL PLAN**

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State Historical Society of Wisconsin

## **A NATIONAL PLAN FOR ARTS IN SMALL COMMUNITIES**

Developed by the Office of  
Community Arts Development - Wisconsin Idea Theatre  
of University Extension, The University of Wisconsin, Madison  
216 Agricultural Hall, 1450 Linden Drive, Madison, Wisconsin 53706  
Robert E. Gard, Director

Financed by: The National Endowment for the Arts  
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Based on Pilot Programs in: Adams-Friendship, Portage,  
Rhineland, Spring Green,  
Waupun, Wisconsin

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Declan Haun, *Life Magazine*, © Time, Inc.

## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

America is coming of age. Note the many changing aspects of America.

A maturing America means a nation conscious of its arts among all its people.

Communities east, west, north, and south are searching for ways to make community life more attractive.

The arts are at the very center of community development in this time of change...change for the better.

The frontier and all that it once meant in economic development and in the sheer necessity of building a nation is being replaced by the frontier of the arts. In no other way can Americans so well express the core and blood of their democracy; for in the communities lies the final test of the acceptance of the arts as a necessity of everyday life.

In terms of American democracy, the arts are for everyone. They are not reserved for the wealthy, or for the well-endowed museum, the gallery, or the ever-subsidized regional professional theatre. As America emerges into a different understanding of her strength, it becomes clear that her strength is in the people and in the places where the people live. The people, if shown the way, can create art in and of themselves.

The springs of the American spirit are at the grass roots. Opportunities must exist in places where they never have existed before. A consciousness of the people, a knowledge of their power to generate and nourish art, and a provision of ways in which they may do so are essential for our time.

If we are seeking in America, let it be a seeking for the reality of democracy in art. Let art begin at home, and let it spread through the children and their parents, and through the schools, the institutions, and through government.

And let us start by acceptance, not negation—acceptance that the arts are important everywhere, and that they can exist and flourish in small places as well as in large; with money, or without, according to the will of the people. Let us put firmly and permanently aside as a cliché of an expired moment in time that art is a frill. Let us accept the goodness of art where we are now, and expand its worth in the places where people live.

*Robert E. Gard*

## HOW THE PLAN DEVELOPED

In 1966, the National Council on the Arts awarded its first grant for development of the arts in small communities. The three-year developmental grant, reflecting the Council's concern for arts at the grass-roots level, was awarded to the Office of Community Arts Development, Wisconsin Idea Theatre of University Extension, The University of Wisconsin, Madison.

This office, formerly known only as the Wisconsin Idea Theatre, had been concerned with developing arts interest throughout the state of Wisconsin for over twenty-five years. Under the direction of Robert E. Gard, this Extension service, founded and fostered throughout the state community theatres and creative writing groups, wrote and toured indigenous drama, and conducted workshops in many forms of creative arts. Thus, the experience and aims of this University of Wisconsin group provided a suitable agency for the small communities' experiment.

The three-year grant, financed by the National Endowment for the Arts, was to be an extension of the aims of the Wisconsin Idea Theatre and dealt specifically with ways of developing greater interest and participation in the arts in communities of 10,000 or less.

Pilot research was conducted in five Wisconsin communities, and this national plan is a result of what was tried and accomplished, or what failed to be accomplished, in these five places. Additional examples are taken from other Wisconsin localities where special work has been done.

**Portage** (pop. 7822), at the edge of the Baraboo Range, a recreational region in south-central Wisconsin, is surrounded by a productive agricultural area. Located between the watersheds of the Wisconsin River and the upper Fox River, Portage is important historically because early exploration and fur trade routes crossed "the portage" en route from Green Bay to the Mississippi River. The town is very old and conservative in character.

**Waupun** (pop. 6000), in south-central Wisconsin, is the site of the state prison and two other penal institutions. There is also a heavy representation of the Dutch Reformed Church. Waupun is the market town for a large area in which farmers are engaged in dairying and in raising peas, beans, and corn.

**Rhineland** (pop. 8790), a North Woods center for recreation in northeast Wisconsin, is the location of a large paper mill. Rhineland has a lumberjack background, and some of the spirit of the earlier vigorous period remains.

**Spring Green** (pop. 1146) is located in southwestern Wisconsin. Taliesin, home of Frank Lloyd Wright, is nearby. A certain amount of interest in the arts has existed from time to time, partly because of the Wright influence. However, many rural people have been opposed to cultural influences, just as they were once suspicious of their famous neighbor. The town is the service and market center for a large rural area.

**Adams-Friendship** (pop. 1800) is in an economically depressed area in central Wisconsin. Farmland is not good, and family income is generally low. Little had ever before been attempted here in community arts development.

## WHY AN ARTS PLAN FOR SMALL COMMUNITIES?

American history begins in small settlements, and crucial American values stem from them. Sixty million Americans now live in communities of 10,000 or less. These communities produce food and essential goods and services that cannot be adequately produced elsewhere since mining, lumbering, fishing, farming, and recreation require less-densely populated areas. Small communities, in which the ideals and realities of American life are to be found, are a response to the general needs of the larger communities.

The small community provides more than it receives. Many young people flock to the great cities, poorly prepared to contribute to the cultural well-being of the city and depleting their hometowns of youthful energy and vigor. When, in turn, these same cities send back other people who are seeking new, vital, internal resources, the small community gladly provides welcome, but is subjected to strain and dislocation of its daily life. Some of the city dwellers who come to the rural areas are retired citizens; others are Americans of middle income who locate a second home in the country; and still others are the varied groups brought in by newly located industries.

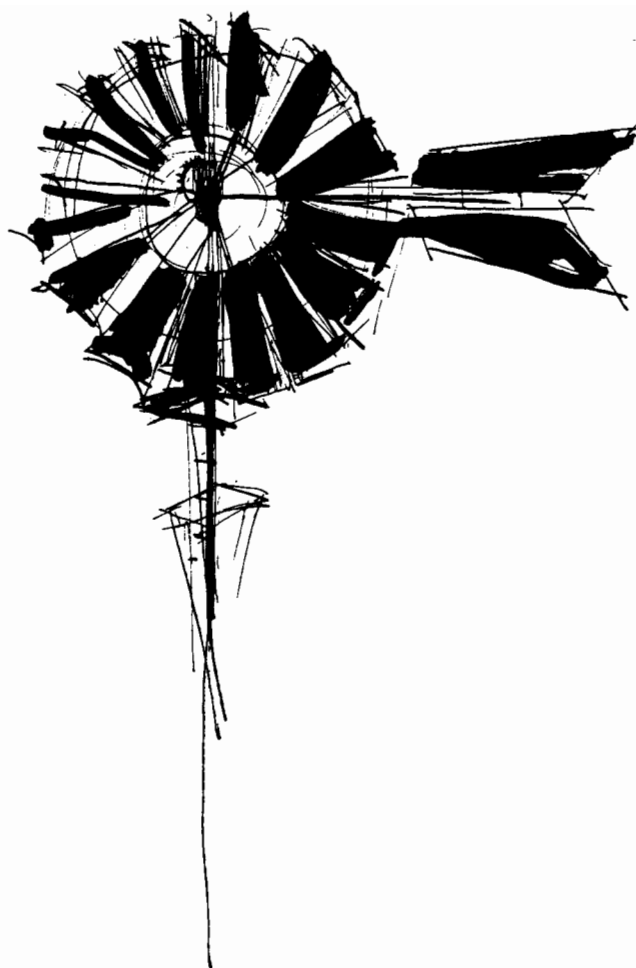
These new occupancies not only place new demands upon the economy and public services of the small communities, but also put a strain on the cultural life. Consequently, as small communities undergo the depletion of cultural resources that results from their role as providers for American manufacturing and commerce; as they educate their young people only to see them located in cities; as older people remain or reside in these communities in their late years because of the lower cost of living and the more intimate social acceptance and recognition they receive as industry decentralizes; then the small community finds in arts development an important part of the answer to its new needs.

It is unimpressive to insist that the large cities, with their infuriated and burning ghettos, are but the tensions of the village subculture drawn large upon the American scene, or that the village has always made war against enlightenment, spurning genius and stoning prophets. In fact, in that area of human anguish in which man recognizes that he can't go home again, he finds in the mythic properties of the rural village an ideal for life sustained to some extent by every small community. It is this ideal, crystallized and repristinated in accordance with contemporary art activity, that will provide new resource for all America.

The contribution of the small community to American life is immeasurable. The farmland, mountains, shore, and open spaces in relation to which American small communities are located, like the small communities themselves, are the heartland of our way of life. Because American literature depicts these home places, and American painters portray them, American localities are a part of the furniture of the human imagination throughout the world. It is our conviction that the development of high quality art activity in these communities may well lead to a new phase of renaissance in the arts.

Modern art activity can provide a new birth and new creative directions of usefulness for such a community. As art activity is developed, the community is re-created. The vital roots of every phase of life are touched. As the community is awakened to its opportunity in the arts, it becomes a laboratory through which the vision of the region is reformulated and extended. And as the small community discovers its role, as the small community generates freshness of aesthetic response across the changing American scene, American art and life are enhanced.

Can the United States rediscover, cherish, and strengthen its small communities? Can we assign to small communities the important role deserved in the forthcoming renaissance in the arts? This plan is an answer to these questions.



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**ORGANIZING FOR THE ARTS**

**THE ARTS COUNCIL**

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State Historical Society of Wisconsin

## THE ARTS COUNCIL

### What Is It?

An arts council is a group of persons who care about the cultural life of the community and seek to express this concern by organizing to promote interest and activity in the arts.

We endorse.....The arts council organization was used in the Wisconsin test communities and proved effective. Since the method has been so successful, this national plan endorses the organization of an arts council as the effective way to develop arts in all communities.

Arts councils seek to foster an active concern for the community in enterprises dedicated to art, and seek to add arts dimensions to presently operating private and public agencies.

The ideal goal of the arts council movement is to create a society of qualitative excellence in which the resources of the nation may serve beneficial and creative purposes in community life through art.

The council is committed to a strategy beginning in minute corpuscles of community art interest, which are embodied in other organizations and activities as well as in art activity itself,

and affirms that art is basic to the general community good. This ideal of art enables the community to discover art and art to discover the community.

Art produces change. Councils acquainted with the traditions of art and the traditions of their community are needed to mediate this change.

The concept is more than twenty-five years old; yet some six hundred recently formed American arts councils testify to its operational effectiveness.

Arts council organizations, no two of which are the same, are tailored to fit the need and opportunity of each community.

The council places art and artist in the mainstream of American life by equipping the largest number of people with active art interests.

The articulate

neighborly

sharing of

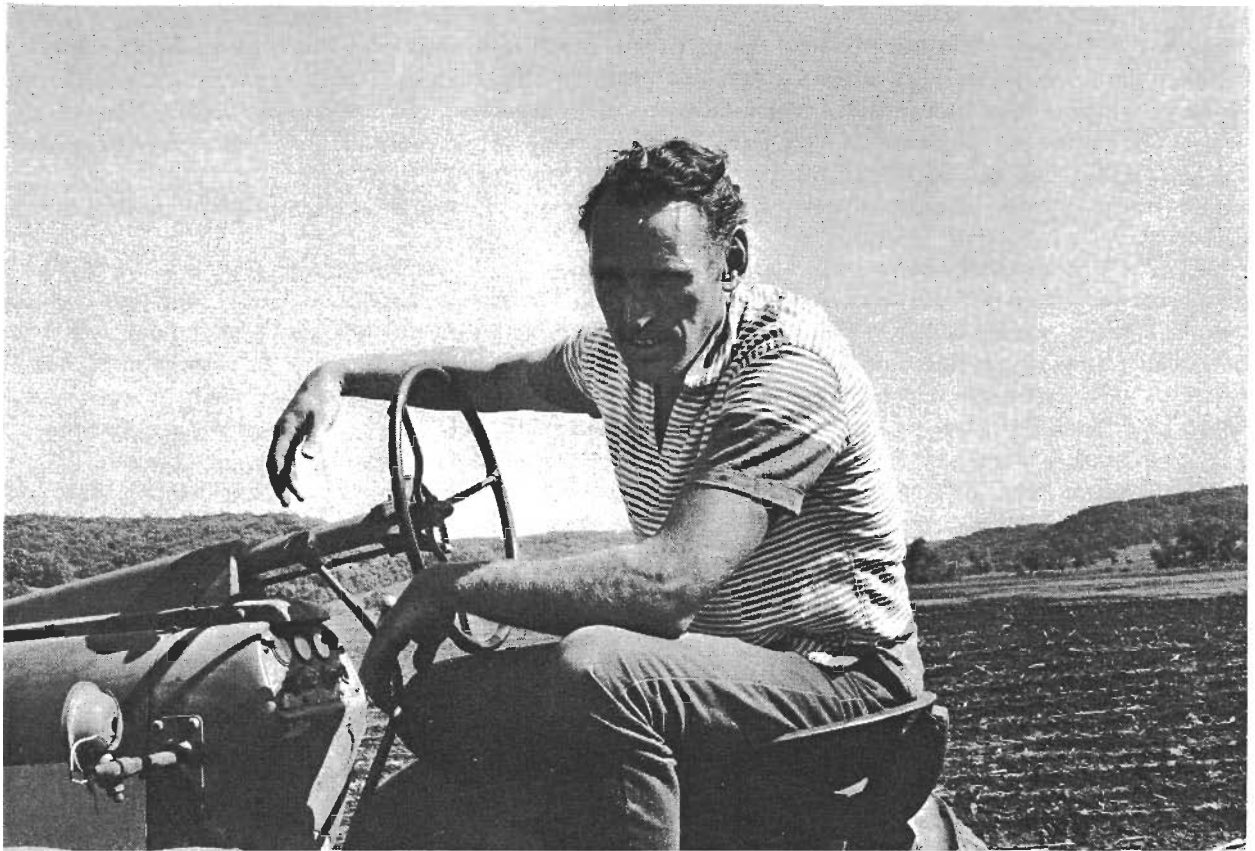
excellence

in art

will interest leaders from every aspect of life. Some will join the arts council from community concern; others from general interest in the arts; still others from disciplined arts commitment.

Each type of leadership is important because the ideal of art, initiated from common experience, supports the ideal of art as America's common faith.

*Arts councils develop in various ways. Arts leaders in Wisconsin tell how councils grew in some of the test communities of the federal grant.*



Declan Haun, *Life Magazine*, © Time, Inc.

#### **ROBERT GARD SPEAKS ABOUT ROBERT GRAVES AND THE UPLANDS ARTS COUNCIL IN SPRING GREEN.**

Robert Graves is tall, a bit gaunt. He walks quickly and firmly, always as though he is crossing a pasture. He is a former oarsman on The University of Wisconsin crew, a farmer, and a constant developer of his home area—the lovely Uplands of southwestern Wisconsin.

Graves has many dreams of developments he hopes may transpire on his own doorstep. Trained as a landscape architect, imbued with the philosophies of his teacher, Frank Lloyd Wright, of faithfulness to landscape in design, Graves has created in the Uplands an image of himself as the undoubted symbol of a style of cultural community development that is occurring there.

Graves envisioned a central group in the Uplands to represent all the arts. The Uplands Arts Council was chiefly formed by him. Like many devoted, dynamic, and perhaps single-purposed men, Graves tends to dominate, to issue orders; sometimes communication becomes difficult, because communication often stops with him.

Lately, Graves has learned that this approach is not good, and the Council now appears to be a group united behind Graves who has become willing to delegate jobs and responsibility.

I first met Robert Graves in 1963. We were standing on the lip of the great Wyoming (in Wisconsin) Valley. We could see down the valley a dozen miles...a patchwork of greens and misty blues and crop yellows. I said, "Robert, how many people in this valley are interested in seeing something unusual happen in the cultural arts?"

"A dozen. Twenty," he replied.

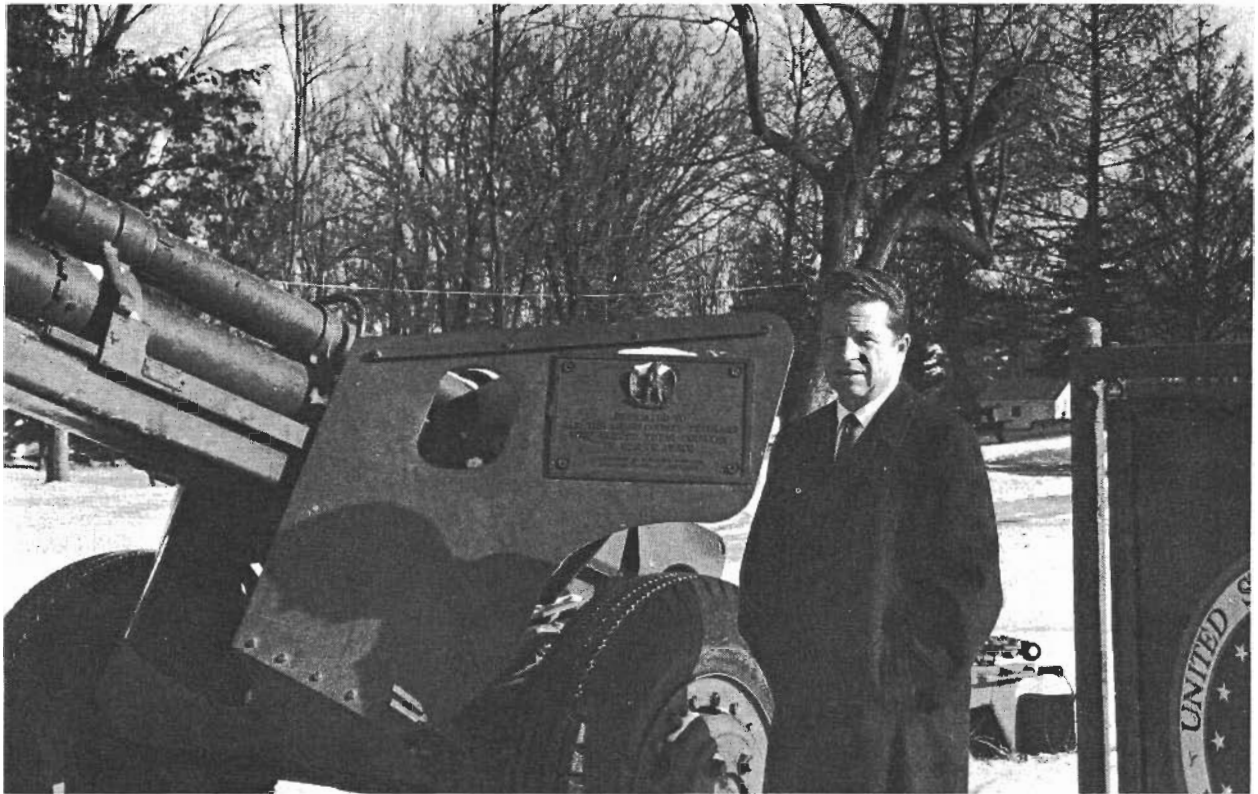
"You've done all you can alone," I said. "Why not get these twenty people together. Discuss what might be done."

"We have great assets," Graves said. "A beautiful part of the land, unspoiled by anything really commercial. We have a charming village, Spring Green. We have the image of Frank Lloyd Wright and Taliesin, his home, at the edge of the village. We live near a complex of 30 million people...if you count the whole Chicago area, Milwaukee, and the cities on the Mississippi. We are going to have a flood of summer and year-round residents, coming from the cities. Unless we watch carefully, the whole unspoiled character of the land will be altered. Ruined. We have to act. Now!"

I said, "Then you need an arts council, a central group to guide the cultural development of the community and to preserve its character."

The Uplands Arts Council was formed soon thereafter, under the leadership of Graves. A strong attachment to University Extension of The University of Wisconsin was forged, and early programs included the opening of a section of the Pioneer Trail, which might bring people through the Uplands on a scenic route. Then Graves remodeled a large barn as an art center. After the center came an amphitheatre, and finally an old opera house in the middle of Spring Green village was redone as a fine, small working theatre. Among the users of the theatre has been the Milwaukee Repertory Theater, first of the regional professional theatres to seek a small-town location. Graves was right, too, about people moving into the area. Already the general population picture has changed. So far there are very few signboards. New buildings carry a feeling, a character of the region...the Wright influence again.

The Uplands Arts Council has far to go perhaps; yet without the Council nothing would have been done, and a beautiful region would soon have become ugly and mutilated.



Adams County Extension Office

#### **RALPH KOHLHOFF RECALLS A CONVERSATION WITH HAROLD LEJEUNE ABOUT THE ADAMS COUNTY ARTS COUNCIL.**

The principal mover in the creation of the Adams County Arts Council was Harold LeJeune, the County Resource Development Agent. Friendship is the county seat and therefore his headquarters and home place.

As a resource development agent he is a member of the federal Extension Adult Education team, which includes specialists in agriculture, home economics, and youth development. In every county courthouse, in every state throughout America, people like Harold and his colleagues have been working for the last fifty years to enlighten and to improve the areas in which they live and work.

During one of the first planning sessions we had with him, Harold LeJeune accurately reflected the range of concern in the Extension Service that can include the arts.

Harold's office was an over-brown room within the seventy-year-old courthouse, complete with seventeen-foot ceilings, misty warm air from a hissing leaky radiator, and from the second floor window an excellent view of the wooded lawn with its artillery piece of Spanish-American War vintage, aimed squarely at the new brick Friendship post office across Highway 13. Highway 13 is the main street of both Adams and Friendship, which are in fact two separate towns.

"One of the problems in doing anything here," said Harold, offering us another cup of coffee from the ancient percolator resting insecurely on the windowsill, "is the sense of rivalry between two small places.

"Adams is the larger community having a little over 1100 people, and yet the courthouse was located in Friendship which has about 700 people. No one's gotten over it yet. If there is one thing that I work on the hardest," he said, "it is to build among these people a larger sense of community, a sense of sharing common problems and sharing the common resources to solve those problems. We certainly have enough problems to go around!" (Adams-Friendship in the old days flourished as a switching point on the main Chicago and Northwestern railroad lines, and when this changed, the town seemed to give up and for many years drifted downhill.)

"The young people have no place to work when they get out of school, so they leave on the first Greyhound bus. Why, we even have an active Railroad Widows Club!"

Harold poured himself still another cup of coffee and swung his ancient swivel chair around until he was looking out the window at the town. "I think we have succeeded in changing things so that we are now going uphill, and I think forming an arts council can help us in that direction.

"My wife is very interested in ceramics and we both like theatre. Every year we get tickets for the summer stock company that performs down in Baraboo, and so do quite a few other people in town."

Pointing out the window he said, "Do you see the Friendship Cafe across the street? Mary Grignano, who owns and runs the place, studied at one of the best private arts schools in the state, and on Wednesday nights, alternating with the Lions meeting, she uses the extra dining room as a studio for the painting club of about fifteen people. I only mention this," he said, "to give you some idea that even here in a place that my uncharitable friends at the University would call a 'cultural desert' there are people interested in the arts."

Getting up, he disappeared into the next room and returned with a sheaf of papers. "These are some reports from Ivan Morrow, the youth leader, revealing that among the 4-H clubs in the county, arts activities and projects are very popular. One of the clubs placed in the finals of the state 4-H drama competition, and, if they had their way, would do nothing else all year.

"You know," he said, "it certainly would be interesting if the founders of the federal Extension Service could see what we're doing now. The original idea was to teach better agricultural methods to the American farmer and better ways for his wife to can pickles. And here we are...the agricultural agent is working to develop a new ski hill project to bring tourists into the area, the home economics agent is working with her homemakers' clubs on creative blockprinting and arranging a bus tour to see the Milwaukee Repertory Theater company, and I'm working to get a paperboard company to relocate here in Adams-Friendship and at the same time getting ready to organize a community arts council.

"The world is a changing place and I guess our programs reflect the general change going on all over America."

The percolator was empty now, and Harold got out some instant coffee and filled our cups with hot water from the sink in the janitor's closet.

"You know," he said, "that last statement hits me as being too passive, and certainly too humble. We aren't just waiting around to copy someone's ideas from some other place. What we are trying to do here is to take this town...our town, from where it is, which looks pretty bad in terms of sociological statistics, and make it as fine a place to live as anywhere. We've got the natural and human resources here to do the job, but someone has to get it going. We need new industry so the kids can stay and make a living, but we need the arts to make the living attractive enough to make sure the kids want to stay.

"What we have to kill is all the darn apathy around here!

"We have to convince people, especially the young, that this town isn't just going from nowhere to nowhere...but to somewhere!

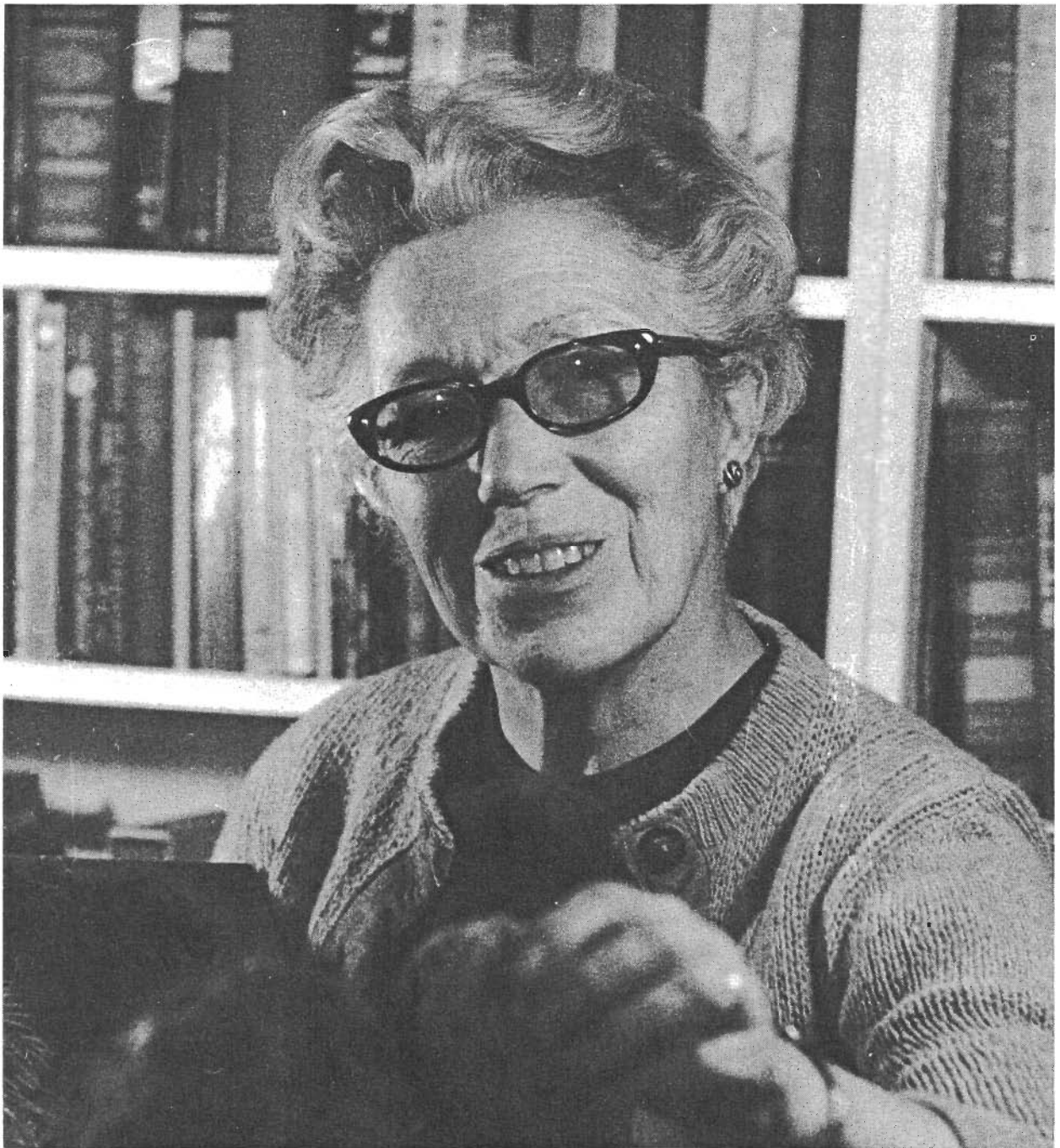
"They have to be convinced that...something's happening!...something's moving!"

Delighted with his inspiration, Harold got up and walked around the room. "I guess that sums up what I think about the arts and getting the council going. The Arts Council is a 'happening,' and if I read *Time* magazine correctly, this means that this office and this town are just as creative as you would like it to be. I don't know what the end result is going to be, but we're going to have a happening and we will see what we will see!"

After this great burst of unconscious poetic artistry on the part of Mr. LeJeune, we settled down to plan the first organizational meeting of the Arts Council. It was to be built around people in the community who had specific interests in drawing, painting, and ceramics.

That was two years ago. Now Adams-Friendship has a new ski hill, a new paperboard factory, and an Arts Council of approximately forty people being reorganized for the third time by an ever-optimistic Harold LeJeune.

We are confident that he will eventually succeed, because he is so stubbornly sure that the arts will help to make Adams-Friendship one of the best places to live in the state of Wisconsin.



Dr. Harmon Hull photo

**MICHAEL WARLUM SPEAKS ABOUT CORNELIA HULL  
AND THE WAUPUN AREA ARTS COUNCIL.**

A small woman with a quick quizzical smile, Mrs. Harmon Hull is the wife of the most respected doctor in Waupun. She is the kind of community leader who never holds office, but sees to it that other people get things done and influences everything they do. She sets an example by taking on with enthusiasm more than her part of any project. According to her friends in the Waupun Area Arts Council, she calls up to chat and adds, "By the way, did you finish that newspaper story advertising the concert?" or employs some other device to refresh memories about a job that needs doing.

I first met Mrs. Hull in late summer, 1964, on the Door County Peninsula. The Wisconsin Arts Foundation and Council was sponsoring a one-day seminar on arts council formation. Mrs. Hull and a friend had driven the 200 miles to attend.

She fanned herself with a mimeographed program of the day's events. "Waupun would really profit by an arts council. We've people who can do it too. I'm going back to tell them all I've learned today about getting people together, assessing community resources, incorporating with the state, sponsoring projects. Oh, it'll be a lot of work, but our town really needs an arts program."

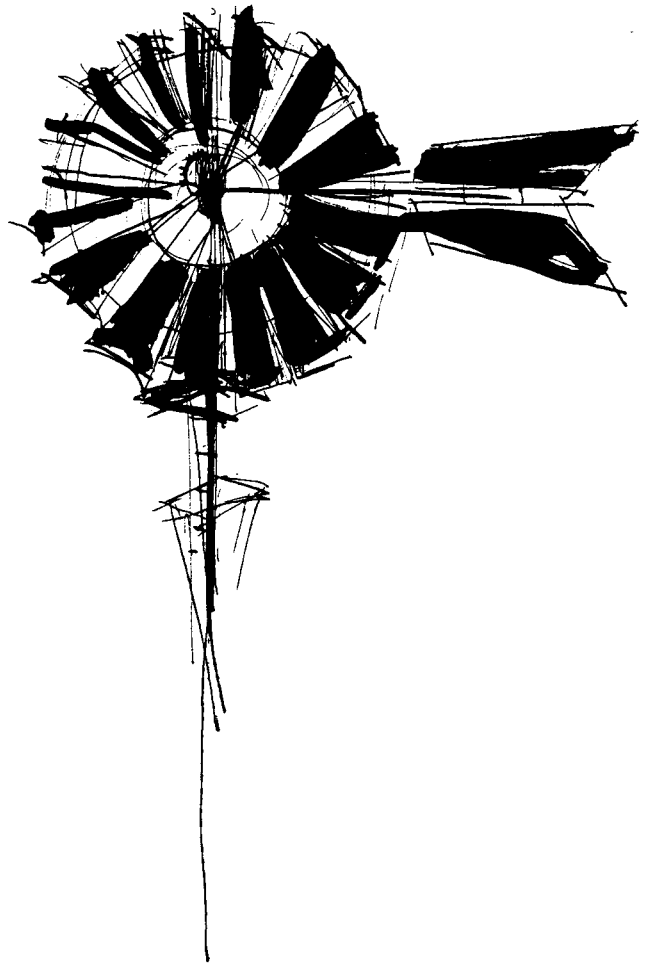
Two years later I sat in Mrs. Hull's long living room, admiring the tasteful mixture of antique and modern furniture and sipping coffee.

The Arts in the Small Community grant had been approved by the National Endowment, and Waupun was to be one of the test communities. Mrs. Hull was the first person I was told to see.

"In the last couple of years we've done quite a bit here in Waupun. First, I called some people I knew and brought up the idea. You know, just incidentally. It caught on with a few. They each saw the Arts Council differently, so we got together to talk about it. Each of the six people who came had suggestions about who else to ask. We agreed that the movement needed as many people as possible and that they should come from all parts and levels of the community, and, oh yes, that people from outside Waupun proper must be part of it too. There were certain individuals we just had to involve. Leaders, people with influence like the reporter for the newspaper, someone from the city council, representatives of the various religious groups. We planned our strategy that day in this living room. Then we separated, determined to use our contacts.

"It took us a while before we were able to call a public meeting. We met in the basement of that new bank building just off the main street. Out of that meeting came a temporary board of directors for the new Waupun Area Arts Council. My, we were so excited about all the things we were going to do. A committee got right to work on bylaws and a constitution. Others started at once planning activities. We've done quite a lot already, and I think the Council would be most eager to hear what the University has to suggest and offer to help us really develop the arts in this area."

*These three examples illustrate the variety of approaches to organization and the sources of leadership available in small communities. The considerations of setting up an arts council as a nonprofit organization and the structure for governing it can, in most cases, be borrowed from already established community organizations. It is the interests of the members of the group and not its organizational structure that make it unique. If detailed information is desired on such things as bylaws for an arts council, it can be obtained from your state Arts Council.*



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## **BLUEPRINT FOR ACTION**

*Once an arts council has been created, its goals and objectives can be based upon considerations that in this plan are grouped according to environment, people, and organizations.*

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State Historical Society of Wisconsin

II.

Consideration 1

## ENVIRONMENT

## ARTS COUNCILS

Should Consider:

Local Area

Because:

- ♦ Councils can influence an area beyond a village or town.
- ♦ Councils can include residents and enlist talent from a wider area.
- ♦ Councils can expand communications to and from neighboring places.
- ♦ Councils can establish a regional cultural center.

## LOCAL AREA

Each small community is the center of a number of important human relations areas. The area under consideration may be widened to include several towns, a county, or a region. In rural areas, the school district, the conservation district, the utility complex or the marketing, communications, and university areas all constitute human relations areas. These areas, defined by the pattern of social, economic, governmental, transportation, and communications life in the vicinity should be carefully studied.

The Uplands Arts Council was conceived as an area Council. Mount Horeb, Richland Center, Plain, Dodgeville, and smaller places all constituted, with Spring Green, an Arts Council complex. Programs were designed so that each community had some advantage of participation, and Council members came from each place. Area newspapers and radio stations carried news of Council activities; a printed program was delivered to each area family. School children were invited to Spring Green or to other communities in the Council area for combined programs. A summer arts festival was arranged so that all sections of the area might participate.

In Friendship, Mary Grignano is owner of the Friendship Cafe, typical of small town restaurants with its backless stools, plastic upholstered booths, and glassed-in displays of homemade pies. Not typical of small town cafes, however, are the lovely oil paintings and charcoal drawings on the walls. The artist is the proprietor herself.

Mary Grignano tells us how one small local group grew to involve a larger area. "We started out meeting here in the restaurant. We called ourselves the Friendship Arts and Crafts Committee. There were quite a few at the first couple of meetings, but the number dwindled to about six or seven. That was how we chose our working board, or got it chosen for us.

"We soon began to see that if there was going to be the kind of support we needed, we'd better involve Adams too. It hurt some of the older committee members to do that because there's always been rivalry between the two towns.

"Anyway, we formed a larger committee with people from both towns. That worked all right for the first year. When it came time to incorporate the Arts Council, though, we still had the problem of involving enough folks. So we called it the Adams County Arts Council. That worked like a charm. New leaders joined us from fifteen, twenty-five miles away."

## LOCAL AREA

### Arts Councils Should Consider that:

1. Local place names are often somewhat confusing in their precise geographic application. A single name may stand for a village, a township, a county, or a larger area including several small communities.
2. The region of local telephone service is an area of primary personal communication. In the arts, as in life generally, word-of-mouth publicity underlies and affects every other kind.
3. The school district ordinarily is an area of minimal transportation, since all children must be within bussing distance. It is the basis of tax life, family life, and the developing youth culture.
4. Grange, social service, public health, medical, and religious organizations in a small community are usually linked with those in nearby communities. These links can be very helpful.
5. A county seat relates the community to its courts, provides road services, houses records, and is often the headquarters for library, hospital, and other services.
6. Colleges, universities, and university centers, both private and public, are interrelated and distributed evenly according to state population. In Wisconsin, a major university center is to be developed within thirty miles of every home. Most other states have similar plans.
7. Conservation districts comprise several counties and focus the attention of small communities on problems of soil conservation, water pollution, and wildlife control. Often closely related to government agencies and university extension programs, conservation districts are generally organized to carry out important services of education and public information.
8. Water, gas, and electric power complexes constitute other important human relations areas. These areas suggest the regional image within which both private and public support for art activities may be generated.
9. Perhaps the most important human relations area is the area covered by radio, TV, and major newspapers.

### *ARTS COUNCILS SHOULD CONSIDER*



College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, The University of Wisconsin, Madison

II.

Consideration 2

**ENVIRONMENT**

**ARTS COUNCILS**

Should Consider:

**Natural Resources**

## NATURAL RESOURCES

Every community has a treasure of natural resources, although some have larger treasures than others. These natural treasures may be mountains or hills, valleys or plains, streams or rivers, woods or forests, lakes or oceans, or geologic remnants. Every community has an environmental shape that is an aesthetic shape. And the environment is of great value to arts council planners.

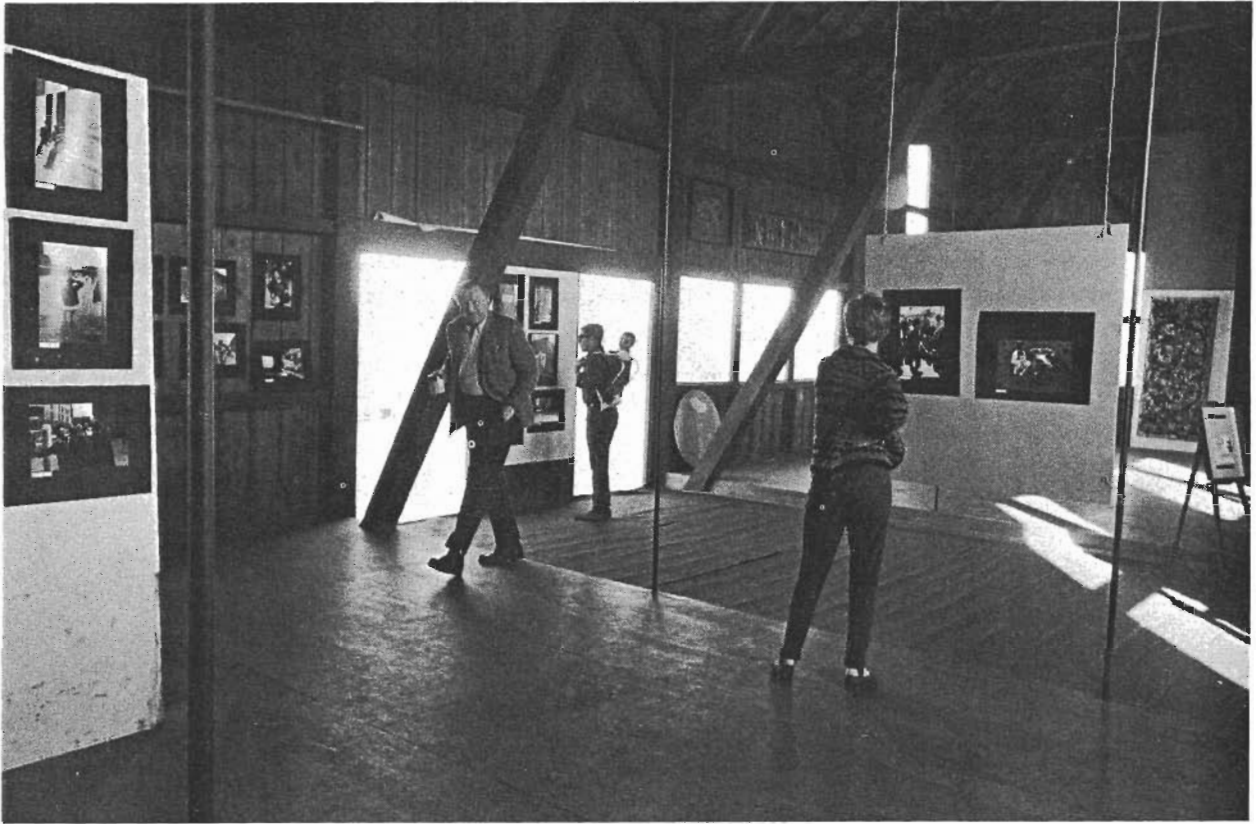
Lady Bird Johnson, when she was First Lady, had a deep interest in the American community scene and its improvement in aesthetic and environmental terms.

In the fall of 1967 the First Lady visited Spring Green to see what was being done to make a more attractive community.

She noted:

1. That there were few billboards in the area.
2. That a constant attempt was being made to preserve the natural character of the landscape.
3. That trails were being marked for public use.
4. That lakes and streams were being cleaned and beautified.
5. That vistas where travelers passed were being prepared as resting spots.
6. That buildings were being renovated, or made more attractive, new sidewalks prepared, and flowers and trees planted on the main business street.
7. That businesses were taking an interest in making their storefronts attractive.
8. That the wildlife of the area was being nurtured and preserved.
9. That when a sign was necessary its design was in keeping with the landscape.
10. That school children were being trained to maintain the character of the landscape and to help in an active way.
11. That historic and geographic sites were attractively marked.
12. That information was available to the public on the history and character of the landscape.

## *ARTS COUNCILS SHOULD CONSIDER*



II.

Consideration 3

### ENVIRONMENT

### ARTS COUNCILS

Should Consider:

Facilities

Because:

- ♦ New facilities can be developed.
- ♦ Farmhouses, barns, outbuildings, and storefronts can be interestingly redesigned or redecorated.
- ♦ Schools, churches, and civic centers can also be used creatively.

## FACILITIES

Community art action begins with the selection of a place or places to carry on the activities. The arts, like every other human activity, must be housed, yet few processes are as flexible and adaptable. While schools, churches, civic buildings, and libraries may have auditoriums or rooms that can be used for some activities, the housing of art facilities is by no means limited to these obvious places. New facilities may be developed. From unoccupied farmhouses, barns, outbuildings, garages, or stores creative adaptations can be made. Such adaptations give arts councils the opportunity to look for the beauty in their natural surroundings, to recognize the values of good architecture, and to exercise both good taste and ingenuity in the development of satisfactory accommodations. Few things add more to the grace and beauty of a community than well-located art programs.

In the Uplands, a region of hills and ridges surrounding Spring Green, a farm, a barn, and outbuildings have been redesigned for art activity. The farmhouse has been modernized and remodeled with large picture windows that take advantage of a beautiful view of Wyoming Valley. This building provides winter quarters for small groups and a summer residence for visiting artists. The barn too was remodeled; meeting or studio space is on the first level and a small theatre or an art gallery is upstairs. Nearby are two smaller outbuildings. One is used to store supplies for pottery and ceramics groups; extending from it is a patio for art lessons and seminars. The other building, formerly a chicken coop, has been admirably adapted for the creative theatre workshops in which children re-create the pioneer days. The Uplands program also uses schools, churches, storefronts, and a variety of other community facilities. But, its imaginative style, which is no longer limited by the initial facility, is modeled on the adaptation of the old barn. In the summer, a continuous and rich program is carried on here; a constant stream of visitors stop by to observe the ballet and play rehearsals, the creative theatre, or the original works of local artists.

## FACILITIES

### Arts Councils Should:

1. Study each art activity relative to an appropriate facility.
2. In the housing of a display, a production, rehearsals, or other activity, study the problems with both the director of the activity and the person in charge of the facility.
3. Consider adapting to the use of the arts a variety of buildings initially constructed for other purposes. Often barns, cottages, stores, school buildings, warehouses, garages, fish houses, or sheds of various types may be found and suitably redesigned for arts activity.
4. Consult with an architect and one or more persons professionally engaged in the art to be housed if a facility is to be adapted from another use or newly built.
5. Consider outdoor displays and productions, where the weather is suitable and where technical problems have been carefully studied, since these add beauty and local significance to the program. However, an indoor facility must always be available in case of inclement weather.
6. Arrange for displays that may be held wherever the light is right, the art work safe from damage, and wherever people assemble or pass by.
7. Rent auditoriums for special programs from schools, churches, or fraternal organizations. In general, when an auditorium is rented, especially on a regular or repeat basis, the more public the use and support of the facility, the more satisfactory the facility is likely to be.
8. Consider libraries as a meeting place for small groups seeking to study art activity problems.
9. Consider opening the old one-room schoolhouse for summer recreation and arts programs for area children.

*ARTS COUNCILS SHOULD ALSO CONSIDER*



*Milwaukee Journal photo*

II.

Consideration 4

## ENVIRONMENT

## ARTS COUNCILS

Should Consider:

Health

Because:

- ♦ Olympic Games grew out of a cultural festival.
- ♦ Some physical education programs include modern dance and ballet.
- ♦ Healthful exercise is important to art groups.

## HEALTH

The Olympic Games grew out of and, indeed, were part of traditional festivals illustrating man in harmony with his environment, physical being, and spiritual nature. However, the relationship between sports and the arts has gone almost unexplored in modern society. There appear to be even as in the Greek culture, strong connections between the two that might be useful to the arts council.

Physical education programs often incorporate training in modern dance and ballet, and occasionally ballet techniques are utilized for improvement of athletic performance. Nowadays, exercise appears to be essential for health and the discouragement of certain kinds of cardiac disease. These and other ties offer fertile ground for arts councils to explore.

Art and appreciation grow from the structuring of perception and are functions of this reformulation of the world. They are, therefore, important in keeping physical and spiritual balance in relationship to surroundings. How we perceive the world determines how we are to relate to it. Art opens rich possibilities for health through expression providing fruitful and intimate modes of adjustment for every person of every age.

At Spring Green, in the summer of 1968, a program of exercise for residents and visiting art students was led by a local physician and a director from the University. A dynamic group met for one hour at noon, three days a week. Not only did the members improve their knowledge and awareness of the arts program in their area, but they felt so much better physically that their general enthusiasm for life increased enormously. As one member of the Arts and Health Group said, "Wouldn't miss it for the world!"

In the gymnasium of the Waupun High School the bleachers were packed with teen-agers. A small man in black tights held the floor. He was Tibor Zana, born in Hungary and now Director of the Wisconsin Ballet Company, which would perform in Waupun the next week. Tibor was doing what he calls "pre-education."

"Now, will the best football, basketball, and golf players come forward. Come, come, do not be bashful." Three tall, embarrassed boys hulked onto the floor. Tibor asked their names and what sports they represented. "OK, the basketball player. Jump for me. Jump as high as you can. Just as you do when you shoot a basket." The boy jumped. Then Tibor, a good ten inches shorter than the athlete, jumped and outjumped the boy by a foot, and with seemingly less effort. "So, you see. Ballet is not sissy stuff. By studying it, using the proper position and leap, you could do your job better. Now, the football player. Do a run and block for me...." And he proceeded to show how similar to dance were the basic moves of sports and athletics.

## HEALTH

### Arts Councils Should:

Prepare the community and arts groups for a relationship between arts and sports.

1. Using prints from hunting, sports, and sculpture, prepare an art exhibit showing that sports and art have always been related.
2. Import a speaker who can talk to key groups, show films about sports, and show documentaries of Olympic Games. Have him appear in the school.
3. Interest local medical men in a committee on health and the arts.
4. Establish an "exercise group" made up of volunteers from various arts and other programs and individual citizens.
5. Work toward local "Olympic Games" sponsored by the central exercise group, incorporating sports activities of the community into a festival of sports and arts.
6. Encourage the health and the arts committee to think through the problems of interesting and worthwhile art for hospitals, doctors' offices, and institutions in which custodial care is required.

### *ARTS COUNCILS SHOULD CONSIDER*



State Historical Society of Wisconsin

II.

Consideration 5

### ENVIRONMENT

### ARTS COUNCILS

Should Consider:

Local History

Because:

- ♦ Local history has its own built-in art interest.
- ♦ Local history has fascinating stories.
- ♦ Local history has dramatic value.
- ♦ Local history has memorabilia that can generate local pride.
- ♦ Local history can give insight to present problems.

## LOCAL HISTORY

People in small towns have a well-developed sense of their local legends and lore, but frequently they do not fully appreciate the dramatic value of their fascinating stories. Development of the arts may well be based on a careful exploration and use of local history. Not only can a sense of local pride be generated, but very often an awareness of the past and past values can give impetus to contemporary viewpoints and programs.

At Rhinelander, the history of lumbering and of the lumberjack has been emphasized. A lumberjack museum has been built, with logging camp and all utensils and tools just as when the area was booming timber-producing country. Indian art and native literature and paintings are displayed and sold at the museum. A major community project partially supported by the city of Rhinelander, the center is host to nearly 100,000 persons each summer.

Late in the nineteenth century, Rhinelander had a famous practical joker named Gene Shepard. His great hoax was the "Hodag," a huge animal he claimed to have captured in the deep woods. Shepard exhibited the fabrication of bull hide, horns, and fierce flashing eyes at the county fair with great success. In 1964, David Peterson of the Wisconsin Idea Theatre staff wrote a musical show, "Hodag," which for three years played at Wisconsin county fairs and elsewhere, eventually touring for the U.S.O. in Europe. The name Rhinelander became well known, and the Hodag and Shepard took rightful places in Wisconsin folklore. Attractive and catchy musical numbers brought many people to Rhinelander to see the home of the Hodag. In 1967, Lady Bird Johnson attended a special performance of "Hodag" at the theatre in Spring Green.

## LOCAL HISTORY

### Arts Councils Should:

1. Identify those people most interested in the local history.
2. Encourage them to form a local history unit, such as a historical society.
3. Merge such a unit with the arts council on the basis that a growing knowledge of the background of the community will strengthen its cultural development.
4. Arrange a special local history room or a special display.
5. Highlight the history of major developments or industries.
6. Identify the old roads and trails.
7. Honor the old-timers on special occasions and encourage them to speak and write of the old days. Published literature may result.
8. Draw together the artifacts of the past life of the community. This valuable service is of particular interest to schools.
9. Arrange exhibits of folk arts of the region. A show of traditional quilts, for example, will draw a large crowd.
10. Preserve the landmarks. Architectural landmarks, especially, are subject to disappearance.
11. Link the local history unit with the creative writers' group. Short stories, poems, articles, and books may result.
12. Dramatize and present as plays, episodes of local history. A summer outdoor production has wide appeal.
13. Form associations with state or regional historical organizations or societies.



State Historical Society of Wisconsin

*ARTS COUNCILS SHOULD CONSIDER*



Rus Arnold photo

II.

Consideration 6

## PEOPLE

### ARTS COUNCILS

Should Consider:

Artists and Art Interest Groups

Because:

- ♦ These people are already committed to the arts.
- ♦ They are motivated to stimulate interest in the arts.
- ♦ They can be of help in programming and promotion.

## ARTISTS AND ART INTEREST GROUPS

Many communities have small groups of people who have banded together somewhat informally to share and promote a common interest in a particular art. Although not common, a few places also have people who make their living as professionals in the arts. Such groups and individuals can be of great help to the arts council since they are deeply interested in the ideas the council is trying to promote. If some attempt is not made to involve them or recognize their work, arts groups and individual artists may unfortunately impede the council's progress.

Harry Nohr, retired postmaster of Mineral Point, Wisconsin, tells about his life as an artist in a small community: "Yes, I guess you would call me an artist. I make my living that way now, and my wooden bowls are displayed all over the country. One was chosen for the Smithsonian Craft Collection. People tell me my bowls have become real collectors' items."

Stacks of the bowls of which Harry speaks surround us in his living room. He finds suitable pieces of wood, often burls, treats them in his basement, and then carves them to a symmetrical shape designed to show off the graining. The bowls are unique because they are almost paper thin. Nohr impregnates the wood with a mixture of epoxies and resins, which makes the bowls usable for anything, including soup. "I always did like wood. Got to fooling around with a lathe years back. Then I talked to some people from The University of Wisconsin, and they told me about the epoxy mixture. So I was on my way, and I've developed quite a reputation.

"Several arts groups have asked me to speak about my work. I'm not a professional speaker, but I take along slides showing a bowl in various stages of development and a stack of the bowls themselves. That kind of presentation works out pretty well.

"A small town like Mineral Point is a good place for an artist to work. The atmosphere is relaxed. My time is my own. The countryside is near at hand. Personally, I couldn't ask for more."

A woman speaks about her arts interest group and the local arts council: "Our painting club was organized for ten years before some people here in town thought about starting an arts council. The chairman of the organizing committee called our president right away and told him what they were trying to do. He asked the president if the painting club would like to be in on the planning. The president brought it up at the next meeting. The club decided to send me to the planning sessions to represent us. So I was in from the start. Starting a council really was a good idea, and I could see at once that its aims were the same as ours, only including all the arts."

## ARTISTS AND ART INTEREST GROUPS

### Arts Councils Should:

1. Assess the community to find out what artists and art interest groups exist within it. Many councils have a broad policy that includes such groups as garden clubs, literary clubs, writing groups, painting and crafts groups, barbershop quartets, lapidary societies, music clubs, and creative sewing groups.
2. Discuss each artist and group in committee, preplanning contacts and foreseeing any diplomatic pitfalls.
3. Appoint members to call or visit each artist and group. Choose people who have an entree, who can explain the purposes and aims of the council, and who will conduct themselves diplomatically.
4. Wait patiently following the call or visit. The artist will need time to think about his role in relation to the arts council. The art interest groups will have to discuss their positions with respect to the council.
5. Make contact again if nothing is heard within a reasonable period of time. Explore with the artist or group any problems that may have come up in discussion.
6. Invite artists and groups to membership in the council. In some communities, it is wise for the council to establish group memberships, so that members of existing organizations can join in a body.
7. Invite those who decline membership to participate in an honorary or advisory capacity.
8. Maintain good will even if participation is refused. Be certain to include professionals and interest groups on all council mailing lists, and, in the case of groups, to consult them in scheduling council activities in order to avoid conflict with group activities.
9. Promote the artist's or group's areas of interest by advertising its activities and cooperating in such events as an autograph party or painting exhibition.

### *ARTS COUNCILS SHOULD CONSIDER*



Declan Haun, *Life Magazine*, © Time, Inc.

II.

Consideration 7

## PEOPLE

### ARTS COUNCILS

Should Consider:

Youth

## YOUTH

A generation is growing up inside a fortress of alienation which only a scattering of adults can penetrate. In servicing its community, the arts councils must not forget citizens twenty-one and under. Programs accepted and enjoyed by adults often say nothing to teen-agers. In many instances programming for this age group requires a fresh look at the community, the young people, and the world. Moreover, it almost surely demands serious consultation with a planning committee made up of teen-agers themselves.

The meetings in Waupun took place in the basement room of the old library. Nothing distinguished the room from the meeting rooms of public libraries across the nation. The Board of the Waupun Area Junior Arts Council was convened.

Six teen-agers lounged around the table. Everyone played it cool, acting disinterested in modern teen-age tradition. An adult observer would not realize that business was being transacted unless he listened carefully.

"Listen, you guys, the president of the Adult Council called and asked Chuck and me to their meeting. We went. Their board said they'd like us to figure out some ways we can help with the sculpture show. Any ideas?"

"How about if we get some guys together to help direct traffic, and maybe some girls to guide people through the show."

"Good. And maybe we could do a corn roast and a dance that week. It would attract the kids to town for the show."

"Besides, if we made any money, it would help out our other projects."

And so they went on, young people with ideas. They live in a different world from their parents, many of whom are members of the Adult Arts Council, but they communicate with them through community projects in the arts. How did the Junior Arts Council get started? Their president told us.

"We got going by accident. The Waupun Area Arts Council sponsored a one-day meeting to interest people in what it was doing. A committee arranged for demonstrations in painting, needlework, and other crafts. They performed some dramatic scenes and gave short talks about the Council. Since the city hall auditorium was available, one of the women on the committee volunteered her son's services to put on a psychedelic light show. *Life* had just run a big article on them. When word got out about it at school, the place really buzzed.

"I guess the committee was pretty surprised when the night of the program came. You should have seen their faces. They must not have realized that we knew light shows were really the in thing. Anyway, 400 of us kids showed up at the city hall, ready to swing.

"It's a rule that no admission can be collected for programs at the auditorium. But it seems that people working for a cause, like the arts, learn fast how to turn a buck. The committee members talked together a little bit and then announced that only paid-up members

of the Waupun Area Junior Arts Council could be admitted. None of us had ever heard of it. Later on we discovered that that was because it hadn't been founded until that very moment. Membership was fifty cents. We all joined in order to get into the show. A week later some of us got together and organized. And we already had 400 members."

Pre-teens may not as yet be as alien as their older brothers and sisters, but to capture their imaginations in a world filled with TV cartoons, exciting new school programs, and rock music is no small challenge. Techniques such as creative theatre, puppetry, and fence painting contests reminiscent of Tom Sawyer have been used with great success. Here is an account by a farm mother from Lone Rock in the Uplands area:

"We decided something should be done for our children in drama. You know, they often don't get acquainted with anything dramatic firsthand in small towns nowadays. Our P.T.A. explored what was available from the state university and found that a specialist on the staff of the Wisconsin Idea Theatre was willing to come out to do workshops. She was one of the most vivacious people I've ever met, and when she walked into that room full of kids, magic happened. She was the Pied Piper and Mother Goose. She loved the kids, chided them, pulled creativity right up out of them. She said to us, 'Look, look what your children can do.' We did look, and we were amazed. We listened to her and agreed when she said: 'In creative theatre as I lead it, the youngsters learn to express themselves. They learn to interact and to make up their own plays. They read folktales, improvise scripts, sew their own costumes, make scenery, and do a kind of show really for themselves. There's plenty of time for them to do printed plays all the rest of their lives, but the way to introduce them to drama is to let them make it themselves.'"

## YOUTH

### Arts Councils Should:

1. Sponsor programs for pre-teens or encourage others to do so.
2. Allow the teen-agers as much autonomy as possible. The adult arts council should conceive of itself mainly as a facilitating body for programs the young people wish to initiate. Judicious guidance is appropriate, of course, but attempts at dictation can be disastrous.
3. Work through the schools and their administrators. They can tell you in what facets of the arts young people have an interest and how the council can sponsor or encourage programs to enrich and augment school offerings.
4. Work with established youth organizations such as the Boy and Girl Scouts, the Campfire Girls, church groups, and others.
5. Help interested teen-agers to set up a youth arts council. It will be a vehicle for communication between the adult council and the young people, since the youth council acts as a planning committee and sounding board for ideas. Moreover, it is a method for giving teen-agers in small places something of their own in the arts.

### *ARTS COUNCILS SHOULD CONSIDER*



Declan Haun, *Life Magazine*, © Time, Inc.

II.

Consideration 8

## PEOPLE

### ARTS COUNCILS

Should Consider:

Retired People

## RETIRED PEOPLE

Since small communities provide not only stability and economic advantages but also warmth and friendship often absent under other living conditions, they often contain a high percentage of senior citizens. Many of these people continue to exercise vital roles in business, civic, and social affairs. Yet life in later years is characterized by a gradual loss of vitality accompanied by a phasing out of business, family, sports, and social goals that gave drive and unity to younger years. Many art activities that do not demand great physical energy can provide new stimulus and satisfaction to older citizens. A new or renewed interest in painting, crafts, writing, and such art activities can discipline leisure time, provide a focus for living, and generate new social relationships, all of which are of particular importance to the senior citizen.

"I am eighty-four years old and live in Adams. My family of five children is grown and married and some of them are old enough to think of themselves as senior citizens too. The pictures I paint will never hang in galleries although several of them do hang in the homes of my children and grandchildren in different parts of the U.S.A. All my life I have enjoyed painting, but in recent years I have done more with it. Because I paint, I have learned to observe the relationships of line and color and shape and see more of the world around me than I would otherwise see. Also, the art class is the only place where I meet my contemporaries; contemporaries in interest, I mean. Only in the art class do I meet fellow artists who are trying to learn more about their craft of painting and who are therefore unconcerned about my age or theirs."

A committee member of the National Finnish American Festival at the small town of Hurley spoke about involving older citizens: "When we started the Festival, everybody thought that the old Finns, the retired ones, would be the best workers. Some of the men are really professional carpenters, and the old ladies, well, all of them bake, and most do fancy work that could be sold in a craft shop. But none of them came to the meetings. We went to see them individually, but had no luck. They just couldn't see how this Festival involved them. So we younger ones worked at developing the museum, the craft shop, the musical programs, and we wondered all the time why the older ones, the people who had actually come here from Finland, didn't help. Eventually, we got to figuring how we could interest them.

"We tried a lot of methods, and none of them worked. At last, we came upon the idea of a radio show. The old Finns all listen to the radio. It's something they can do without going out. The local radio station gave us an hour per week public service time, and we started the Finnish Radio Hour. Of course, we wanted to reach everyone, but we particularly aimed at the old folks. We played folk songs, the kind most of them hadn't heard since they were children in the old country. And it worked. They started showing up at the coffee socials, they brought work to the craft shop, they took to calling up the radio station and asking what they could do to help the Festival. Now they're our staunchest supporters, and all because we did something that mattered to them."

## RETIRED PEOPLE

### **Arts Councils Should:**

1. Develop the view that art can become an important part of retirement strategy, especially if arts activity is developed before retirement.
2. Identify the persons of older years in the community who have sustained arts interest and help them to display their work, or practice their art.
3. Invite retired businessmen to assist in financial affairs.
4. Seek the professional counsel of retired professional people in connection with the organization of activities or the adaptation of particular facilities.
5. Provide opportunities whereby arts and/or crafts activities may be related to important services to people in the area.
6. Draw together older people in a center where they can explore or practice creative activities, but do not exclude them from arts activities with younger people.

*ARTS COUNCILS SHOULD ALSO CONSIDER*



Elmer E. Richardson, International Institute, Milwaukee

**II.**

**Consideration 9**

**PEOPLE**

**ARTS COUNCILS**

**Should Consider:**

**Ethnic Groups**

**Because:**

- ♦ Folk groups enrich American heritage.
- ♦ Folkways are attractive.
- ♦ Folk art is vital.
- ♦ Folk crafts are beautiful.
- ♦ Folk festivals attract many visitors.

## ETHNIC GROUPS

Every state, region, or community is enriched by its ethnic heritage. Most places in America grew out of several different settlements and nationality patterns. Sometimes foreign tradition and heritage diminish with time and are almost forgotten; elsewhere the generations keep the heritage strong and perpetuate it in many ways.

Since national heritage is attached to cultural expression, it is possible to open vistas to the arts through ethnic doorways. The folkways of the people are attractive, and their preservation in folk art exhibits, craft shops, foods, and festivals draws people to the community as well as strengthens its social fibre.

Summer evenings in Wisconsin are beyond telling. They have to be felt, seen, and smelled firsthand. The best way to spend at least one each year is sprawled on a blanket, the stars spangled up above, with an arm around your best girl, watching *The Song of Norway*. When they sing "Midsummer's Eve," you know what they're singing about.

The musical, based on the life of Edvard Grieg, is performed each year by the people of Mt. Horeb, a town of about 3,000 in the Uplands area. They do it on Saturday nights on a plywood stage with improvised scenery. The audience arrives toting camp chairs, blankets, and the kids, and spreads itself out across the hillside—a fine ski slope in the wintertime. Some even come early enough to have a picnic first.

*The Song of Norway* festival got started when a few of the citizens of Mt. Horeb decided to do something to show the state how proud the town was of its heritage. A local committee, calling itself Song of Norway, Ltd., arranged for the building of the stage and other facilities, recruited the cast, and employed the director. The committee also interested other people in doing publicity and designing and making costumes, sets, and arrangements. As in any missionary effort, a few worked a lot of hours because they had faith in their idea. Their reward was immediate.

People from all over southern Wisconsin made it a point to come to *The Song of Norway*. Best of all, citizens of Mt. Horeb came who had been watching the progress but had taken no active part. Furthermore, they got in the habit of coming every week. The actors do find it a bit disconcerting to have a woman nearing eighty hobble up to the stage afterward and say, "Young fella, you did a fine job, but you didn't say that one line in the second act the same this week as you did last Saturday."

In another Wisconsin small community: "Some of us here felt something should be done to promote the arts. But our people are former miners and lumberjacks with a few dirt farmers thrown in. Not many of them are what you'd call artistic. So we decided to sneak up on them. We looked for a device by which people could take part without feeling sissy or like they were wasting time.

"A lot of us are Finnish by background. The migration took place at the turn of the century, so some of those who came over from the old country are still alive. The Finn has been a very important part of this area.

The logical way to get something done about the arts was to tie it in with the Finnish heritage. We set up three objectives: to promote and preserve the Finnish-American heritage, to provide family-type entertainment for tourists and local people, and to stimulate the economy through attraction of tourists. Notice that we didn't say anywhere that the organization was to promote the arts. But that's what it did. Why, we had all sorts of people get involved who never realized they were practicing and encouraging the arts until they were right in the middle of it. By that time, they could admit what they were doing because they had discovered they liked it and that, surprise of surprises, it was worthwhile."

## ETHNIC GROUPS

### Arts Councils Should:

1. Find out what ethnic groups settled and still predominate in the area by reading local histories and talking to longtime citizens.
2. Determine which groups are most aware of their ethnic heritage. Choose one that has a sense of ethnic pride but is enough integrated into American culture so as not to be exclusive.
3. Approach members of the ethnic group with the idea of starting a festival or series of activities with an ethnic theme. Talk to people who have an interest in the arts and enough influence so that their fellows will listen to them.
4. Include in the arts council structure members of ethnic groups.
5. Consider short-term festivals in which activities are clustered into a limited time span.
6. Consider the many possibilities for activities based on ethnic themes. These include dramatic, musical, dance groups, craft and art workshops and sales, radio and television programs, classes and lectures. Be certain that activities are open to all citizens.
7. Proceed with care if the decision is to work through a single ethnic group. In some places, bitter factionalism comes to the surface only after work has begun to emphasize the culture of one nationality. In certain cases, it is best to work toward an international festival with several ethnic groups participating.

*ARTS COUNCILS SHOULD ALSO CONSIDER*



II.

Consideration 10

### PEOPLE

#### ARTS COUNCILS

Should Consider:

Other Groups

Such as: Hospitals, prisons, migrant camps, tourist centers, poverty pockets.

Because:

- ♦ The arts can be a positive aid in a negative situation.
- ♦ With tourists and migrants the arts can be a positive aid in communication, as they can with particular age groups or neighborhoods outside the mainstream of activities.

## OTHER GROUPS

Because talent and desire for self-expression are universal, because art belongs to all men, and because the arts council is responsible to the whole community, it must ask itself whether every group that could profit from involvement is involved. The community may contain penal institutions, large hospitals, seasonal colonies of tourists or migrant workers, or some other population isolated from the mainstream of community life. In many cases, such groups provide the arts council opportunity to expand its activities, gain interest and support from another part of the community, and shape for itself a more unique community role.

Waupun is the home of Central State Hospital, once called the Hospital for the Criminally Insane. The area Arts Council worked with a local creative writing group and with members of the hospital staff to start a writing group inside the institution. Members of the Writer's Club met once a week at the hospital with a group of inmates to discuss their writing.

Soon, the inmates conceived the idea of printing an anthology. One member's mother who worked at a paper company, contributed stock. The hospital group, with the help of Penrock members, carefully screened material and had the anthology printed in the hospital print shop. The result is a handsome volume that has been distributed throughout the state.

During the summer of 1967, the Wisconsin State Department of Education, working with local education units, conducted an experiment among agricultural migrant workers in Shell Lake. They set up a multi-arts program in which specialists in music, theatre, and the arts and crafts toured the area conducting workshops and programs for the children in the migrant camps. Most of these young people had little general education and no previous education in the arts at all. The absolute happiness of the young people discovering the pleasure of artistic creation for the first time was inspirational and has encouraged the development of even more ambitious programs for the transient population of small communities.

## OTHER GROUPS

### Arts Councils Should:

1. Make contact with people in segregated groups who show artistic interests and relate them either to others who share similar interests or to people who are interested in hearing about or discussing such interests.
2. Observe any seasonal migrations into the area either for work or play purposes and inquire among such groups for persons with artistic interests.
3. Bring the people with artistic talent into conversation concerning ways of exhibiting or producing their work, helping to create satisfactory displays, productions, and audiences.
4. Ask the school art teacher or other arts faculty to provide a list of children of definite artistic talent that includes several names from every economic group. Follow up by visiting in the homes and discussing the art work of each child.
5. Study the community carefully for ethnic minorities whose art interests are not known to the entire community. Find ethnic expressional life within such groups and share it with a sympathetic audience outside the group.

### *ARTS COUNCILS SHOULD CONSIDER*



State Historical Society of Wisconsin

II.

Consideration 11

ORGANIZATIONS

ARTS COUNCILS

Should Consider:

Business Groups

## BUSINESS GROUPS

In small communities, as in large ones, businesses and businessmen occupy a central position in the life of the town. Geographically most communities are clustered around the stores and services catering to the buying needs of the community.

Businessmen have a vested interest in community development. Economic development is dependent upon a steady and hopefully increasing supply of consumers and, therefore, most businessmen are keenly interested in factors in their community that will keep present citizens and attract new ones.

Business has reached a point where aesthetic considerations have become almost as important as economic factors. For this reason the small community has the opportunity to become the testing ground for developing a community life in which aesthetics and the arts become the cherished possessions of the majority of the people.

With improved transportation and communications, American business has realized that industry need not be centralized in already overcrowded, high-cost metropolitan areas. As a result, many plants and factories are relocating in small communities throughout the United States.

We are on the threshold of a new community life that combines the traditional appeal of the small community with the economic and cultural advantages of the city. To accomplish this requires a partnership between business and the arts that is mutually supporting. If business supports the arts, the arts will make life in the community more meaningful and pleasurable to the people. If the life of the people is dynamic and vital they and their children will stay to enrich and support the business community. In such a community, business, the arts, and the community as a whole can only benefit. Pointing out the value of such reciprocity should be an important task of the arts council.

A board member of the Uplands Arts Council speaks about involving local businessmen in the Milwaukee Repertory Theater program in Spring Green: "We hit them right where it makes sense to a businessman, in the purse strings. Most of the fellows who have businesses on Main Street in Spring Green don't know anything about the arts. It's just not important to them. You can't expect it to be. These folks work hard. They're interested in their stores, garages, offices. Some of them put in sixty, eighty hours a week. They think, sleep, and eat business. Don't get me wrong. Business isn't their only interest. They want Spring Green to be a better place for their families and neighbors to live. But that sort of thing goes along with making a place for better business, doesn't it?"

"So we didn't go to them and say, 'Look, this is art. This is great theatre.' No. We said, 'This will bring people in. This acting company is known all over the Midwest. Everybody will come here to see it. And those people who come will eat, they'll buy gas, they'll shop in the stores. A full-time professional theatre in a town of this size will be a great attraction.' And they supported it. You know something else? A lot of them came to the plays and found out that live theatre was pretty good stuff."

At Waupun, a fall festival is held annually to celebrate the arrival of the Canadian geese at the Horicon Marsh, a stop on their flyway. Thousands of tourists flock to the area to see the roosting geese. Painting exhibits, public performances, and other events in the arts have become an integral part of the Waupun festival.

Particularly successful is a yearly exhibit in the local bank, of wildlife paintings by Wisconsin artists.

Businessmen contribute financially, but many also take an active part in handling publicity, mounting exhibits, making store windows available for historical displays, booking performances by outside groups, and helping with all the other tasks involved in making Waupun a more interesting and enticing place through the arts.

## BUSINESS GROUPS

### Arts Councils Should:

1. Keep the business community informed from the outset as to what the arts council is and what it plans to do.
2. Try to interest businessmen and professional men in becoming active members of the arts council because they are usually influential leaders in the community.
3. Involve businessmen wherever possible in planning activities for the community. This means more than approaching them for occasional financial contributions.
4. Work closely with the Chamber of Commerce. This is a direct means of reaching many of the local businessmen.
5. Initiate special projects in which the businessmen can play a part on their own terms, that is, through and for the benefit of their businesses and for the benefit of the community as a whole.
6. Give just and public credit to businessmen who aid the arts council cause.
7. Stress to the business community that an arts program is important to individuals and industries when they seek new locations.

### *ARTS COUNCILS SHOULD CONSIDER*



Leonard McCombe, *Life Magazine*, © Time, Inc.

## II.

Consideration 12

### ORGANIZATIONS

### ARTS COUNCILS

Should Consider:

Public Schools

Because:

- ♦ They have a built-in interest in arts development.
- ♦ They have arts programs.
- ♦ They have skilled personnel.
- ♦ They have space for meetings, workshops, presentations.
- ♦ They have potential for obtaining funds.

## PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The development of the arts in America is a result of the general revolution in education. The public schools should be viewed as a major institution in making the arts an important part of community life.

The school is the one community institution that commands the interest of the majority of the people. The nonadult population of the community spends the greater part of its time in the schools, and as parents the adult population is interested in what is happening in the schools. Interest is further insured because public education receives the major share of the tax budget.

The public school is a principal institution of community and area pride. It is the schools that provide more community feeling by means of organized sports, forensics, drama productions, and other similar events.

It is the one community institution that, as a part of its educational objectives, has a commitment to engender an interest in the arts. To meet the general standards of American education, schools are required to have dynamic programs in the arts. Many state departments of education demand such programs before the school district is eligible for state aid.

The public school is the one institution found in all small communities that usually contains individuals trained or interested in the various arts disciplines. Many school systems now employ specialists in music and the visual arts, and some have individuals trained in the theatre and dance. These individuals can serve in the dual role of artists and educators, capable of teaching both the young and adults. In addition, these individuals can take important leadership roles in the community arts council.

In many small communities the public school is the logical choice as the principal arts facility, because most public schools have rooms for meetings, workshop space, and an auditorium for films and the performing arts.

The public schools can be a source for obtaining funds for community arts development programs or projects. Public schools, under Titles I, III, IV, and V of the Federal Aid to Education Act, are entitled to request money from the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare for arts projects, including cooperative programming with an agency such as the arts council.

The public schools can also serve as a resource identification agency for the arts council. They can inform the council about what other educational institutions, such as universities and adult education agencies, can offer the community in the way of arts programming or consultation.

One of the principal tasks of the arts council is to educate the community in the arts. Therefore, it should seek to ally itself with educational institutions.

“Since the people of this district put up the funds for the Rhinelander Union High School, it should be used for their direct benefit. Its main purpose is as a place for their children to be educated, of course, but it is also the logical center for community activities. That’s partly why we designed this room, and the auditorium, the swimming pool, and all the other facilities so many new schools lack.”

The room in which Cedric Vig, Superintendent of Rhinelander Public Schools, sat talking is the high-ceilinged, lannon stone and glass-walled lounge, one of the first rooms a visitor sees when he enters the Rhinelander Union High School. Its imposing entrance opens to the central corridor of the building. A mammoth fireplace, huge murals painted by students, and bright couches invite you to come in and visit.

The room suits Vig. He is tall and lean, gray-blond like the lannon stone, and has a ready smile. He is a gentle man, no back-slapping administrator, but an efficient, scrupulously fair doer of his job.

The Rhinelander School of Arts opened in 1963 because The University of Wisconsin wished to institute a concentrated summer writing program somewhere in the state. Since northern Wisconsin furnishes an ideal summer environment, Rhinelander, with its excellent high school and cooperative administration, was the obvious site.

“This is the logical spot for a program like the Rhinelander School of Arts. To me, there is excitement in top writers—Marc Connelly, Jesse Stuart, August Derleth—coming to the North Woods to teach, and 250 people coming to learn from them. Without the new school, we couldn’t handle it.”

Enrollment has grown steadily, and new features have been added each season until now workshops are offered in fiction, poetry, satire and humor, playwriting, article writing, and literary marketing. Other arts are represented by classes in ballet, creative theatre, photography, and painting and drawing.

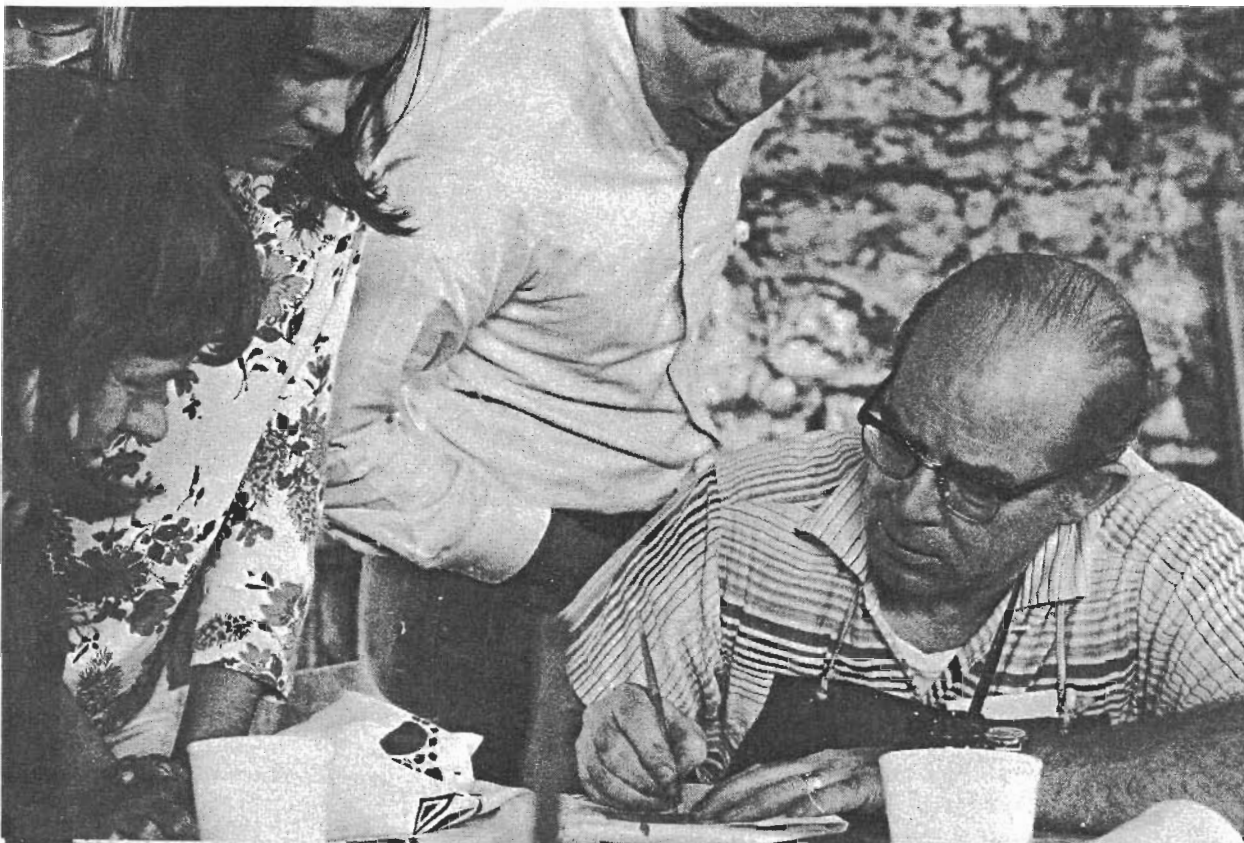
Evening events, plays, concerts, and autograph parties also go on during the two weeks. As Superintendent Vig puts it, “The people who come here don’t know what they’re in for. They go home tired from all the activity, but they learn. That’s what a school is for, isn’t it?”

## PUBLIC SCHOOLS

### Arts Councils Should:

1. Seek as active members such individuals as the superintendent of schools, the arts teachers, other faculty members, and members of the school board. The latter are elected by the community and therefore will represent influence and respect that can be helpful in generating support for arts council programs outside the schools.
2. Support the arts programs in the schools and encourage the students to participate in them. For example, the council could sponsor student art exhibits in community businesses, create scholarships in the various arts disciplines, and help promote ticket sales for school concerts or plays.
3. Accept a responsibility to mobilize public opinion and to influence the school board and administrators to institute arts programs. Where there are established arts programs, the council should seek to improve them in these ways: increase the size of the school's arts staff; raise the hiring standards for arts faculty; provide new and better supplies and equipment for the arts; improve program facilities by, for example, replacing a gym-auditorium combination with a single-purpose theatre or granting curricular status to the arts.
4. Request the school board to develop an adult education program in the arts. It could include a community theatre group, instrumental or choral groups, classes in writing, painting, pottery, sculpture, and other arts and crafts. It could also include appreciation classes in the arts featuring lectures and field trips to arts museums or theatres, and a performing arts series in which the school would sponsor appearances by professional performers.
5. Seek to identify the students most interested in the arts and attempt to interest them in the community arts council by designing arts council programs and projects specifically for youth and including youth in general community projects planned by the council. The council could also create a youth auxiliary arts council in cooperation with the schools.
6. Attempt to build bridges between the arts and athletics. Frequently the school's athletic programs attract the greatest general community interest, and the council may add an artistic element to these events.
7. Attend P.T.A. meetings. Such meetings are an opportunity to promote the arts as a whole and the programs of the arts council in particular. By means of lecture and demonstration, the council should make the parents aware of arts programming in the schools and its benefits to their children. Capitalizing upon their interest in their children can be an effective means of reaching adults. It is a technique that should be used by the arts council, and it is a principle that can be applied in many ways.

### *ARTS COUNCILS SHOULD CONSIDER*



A University Extension Staff Member Teaching in the Field

II.

Consideration 13

### ORGANIZATIONS

### ARTS COUNCILS

Should Consider:

Colleges and Universities

Because:

- ♦ They may have talent and programs available.
- ♦ They may have extension services and courses.
- ♦ They may have qualified people in the arts interested in community service.
- ♦ They have such facilities available as libraries, books, and bulletins.

## COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Institutions of higher learning take a growing interest in making their services available to communities. They can be of help both in developing arts programs and in providing performing artists and teachers.

The University of Wisconsin is especially well known for its outreach and for the development of community arts programs. For more than fifty years, the University has maintained field specialists in the community arts who help citizens to develop grass-roots drama, music, and art. Any community or any individual may request aid from The University of Wisconsin and expect to get a helpful response. One of the most optimistic things that can be said about any plan for arts development in smaller communities is that many universities and colleges now have such help available and indeed welcome the opportunity to extend themselves.

We pushed through the lobby crowd. As at any opening night, electric excitement filled the theatre. Finding our seats, we waited for the operagoers to settle themselves.

At last, the lights dimmed, the crowd hushed, the music began, and the opera, a production of *La Bohème*, was underway.

Lincoln Center? The Chicago Lyric Opera House? No. The Portage, Wisconsin movie theatre (on the other six nights of the week). Tonight it housed an Opera Workshop production from The University of Wisconsin's School of Music. Its director, Karlos Moser, has prepared over the years a number of student productions that have toured schools and communities throughout Wisconsin.

Opera Workshop affords small communities opportunity to experience lyric theatre. To the people of Portage, it also gave the bonus of the glamor of a real first night.

## COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

### Arts Councils Should:

1. Investigate the services of colleges and universities in the area. Some institutions employ special field staff to help communities in arts development. In any case, some staff members may be willing to advise and to help arrange special arts events using university or college talent. Write to the various institutions for descriptions of services.
2. Make it a point to keep close contact with the county agricultural, resource, or home economics agent in the county seat. The role of these individuals is radically changing; their activities now include the sponsorship and organization of many kinds of community and area events. They may be a valuable link between the council and the various institutions.
3. Work with the state arts council in making contact with institutions that may provide services. Each state council knows what services are available to local councils.
4. Apply the kinds of services that may be available. These may range from special arts workshops and clinics, exhibits, contests, and conferences to touring artists, plays, and group musical events.
5. Develop a seasonal program in connection with the university or college. At times a concert, play, lecture, or exhibit package may be the result.
6. Investigate the growing body of literature that may be obtained from the colleges. They have, often for loan, many kinds of books on the arts and on the various techniques of the arts. Occasionally a university will be able to lend art exhibit materials or a library of films or plays.
7. Write to the correspondence study bureau of institutions that conduct such a branch. Often courses such as creative writing are offered.
8. Probe continuing education opportunities. Many extension departments conduct a continuing education phase that includes special classes developed in the communities. An instructor is furnished at low cost to a group of students.
9. Find out whether the local council could have an intern living in the community to work with the council on arts development. Some institutions are beginning to train arts developers and might be interested in a proposal.
10. Arrange bus tours of young people and adults to the university or college for worthwhile events. Sometimes the college will stage a special program for visitors.

### *ARTS COUNCILS SHOULD ALSO CONSIDER*



State Historical Society of Wisconsin

**II.**

**Consideration 14**

**ORGANIZATIONS**

**ARTS COUNCILS**

**Should Consider:**

**Religious Institutions**

**Because:**

- ♦ Religion and the arts are related.
- ♦ Some churches offer courses on this relationship.
- ♦ Many clergymen have arts interests and talents.
- ♦ Choirs, religious drama, and church architecture demonstrate the artistic-religious impulse.

## RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS

The religious institution, more than any other, is the historic guardian of both order and significant change. Where art is introduced in the context of human relationships, the religious institution cannot responsibly stand aside, but must take an active interest and participate. Almost always, religious foundations were secured with the early settlement of the town and are still part of the fabric of daily life. Consequently, in order for art to become rooted in the community, it should seek the cooperation of religion.

In the Spring Green-Uplands area, eleven area clergymen attended a one-day arts conference. Three of them were pastors of large congregations (500, 1500, 2800); the remainder served town and country churches of smaller sizes. They represented five denominations; one was a seminary professor. Of this group, only two lacked any developed interest in the arts, and both of these men recognized the importance of art activity. The other nine pastors had some art training or interest; one of them performed opera and another taught piano. While an interest in vocal music predominated, other art interest included the visual and performing arts as well as the production of motion pictures.

Before entering into a lively discussion they listened to a panel of speakers talk about religion and its relationship to the theatre, painting, sculpture, architecture, and music. One of the pastors later wrote:

"The conference was most stimulating and helpful to me, and when I returned I was able to encourage a group of our young people to write a play dealing with a contemporary ethical problem. So perceptive was their theatrical creation that we presented it one Sunday in place of the sermon. It was very well received."

The ladies of the Congregational Church Guild in Waupun had wanted to add some unique touch to their new church building from the day it was built. The subject of what could be done came up at meeting after meeting. They finally decided that since several members attended classes at the craft center, established by the Waupun Area Arts Council, they might design and construct a screen for the sanctuary.

One of the members, an art teacher, drew up the design, replete with religious symbols. Some of the others sketched it onto lengths of velveteen with chalk, and a large group began the creative stitchery. Seeing these church women, ranging in age from thirty to seventy-five, bent over a sea of gold material, stitching carefully with colored yarns, reminded one of the old-time neighborhood quilting bee. And now, the Congregational Church is decorated by a screen that is an artistic, personal expression of its members.

Two graves stand under a broad oak near the Unity Chapel in Spring Green. One is the grave of Frank Lloyd Wright, the originator of organic architecture. It is surrounded by a circlet of flowers and at its head is a slab of Wisconsin sandstone. The other is the grave of the Reverend Jenkin Lloyd Jones, Chaplain of the GAR, outstanding liberal preacher in Chicago at the turn of the century, and uncle of Frank on his mother's side, who grew up at the Jones' farm on the same property.

Neighbors still remember Jones' sermons, preached from a pulpit made from the trunk of a tree, as well as the Sunday afternoon service and picnic at the Jones' place. Some folks still recall the old wagon loaded down with adults and children on their way to the meeting and, among them, the Reverend Jones' nieces and nephews, including Frank.

Who can deny that Frank Lloyd Wright's concept of organic design was rooted in his uncle's tree-trunk pulpit and in the church of God that had as its roof the open sky? Who can foresee what genius will be nurtured by the religious and artistic soil of the small community?

## RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS

### Arts Councils Should:

1. Write to the national or regional headquarters of each church asking for information concerning religion and the arts. Ask a clergyman who has studied this subject in seminary or who has particular art interests to interpret this material. Ask a panel of representatives from the arts and religious community to respond to this presentation.
2. Invite the choir and music leaders to talk with the arts council. Refer lay choir leaders to workshops. If none exists, consider starting such a workshop.
3. Look for any activity in religious drama and the theological interpretation of serious secular plays. Plan a program inviting teachers of religion and arts at the college and university level to share their knowledge of these areas of interest. Present religious drama.
4. Study church architecture and help the churches, through interchurch conferences, to understand liturgy in terms of the structure and style of their church buildings.
5. Organize a religious music festival, inviting each church to explain and interpret some of its music.
6. Organize a program of religious jazz.
7. Arrange a program with the clergy in which the arts program is discussed in the context of regional aesthetics and community planning.
8. Organize a program of youth, religion, and art.
9. Encourage religious institutions to develop arts display and sales at their annual bazaars or help them set up an arts festival.
10. Start a religious art library at one of the churches, making its facilities available to all.

### *ARTS COUNCILS SHOULD ALSO CONSIDER*



*Employees' News, Wisconsin Power and Light Company.*

**II.**

**Consideration 15**

**ORGANIZATIONS**

**ARTS COUNCILS**

**Should Consider:**

**Service and Social Clubs**

## SERVICE AND SOCIAL CLUBS

Most small towns have service and social clubs that play a major role in community life. These organizations vary in character, but usually share one characteristic: They have not been identified in any way with the arts.

Service and social organizations are constantly evolving and redefining their purposes depending on concerns of their members. There is nothing to prevent them from taking on aesthetic and artistic aspects.

The A.A.U.W. president from Rhinelander explains what her group did. "All kinds of art and literary activities are tied in with the Rhinelander School of Arts. Our club was looking for a project and decided that it was part of our job to promote the School. Someone suggested that we give scholarships. All the ladies agreed, but then came the question of how to raise the money. Sure, we could have candy sales and thrift shop days but that seemed too mechanical and cold. We wanted to do something to really tie closely to the School of Arts itself. So we began the secondhand book sale. All of us combed our attics and called on our friends to do the same. We arranged for the school to provide space and tables. Then we ran our sale during the time of the School of Arts itself. It was a complete success, and we've repeated it every year since."

The Portage Lively Arts Council asked one of its board members to form a speakers' bureau. Her task was to identify people who could be available to do programs for local organizations. The Council reasoned that almost every group in town had at least twelve monthly meetings. Each also had a program chairman who probably was eager to program the time with something worthwhile. They reasoned correctly. As soon as the Council announced the service, the speakers' bureau chairman received calls from all kinds of clubs, including several she had never heard of.

"This gave me a wonderful idea," she says. "Why not use the opportunity to tell them about our Arts Council and its doings? I went along with the speakers or sent our president, and we introduced the program. You can bet that we took a little time in that introduction to tell them what the Lively Arts Council was trying to do for Portage, and how the club could help."

The Lions Club sponsored the Summer Theatre Festival at Rhinelander.

The Kiwanis Club at Waupun sponsored a concert by the University Concert Choir at a fall festival.

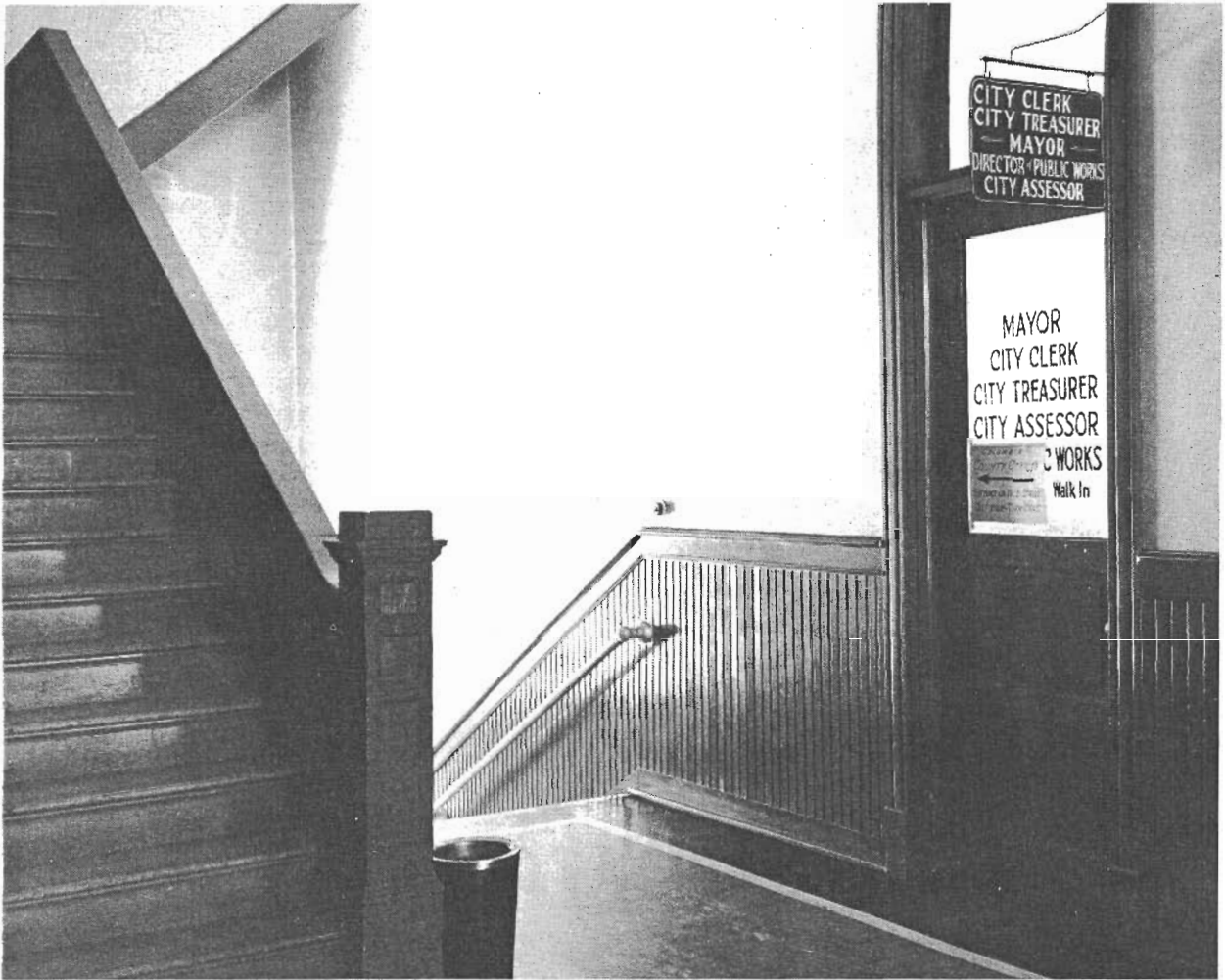
Innumerable service clubs such as the Rotary, Optimists, Jaycees, Business & Professional Women's Club, medical & dental auxiliaries—to mention only a few—helped to sell season tickets for the Milwaukee Repertory Theater summer season in Spring Green.

## SERVICE AND SOCIAL CLUBS

### Arts Councils Should:

1. Compile or obtain from the local Chamber of Commerce a list of service and social organizations in the community.
2. Arrange for one of its members to approach an officer or other informed member of each group to explore possibilities for involving the organization in artistic activity.
3. Have one of its members speak about the arts council at a group meeting, either as part of a program arranged by the arts council or as a short informative part of the business meeting.
4. Design special projects in which the service and social clubs can participate and compile for general distribution a list of suggested projects for the furtherance of community arts.
5. If appropriate according to the structure of the council, make available institutional memberships, so that organizations can join and send representatives to arts council meetings.

### *ARTS COUNCILS SHOULD CONSIDER*



State Historical Society of Wisconsin

## II.

Consideration 16

### ORGANIZATIONS

### ARTS COUNCILS

Should Consider:

Local Governments

Because:

- ♦ They control tax funds.
- ♦ They administer community facilities.
- ♦ They influence private interests and agencies.

## LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

The city council, county board, and other units of local government are not ordinarily considered in connection with the aims of arts councils. But in fact, local governments may often be both interested in and important to the arts in the small community. Members of local governmental agencies sometimes need to be educated concerning the importance of the arts, but such education can be very rewarding to the arts council. The local government controls community tax funds, has jurisdiction over use of community-supported facilities, and influences private sectors of the community.

Glen Wilson, Mayor of Waupun, speaks: "We have a really fine city hall and civic building here. It even has an auditorium for community use. Some years ago, the city government started getting complaints that the building was really run down. There was even talk of getting rid of it. Instead, the City Council allocated funds, so much a year, to fix it up. We authorized painting, cleaning the brick, and things like that.

"The board of the Waupun Area Arts Council found out about the money that was available. They asked that we fix up the auditorium, improve the stage, buy some good theatrical lighting, put up new curtains. They wanted it to be used for plays and concerts. Representatives of the Arts Council came to our City Council meetings, and some of us met with local contractors and consultants about estimates on the work that was needed. Finally, we voted that the money be used for auditorium improvement. Best investment we ever made because now people really use it."

## LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

### Arts Councils Should:

1. Make themselves aware of the units of local government, how they operate, and what they control in the community.
2. Find out if there are officials who are actively interested in the arts or are receptive to discussion of the arts council and its aims for the community. Put all officials on arts council mailing lists.
3. Identify projects involving concerns of the local government, such as city beautification, improvement of community-owned buildings, functioning of the city recreation department, or utilization of city or county parks.
4. Participate in city projects that are related to the general aims of arts council.
5. Take care that requests made to local governments are reasonable, remembering that officials receive many such requests from special interest groups.
6. Urge local governments to take a dynamic viewpoint toward the arts on the local scene.

### *ARTS COUNCILS SHOULD CONSIDER*



**II.**

**Consideration 17**

**ORGANIZATIONS**

**ARTS COUNCILS**

**Should Consider:**

**Libraries**

## LIBRARIES

Many communities have some type of public library. This institution and its staff can be of great help to the arts council. The librarian will most likely be interested in the council's objectives. The library's holdings and materials from interlibrary loans can be of inestimable value in council programming. The library building itself is often an appropriate meeting place for committees or the arts council board of directors.

The Portage Public Library was donated to the community by Wisconsin author Zona Gale and had been, in fact, her residence. The attractive, rambling brick building is presided over by a gray-haired, comfortable-looking lady, Mrs. Price.

"Of course the Lively Arts Council is a good thing for this area! The group held some of its first general meetings in the building, upstairs in what used to be Miss Gale's bedroom and sitting room. The creative writing group has also met in the building several times, and the stitchery workshop met downstairs during its first year.

"Members of the Arts Council have also started a program for mothers who bring their children to story hour. They review books for the ladies. So, really, you could say, we have two story hours going on at once."

The Waupun Area Arts Council was a force in helping to build a new library for the city. The old building was dignified and beautiful, but outmoded and unsuited to modern community needs. However, when a referendum for new construction was presented to the public, it was voted down. Exploring the situation, Council members discovered that the voters had, by and large, considered only the financial aspects of the new library question. By a concerted program of informal education through letters to the editor, talks to service clubs, and articles in organization newsletters, the Council told the public why a new library was needed.

On the second vote, the referendum passed, and today Waupun has one of the finest small community libraries in the state, catering especially to the total cultural well-being of the city.

## LIBRARIES

### **Arts Councils Should:**

1. Strive to involve the local library staff from the outset in council planning.
2. Explore the library's arts resources. It may be appropriate for the council to raise funds to initiate or add to the library's collection of paintings and prints, records, or art books.
3. Determine whether or not the library participates in an interlibrary loan system and find out how local art interest groups can make use of it.
4. Encourage the library to sponsor and give space for art exhibits.
5. Make use of meeting space provided by many libraries. The library, in some instances, may be able to function as a kind of art center.

### *ARTS COUNCILS SHOULD CONSIDER*



II.

Consideration 18

## ORGANIZATIONS

### ARTS COUNCILS

Should Consider:

Communications and Promotion

Because:

- ♦ Unless the community is aware of the arts council and its programs, it cannot be expected to support it and them.
- ♦ The community must be educated to the value of the arts because the majority of people in the small community know little about them.
- ♦ The community must be sold on the idea of supporting the arts because the arts council is competing with other activities and organizations actively seeking citizens' time and money.

## COMMUNICATIONS AND PROMOTION

The arts council in the small community must be aware that to make the arts an important part of living for the majority of the people, it must both educate the community and be involved in activities that can only be described as promotional.

The arts are presently not an important part of small community life in many places, and the idea that they can be is viewed by some as novel, and by others as revolutionary. This being the case, the arts council cannot be timid or retiring. If an arts council does not take on the task of communicating about the arts and dynamically promoting them, the arts will very likely remain the dignified concern of a small minority.

We are presently living in an age and society saturated with communications and promotion. The American people are besieged with appeals for their time, interest, and money. As much as one might resent the sound and fury of American advertisements and their blatant commercial intent, the principles of communication and promotion have become a part of American life. In order to interest the community in the arts, which the council knows are of more value than the commercial products constantly being huckstered, the council must use the same means of communication and promotion without hesitation or guilt.

Therefore, the council should be prepared to use all of the tools of the advertising world, including the printed and spoken word and the still or moving visual image. The three principal media to be concerned about are radio, television, and printing, including the ever-important newspaper. Many of the arts council's programs revolve around the performing arts. The success or failure of the performing arts, which means the buying and selling of tickets, depends critically upon how well they are promoted through the various media.

Tom Foley of the *Portage Daily Register* is a fiery young man, devoted to his newspaper. He talks about the early days of the Lively Arts Council.

"Our paper wanted to do all it could to support the Council because small towns should have the arts just like anyplace else. I took pictures of their meetings and events and ran a whole number of articles. Besides that, I saw to it that the Council had space in the corner of the front page to run a questionnaire three times and the response was excellent. The *Register* was a real force in letting people know about the Council and its ideas. This is only right. The newspaper has a responsibility to make the community a better place."

## COMMUNICATIONS AND PROMOTION

### Arts Councils Should:

1. Make the publicity committee one of the most important permanent standing committees of the arts council. Try to staff this committee with the most aggressive and imaginative people possible.
2. Try to get as council members individuals professionally employed in radio, television, or the newspapers, preferably ones with the power or option to feature the council and the arts.
3. Attempt to get a weekly space in the newspaper for arts news.
4. Set up a working liaison with such people and provide them with *regular* reports on council activities.
5. Establish a committee to prepare special presentations about the arts council activities that can be taken to radio and television stations and used in public service programs.
6. Survey all of the newspapers and radio and television stations in the area of the council to identify the number and type of people they reach. All of the institutions that sell advertising have such information and will be glad to supply it to the council.
7. Make a map of all the places in the community and area where eventually people congregate and where best in these places posters can be hung and flyers distributed.
8. Find someone capable of designing striking and artistic posters and flyers. Because most posters and flyers in small communities are poorly designed, artistic ones stand out and thereby increase the chances of getting the messages across. In many small communities this problem might be solved by interesting the high school arts teachers and students in taking on this task.
9. Design a distinctive and attractive graphic symbol that represents the arts council, for use on posters, in the newspaper, and on television. Use it often to build identity in the community.
10. On the basis of the surveys that outline all of the communications networks in the community, draw up a plan for publicizing and promoting all of the council's programs, including publicity distribution procedure, that will be *consistently* used. A standard operating procedure makes it easier to distribute the labor among the members of the publicity committee or other delegated members of the council. Records and scrapbooks should be kept on the various promotional campaigns in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the various methods tried.
11. Explore the possibility of 'piggy-backing' arts council news with club newsletters of advertisement materials sent out by local businessmen.
12. Work with school authorities to have the children take arts council materials home to their parents. Such a distribution may reach almost all of the people in the community.
13. Use the publicity facilities of institutions cooperating with the arts council, such as colleges, universities, churches and performing arts groups.
14. Do not be afraid of advertising or publicizing arts council programs. Utilize every media possible because all people do not equally respond to one kind or another.



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## ARTS IN THE SMALL COMMUNITY

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The arts are for everyone.

Each man, be he young or old, rich or poor, has the right to experience the arts both as spectator and as participant.

In the Wisconsin project, a three-part strategy was used to make the arts part of daily life.

Indigenous, hometown arts were encouraged. Groups flourished in painting, ceramics, creative textiles, writing, music, environmental beautification. People became involved.

Demonstration programs featuring plays, operas, concerts, lectures, dance performances, and exhibits were presented by professional and highly skilled amateur groups and individuals from outside the communities.

Demonstration and indigenous programs were combined to form unique, specialized experiences tailored to the communities, stamped by the people as their own because they had guided and planned them.

Five Wisconsin communities will never be exactly as they were before the grant project.

Their people have tasted of the arts. Now art is in their future.

Their children were drawn in with the help of an inspiring leader in creative theatre.



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Adults were involved by the chance to try something new to them such as ceramics . . .

or creative writing . . .

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or interpreting their environment visually.

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There is always the problem of isolation, the man, the woman, writer, painter, ceramist, the musician, living where there is no one else to share or understand.

The Wisconsin project opened the doors. Created sympathy, brought contact. It helped interested people to find and know one another so that creative joy could be shared and bitter isolation diminished.

Art products are the natural result of creative activity. The processes and products of art are intimately related and call upon the same sensibilities. Individuals who are actively participating in the arts become the most understanding and appreciative audiences.

Since the creator and appreciator are part of a unified process, the artist is doomed to isolated labor and noncommunication unless he and the audience are developed at the same time. This twofold development is the task of the arts council. It develops artist and audience in order that each may support and reinforce the other in a way beneficial to both.

In helping its community to have an arts life, the council must clearly recognize that art has two facets of equal importance to human beings. Art is a process which enables the individual to explore the creative possibilities of his intellectual and emotional self and a product which, if properly perceived and appreciated, can result in new understanding of the human environment.

To promote this understanding, artists brought their products to the test communities.



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Edgar L. Obma, Dodgeville, photo

People witnessed theatre in their home places.



*Milwaukee Journal photo*

The most exciting experiment of this kind was bringing the Milwaukee Repertory Theater Company to Spring Green.

The Milwaukee Repertory Company is one of the country's ten leading professional regional repertory theatres. Never had a full professional regional company been invited to become resident in a community of 1000 population. However, in the winter of 1968, the Milwaukee Repertory was invited to take up summer residence at Spring Green, Wisconsin. The managers accepted.

The purpose was to test the effect and place of the professional actor in the small community. Many doubts were expressed as to whether the community would accept the Company; whether the Company would accept the community; whether anybody would go to see the plays; whether the whole project could be financed; whether Actor's Equity would cooperate by slightly altering union rules to permit performance in Spring Green.

The Company arrived in Spring Green in May of 1968, on completion of the winter season in Milwaukee. They found homes in the village or in the lovely rural area surrounding it. The community welcomed them with a great party. Friendships were formed. The actors presented plays in an exciting way the residents had never before seen. The actors also found time to organize a baseball team and play the hometown boys. The Company discovered the summer experience to be excellent for their total year's income. Financially, some funds in addition to the box office were required. A businessmen's committee representing several firms in nearby Madison raised the money, and University Extension, The University of Wisconsin, contributed as well.

What was the meaning of the experiment? It proved that an excellent group of professionals could operate successfully in a small community. It proved that people in the small community could respond completely to the best in theatre. It proved that the professional does have a definite and welcome place in grass-roots art.

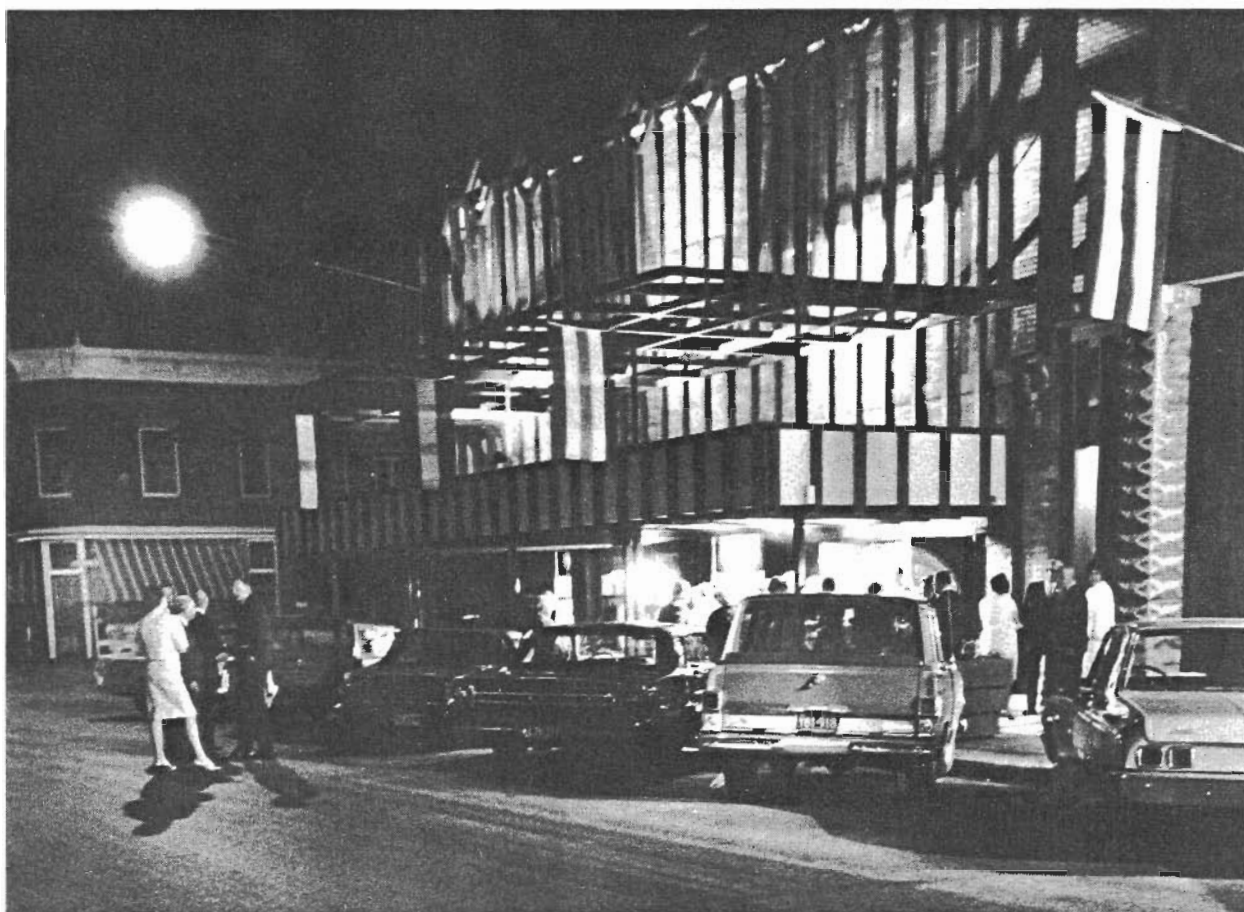
Not to be forgotten is the place and importance of the volunteer community theatre which is the theatre most often seen in small communities. The problem is to strive to raise the standards of volunteer theatre to make it an exciting experience for the audience.



*Milwaukee Journal photo*

A new horizon of life has opened for the people of five small communities. They have come to accept art as part of their day to day existence. This can happen in countless smaller places throughout the nation.

In Wisconsin they have prepared places for the arts to happen, such as the theatre at Spring Green, a converted movie house . . .



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or the Waupun Area Craft Center, a converted storefront where those interested in the textile crafts meet to work.

The Waupun Area Craft Center is set up right on the main street. The building is one of the oldest in town and once housed the city's first hotel. The building had been used by retail businesses in late years, and was standing empty. A committee of the Waupun Area Arts Council and a local craft group took it over as a center where anyone could come to learn the textile crafts and related arts through classes and workshops, and to discuss and work on their own projects.

The idea germinated and grew slowly. First, students and faculty members of the Related Art Department at The University of Wisconsin, Madison, came to demonstrate block printing, weaving, tie dying, machine stitchery, and other techniques. The interested ladies of Waupun arranged for one of the students to come back and conduct a class in stitchery. Work in weaving, advanced stitchery, oil painting, and other visual arts followed.

At last, the group felt itself cohesive enough to have a home. A local church donated the use of a house, employed in the winter for Christian Education, for a summer craft center. The idea of a permanent facility worked well, and the group set about arranging for the downtown store building. They painted and fixed up the inside and refurbished the outside as a community beautification demonstration.

Now classes and workshops take place on a year-round basis and are open to anyone for a modest fee. Most important of all, the whole project is administered at the local level by members of the group itself.

People in Spring Green and other small communities take part in and host ongoing arts programs such as the Wisconsin Regional Art Shows, which take place each year all over Wisconsin . . .



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And they invite people in for special programs such as the Rhinelander School of Arts, which attracts upwards of 250 students from all parts of the United States. These students are hosted for two weeks by local residents in the beautiful Rhinelander Union High School, where they take classes in creative writing, the visual arts, ballet, and creative theatre.

The staff is a distinguished one and has included Jesse Stuart, Marc Connelly, August Derleth, and other well-known writers and artists. In addition to classes, the community provides a series of evening activities including autograph parties, plays, ballet performances, concerts, and lectures.

The Rhinelander School of Arts is administered by University Extension, The University of Wisconsin, but it could not take place without complete cooperation of the people of Rhinelander. The program has given the community a unique position in the picture of Wisconsin arts and has, in some way, touched almost every area resident.

Certainly not all that passes under the name of art is the real thing.

Cheapness and fake values are everywhere and in every activity. The community arts council is not an automatic road to excellence either through the work of amateurs or the products of professionals.

But excellence, while more rare than pretense, is as equally distributed. Talent is ubiquitous.

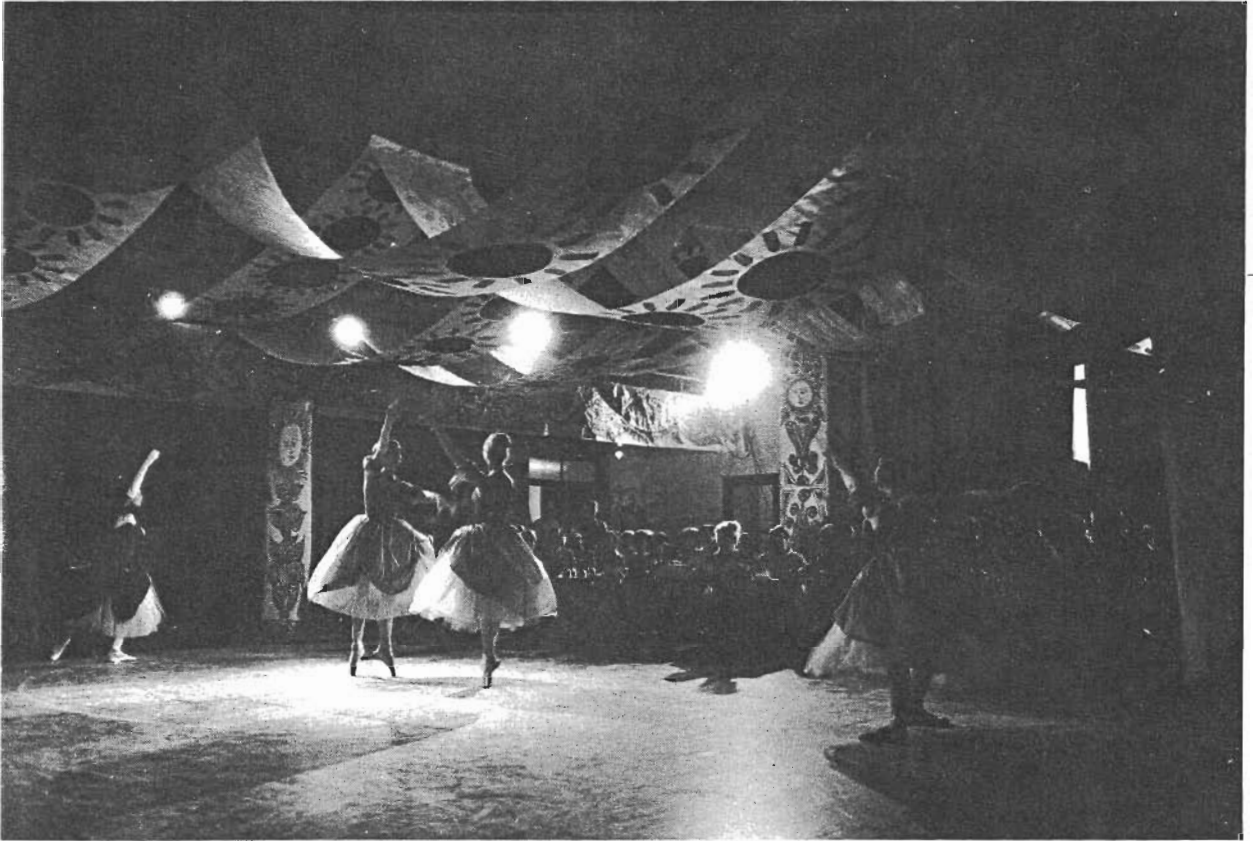
In the small community, it may sometimes be found unspoiled.

No one can prove that it will not be discovered next door . . .

next moment, as in a choir loft at Portage.



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Declan Haun, *Life Magazine*, © Time, Inc.

Nor can anyone say that the next important art event may not be an historic moment in artistic expression.

There is a vast and noticeable difference between letting a thousand flowers bloom and permitting everything to come up in weeds.

But if arts councils encourage and foster genuineness of expression among amateur artists and honor authenticity of product among professionals, they will set standards and refurbish the instinct for what is real.

Further, if they branch out through alliance with other community arts councils to form regional councils and with state arts councils, they can contribute to a germanely American culture.

Arts councils in small communities all over the nation are doing this. A group of interested individuals working in your community can do the same.

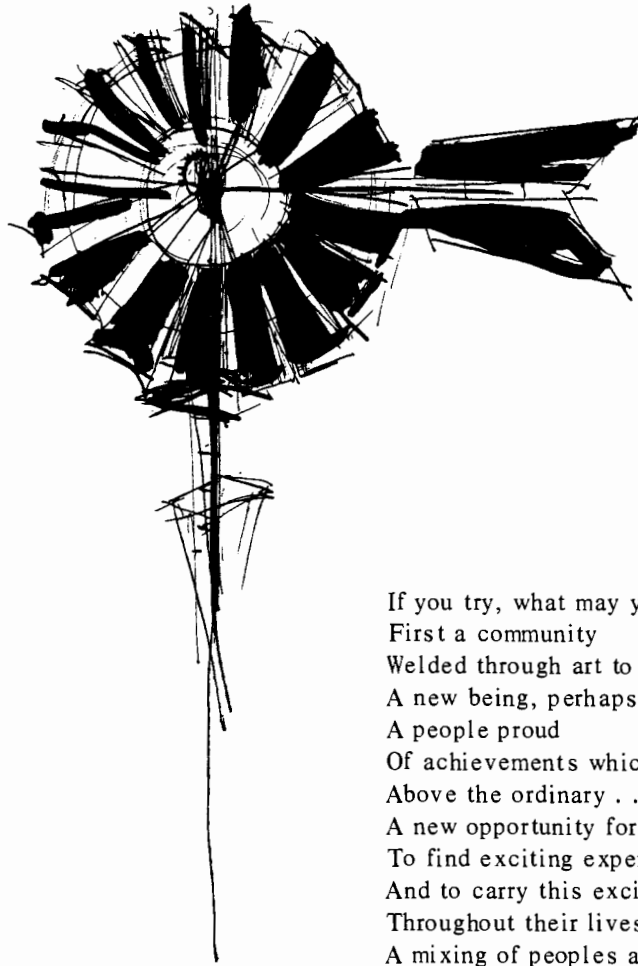


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Why not try?



If you try, what may you expect?  
First a community  
Welded through art to a new consciousness of self:  
A new being, perhaps a new appearance . . . .  
A people proud  
Of achievements which lift them through the creative  
Above the ordinary . . . .  
A new opportunity for children  
To find exciting experiences in art  
And to carry this excitement on  
Throughout their lives . . . .  
A mixing of peoples and backgrounds  
Through art; a new view  
Of hope for mankind and an elevation  
Of man . . . not degradation.  
New values for individual and community  
Life, and a sense  
That here, in our place,  
We are contributing to the maturity  
Of a great nation.  
If you try, you can indeed  
Alter the face and the heart  
Of America.