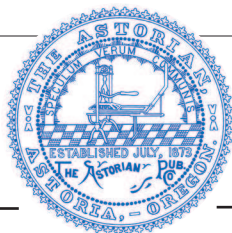


OPINION

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OUR VIEW

Support the arts, feel good and help your taxes

With most headlines about taxes grabbed by the national debate over priorities, it's appropriate for a timely reminder about a program that helps individuals with their taxes and benefits our community.

The Oregon Cultural Trust must surely be one of the cleverest inventions of the modern era.

And it is unique to Oregon. No other state provides a 100 percent tax credit to inspire cultural giving.

Created by the Legislature in 2002, it provides a single funding mechanism that allows taxpayers to benefit while giving to arts, cultural and historic preservation organizations around the state. The Trust's mission is to "lead Oregon in cultivating, growing and valuing culture as an integral part of communities."

In 2015, Oregonians gave \$4.56 million. While a portion is invested to build the trust's permanent fund, the rest comes back to communities in the form of grants.

If anyone is skeptical about the money coming back here, 12 local groups received \$13,000 this year. The cash is apportioned by the Clatsop County Cultural Coalition, a local umbrella group of arts and cultural organizations.

The North Coast Symphonic Band and North Coast Chorale received money for musical events. Partners for the PAC in Astoria, which received grants for theater performances the past two years, received support for its 2018 concert series.

South County is always well represented in the list of recipients. Seaside Park and Recreation District will stage a children's summer theater thanks to some funding, the Tolovana Arts Colony's arts and cultural exchange series will be aided, as will the Seaside



William Ham, left, and Slab Slabinski in a 2015 production of "Waiting for Godot" at the Clatsop Community College Performing Arts Center.

Museum and Historical Society, which will host a field trip for fourth graders.

Some grants went to Clatsop County groups planning more permanent projects.

Netel Grange is adding a much-needed emergency exit, while Camp Kiwanilong is improving its arts building. The Astoria Regatta Association is getting into the act, creating mural boards for Heritage Square.

Taken as a group, these beneficiaries exemplify the cultural richness and variety of life in our beautiful corner of Northwest Oregon.

With December ticking away, now is the time of year to think about making a gift to the Oregon Cultural Trust. If you have given to a nonprofit organization in the arts and culture category, you may



The North Coast Symphonic Band and North Coast Chorale perform on stage at the Liberty Theater in December 2012.



The Daily Astorian

A float carrying the 2017 Astoria Regatta royalty makes its way through downtown.

give an identical amount to the Trust. And you get a tax credit equal to your amount of giving.

For most of us, it is one of the best deals in Oregon tax law.

The Trust's vision statement says, "We envision an Oregon that champions and invests in creative expression and cultural exchange, driving innovation and opportunity for all."

Our vibrant cultural and arts scene here on the North Coast is living proof this is working — but the Trust needs your continued support.

On the Web

Oregon Cultural Trust: culturaltrust.org
Clatsop County Cultural Coalition: clatsopculturalcoalition.org

SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

A school for hospitality in Cannon Beach?

In May 2016, Chris Breitmeyer was named president of Clatsop Community College. Breitmeyer, who previously served as vice president for academic and student affairs at Saint Charles Community College in Missouri, is now a year and a half in. Among his goals is a five-year strategic plan for the college, with the goal of determining how it can serve the community and region more effectively. We met with Breitmeyer in the Seaside extension of the campus.

Q: Do you get to the South County campus often?

Breitmeyer: Not as much as I would like. That's why I am making an effort now. At

least a couple times each month I am going to spend mornings here. I have meetings here, but I'm trying to make a special effort. Especially in Cannon Beach. Interacting with those folks is something I haven't done much of.

Q: What is the rationale for the South County campus?

Breitmeyer: Right now it is focused on SBDC (Small Business Development Center) and CEDR (Clatsop Economic Development Resources).

I know we do have some classes here, but I'd really like it to be more of an extension of the main campus.

In the future, we would have the option of lower-division transfer courses classes down here or be able to start a CTE (career technical education) program.

A good example is our business program. We have two tracks: one where you can transfer to get a four-year degree and a certificate degree where you can start working. We are limited a little bit by the number of classrooms we have. But, for example, today I am

the only person in this room. We could have a class in here. The problem we have run into in the past is that enrollment numbers have never been that strong in the South County. We have to crack that nut.

Q: Given that history, are you considering new programs here?

Breitmeyer: One of the things we are doing with the strategic plan is looking at new programs. That includes new things, and also more niche and focused kind of programs.

We are looking for something under the hospitality, brewing and management umbrella. That has come up several times. That is something I want to move forward on. I don't know if we have the facilities to do it all down here, but we could at least get it started. Within the next year or so we really have to look at how we are going to do that.

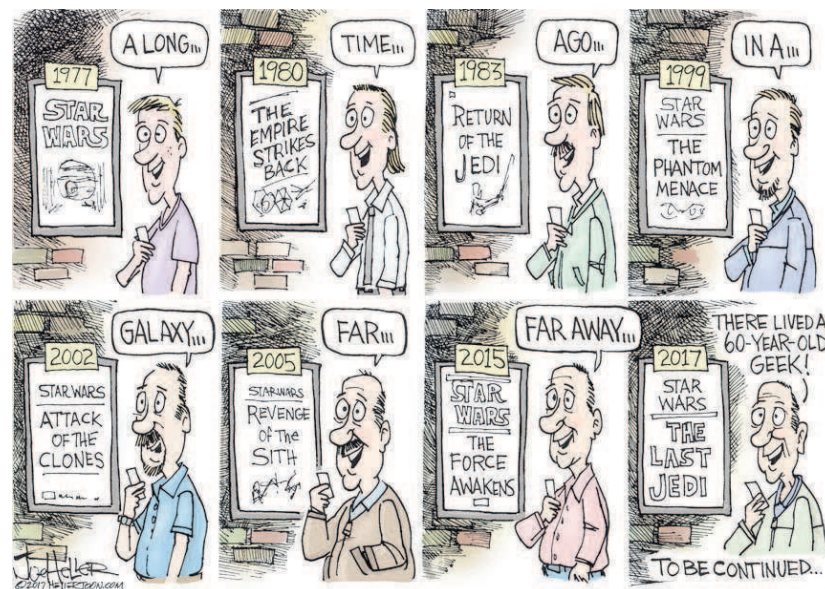
There are other programs in the state that we can model that program after. The curriculum is out there, so it's not like we have to start from ground zero. That could be this campus's identity; it's tailored for that. The South County campus could be for the hospitality sector what the main campus is for the maritime and automotive community.

Q: Who is your audience? Young people? Life learners?

Breitmeyer: There is a large population of folks who are highly educated, have been successful in their careers, but are still eager to learn. I do see an opportunity for those lifelong learners throughout the area. We are looking for returning learners or people who want to be retrained or retool for a new career.

Q: How would you measure a program's success? By the number of attendees?

Breitmeyer: Yes, that's the basic



metric. We have a minimum. If there are only two people interested in a birdwatching class, I want to figure out how to be able to make that go. But I also have my administrator saying, it's going to cost "X" amount of dollars, is it worth it?

Additionally if we start to expand here, we are going to have to take some losses upfront. In order to build the momentum, it's just like any business — you are not going to get profitable for a while.

Q: Do you recruit students?

Breitmeyer: Troy Henry is our recruiter and he goes out to the high schools. We just had 300 high school seniors on our campus last week. They were from all the local schools — Seaside, Warrenton, Knappa, Astoria and Jewell. We had others from as far away as Portland and Canby. Each took a little mini-class they could select out of three.

Q: I saw a shocking statistic about the number of homeless students in the state of Oregon.

Breitmeyer: I personally know a couple of students in Astoria who shared their stories with me. They are couch-surfing for a while and then they live in their car. It's pretty incredible.

I thought I had it tough when I had to work in the cafeteria as an undergrad. What they're doing is incredible.

Q: Does Clatsop Community Col-

lege have any dorm facilities?

Breitmeyer: Like everybody else here, we are struggling with housing. We may look in the future to some kind of public-private partnership where a private entity builds and manages a space and we enter into an agreement to supply them with students as residents.

Q: How do you like living here?

Breitmeyer: I love it. I am from the Midwest originally. I love the weather here.

Q: Do you want people to be involved in the school here, maybe not as students but as leaders or volunteers?

Breitmeyer: Our foundation is one way people can get involved if they are interested. That's the fundraising arm. They do a lot of good work raising scholarships for students.

One of our board members just stepped down. He's from Astoria, so they have to be from Astoria. People can put their hat in the ring and the board will do an interview process.

We talked about community education classes. If someone has an interest in photography and they would like to teach a class, they could certainly do that.

R.J. Marx is The Daily Astorian's South County reporter and editor of the Seaside Signal and Cannon Beach Gazette.