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Venue talk

By Hanan Daqqa / Fairfax County Times Dec 21, 2018



President and CEO of ARTSFAIRFAX Linda Sullivan: “We’ve got a handful of venues, but it’s inadequate for more than 230 arts organizations and a community of 1.1 million.”

PHOTO BY HANAN DAQQA

Fairfax Times wants to connect bright minds to find solutions. We took some of the concerns raised by local award winning visionaries whom we interviewed, such as American Youth Philharmonic Orchestras (AYPO), to the President and CEO of ARTSFAIRFAX Linda Sullivan. AYPO was awarded the Arts Education Award by ARTSFAIRFAX.

One of the challenges I’ve heard about from AYPO is the lack of venues.

SULLIVAN: We're totally under built in terms of cultural infrastructure in the county. We've got a few big venues like Wolftrap, George Mason's Center for the Arts, Mt. Vernon, and a few small venues, the Reston Community Center. We've got a handful of venues, but it's inadequate for more than 230 arts organizations and a community of 1.1 million. So we are very aware of the need for arts venues. We even see some of our grantees having to perform and take their programs out of the county because there aren't venues here to use.

Is there a solution?

SULLIVAN: There's good news on the horizon. We are working on a master arts plan to make recommendations to the county, and with that comes a market analysis so we can make good recommendations of what different areas of the county need. In the meantime, we see the private sector starting to step up to the plate. Capital One in Tyson's is doing a 1500-seat auditorium and a 250-seat black box theater. It's in construction now. It'll open by 2021, I hope. ... In the southwest side along Frying Pan Park, there's going to be an arts education center. There is a group of people working on that; it's a private project. It's going to be open for school-aged kids, 1st grade to 12th grade. That'll have a small theater in it. We hope the Mt. Vernon high school will have some kind of performing and exhibiting capacity in its renovation. All of this takes time, though. ... There may be a new theater in Falls Church for Creative Cauldron. There's the new museum at the Workhouse, so there are more venue capacity building coming along with the Workhouse Arts Center in Lorton. So we have a lot to be excited about, in the next, I'd say 5 years.

ARTSFAIRFAX, previously known as the Arts Council of Fairfax County, is a local arts agency, a nonprofit that does the work of service to support the arts, distributes county funds as competitive grants and recognizes organizations and individuals who make a big impact in Fairfax County in terms of its cultural life. The next largest role that ARTSFAIRFAX plays is of an information and data gathering service. ARTSFAIRFAX does a lot of studies and surveys and gathers documentation and data that help people advocate for the arts or plan. ARTSFAIRFAX has a new website with an arts events calendar, arts directories and arts resource information.