



photo by: Pritchett Photography

Boerne Convention & Visitors Bureau: Promoting the Business of Art in Boerne

A

by Lauren T. Stumberg

Art brings to mind thoughts of beauty, creativity and expression, but what you probably don't realize is that beyond the aesthetic value of art it has a substantial economic impact both locally and nationally. The team at the Boerne Convention and Visitor's Bureau know what an important part the arts play within communities and work hard to foster Boerne's art culture. Larry Woods, President and CEO of the Boerne Convention and Visitor's Bureau, along with Wendy Little, Director of Marketing and Linda Tom, Marketing and Sales believe that the arts will play a huge role in the future of Boerne.

Nationally, the nonprofit arts and culture industry generates \$166.2 billion in economic activity each year, \$63.1 billion in spending by organizations and an additional \$103.1 billion in event-related spending by their audiences. With all that money being spent in relation to the arts it makes good sense to encourage our local tourism industry to grow in that direction. According to an article written by Billye Proctor Shaw, Chair of the Texas Commission on the Arts, "(Arts) are one of the top factors corporations and businesses cite in deciding where to locate, stay and expand. Arts attract cultural

tourists that will spend nearly twice the time and money as the average visitor and return more often.”

“From a marketing standpoint, art appeals to a broad base,” states Larry Woods. He points out that Boerne draws a large number of tourists from areas such as Houston and Mexico who have money to spend on art. According to Woods, “We offer a selection of art that is unique and different, while typically being more affordable than our neighbors such as Kerrville and Fredericksburg.”

Boerne is home to many nationally and regionally known artists and we have three local art organizations – the Boerne Professional Artists Association, the Cibolo Arts Council and the 2nd Saturday artist group. The Boerne CVB supports all of these organizations through marketing and advertising. “Wendy provides the graphic design and ad layout and the CVB pays for the advertisements with HOT (Hotel Occupancy Tax) funds. We spend approximately 40% of our annual budget promoting events that are arts driven,” says Woods. The tagline for the Boerne Convention and Visitor’s Bureau, which is on 90% of their advertising, even states “Experience the History, the Arts, the Charm.” Advertisements for Boerne events are placed in numerous publications including Texas Monthly, Texas Highways and San Antonio Magazine just to name a few. The Boerne CVB even markets our town to Mexico, which has proven to be a tremendous source for tourists.

Many local businesses recognize the benefits of supporting the art community as well. Businesses such as the Boerne Grill and Bear Moon Bakery, that have a large amount of tourist foot traffic, realize that art creates visual interest and encourages both visitors and locals to stop in, take a look and then spend some money. However, businesses that don’t have a lot of tourist traffic can also benefit from displaying art. When asked why The Trust Company exhibits artwork by local artists in their Boerne location, Mike Schultz, Director of Business Development, stated that “we wanted to do things differently than other banks, instead of inviting our customers to seminars, we took note of Boerne’s large art community and decided it would be nicer to invite our clients for wine and cheese with works on display by local artists.” Schultz adds that “our goal is to maintain the feel of a small town bank and we believe that exhibiting local art adds to the charm of our community.” At the beginning of each exhibit The Trust Company will hold an opening and both the bank and the artist benefit from traffic and exposure that it creates.

Woods and his team at the Boerne Convention and Visitor’s Bureau would also like to see Boerne’s art scene expand into different types of creative media. According to Woods, “Our community is currently geared towards hanging art, but we would like to see the development of all types of art including dance, music and theater.” That being said, the Boerne Convention and Visitor’s Bureau will be putting on Boerne’s first film festival to be held September of 2010, called “The Weekend at Boerne’s Film Festival.”

Another important aspect of the arts is art education. According to the Texas Commission on the Arts, the arts are essential to a well-rounded education and encourage self-expression and teamwork. Students involved in the arts do better in school, score higher on tests and are more likely to graduate. In the long run, money spent on art education results in improved student performance, a more vibrant economy and a richer American culture. “Developing a program that would allow our local artists to be involved with honing the skills of talented children would be beneficial to our community,” states Woods.

Beyond being visually appealing and contributing to our quality of life, arts are big business and deserve the support of our local businesses. According to the Creative Industries Study conducted by Americans for the Arts, as of January 2009 Texas Congressional District 21, of which Boerne is a part of, is home to 3,011 arts-related businesses that employ 13,241 people. These arts-centric businesses play an important role in building and sustaining economic vibrancy. They employ a creative workforce, spend money locally, generate government revenue, and are a cornerstone of tourism and economic development. These creative industries are composed of arts businesses that range from non-profit museums, symphonies, and theaters to for-profit film, architecture, and advertising companies. Arts businesses and the creative people they employ stimulate innovation in today’s global marketplace.



Photos - clockwise from top left: Linda Tom, Larry Woods and Wendy Little of the Boerne Convention & Visitor’s Bureau; Nationally renowned Boerne artist Jay Hester; Michael Schultz, Director of Business Development for The Trust Company, stands with art exhibit by local artist Bob Haven.

Let’s applaud the Boerne Convention and Visitor’s Bureau for recognizing the importance that the arts can play in our community and endeavoring to further develop this industry. Their investment in the arts is both an investment in our local economy and an investment in the future of Boerne. [BAM](#)