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Art as public health care

By Hanan Daqqa / Fairfax County Times Jan 31, 2019

K. Lynn Tadlock, the deputy executive director of giving at the Claude Moore Charitable Foundation, was first introduced to the importance of the arts through her interaction with Margaret Mead “who was 97 or something” when she met Tadlock who was “new to philanthropy.” “Mead was a big arts funder in D.C. She gave the money to redo the Arena Stage. I think it was about 13 million. And I met her at a dinner. She was an engineer, but she loved art, and she really influenced me,” recalls Tadlock.

The Claude Moore Charitable Foundation was awarded the 2018 Jinx Hazel Award for being a consistent leader and funder of the arts for more than 31 years. The foundation is recognized for creating programs and partnerships aimed at increasing academic competence and encouraging leadership abilities with an emphasis on the underprivileged.

Tadlock was happy to see Fairfax Times paying attention to the local art scene. She welcomed our meeting at her office with a generous and open heart and we started by celebrating the Jinx Hazel Award.



Claude Moore's Tadlock: “I think we need more coordination and collaboration. What happens a lot with charitable organizations is that they get in their own silo and forget that we do more together than we do separately.”

PHOTO BY HANAN DAQQA

Is this your first award from ArtsFairfax?

TADLOCK: From ArtsFairfax, this is our first award; we supported them for several years now, and our executive director J. Hamilton Lambert was also the county executive for Fairfax in the growth year, so we have a deep commitment to Fairfax.

We were part of the early participants in securing the Lorton prison. In fact, I worked with Fairfax County Park Authority and worked on the team that was part of the negotiation to get Lorton and I was on the team to start Lorton Arts.

The Foundation was one of the early funders of the Lorton Workhouse project. We've done a lot with arts around the region. We fund the Symphony here in Fairfax. We also fund the Symphony in Loudon. We helped with a lot of specialty music and arts schools. We believe there is a lot of talent in this region and we also know the impact that the arts have on our quality of life. We are also participants regionally in the Washington Regional Association of Grantmakers.

When it comes to the arts, what do you think Fairfax County's potential is?

TADLOCK: Well, we kind of moved from more of the suburban community to a highly urban community, especially as we are seeing what's happening with Tysons Corner, the Springfield area and the Reston Town Center, so you are seeing big city, high urban impacts on our citizens... The offset of the removal of open space is to add creative space and to add art space and I think Fairfax got a tremendous opportunity; look at all the resources in our community from Wolf Trap to Lorton Arts. We are moving in that direction and I am glad. You can take some of the ugliness away from urban life because not all buildings are beautiful to look at, but I know that as developments come they are adding arts as a requirement to the development. We've been doing that in Fairfax for a while and you start to see all of that and its benefits. We just need to continue.

How much of the County's potential in arts has been reached?

TADLOCK: I don't think we've reached it yet. I do think we have a ways to go. One of the reasons we support ArtsFairfax is because they have the strategic mindset of where we are going in Fairfax with arts and to try to make it a coordinated effort. Bring attention to it. It is almost like you need to create a business model around art in this county and that is what I see them doing. They are strategically looking at it and I think this is a good direction for the county.

I think we need more coordination and collaboration. What happens a lot with charitable organizations is that they get in their own silo and forget that we do more together than we do separately. So I like the fact that it is more of Fairfax arts that are coming together, hopefully, with this new strategic vision that ArtsFairfax is implementing.

What do you think your role is in helping this collaboration to happen?

TADLOCK: Well, I talk a lot about it. I speak about it in the region quite a bit and we encourage it with our grant making. If we know that something is not working or could function better and we know two organizations trying to address the same goal, quite often I've said, 'You guys need to get together and address this. Figure this out.' Sometimes it works. Sometimes it does not. But I am a big proponent of 'We can all get by with a little help from our friends.' It is a simple philosophy, but hard to implement.

What do you think others can do?

TADLOCK: I hope that we continue to give some recognition to those who are art leaders in the community and that we could do more in that regard to bring more attention to all the arts activities we have in this region. We have a lot in Fairfax . A lot of people just do not know about the opportunities. Kind of figuring out how to market what we have to citizens so they can maximize the use of it.

Any ideas on how can we do that?

TADLOCK: Some of the changes with ArtsFairfax are going to help with that.

I think to reach out to all arts organizations and to try to get our arms around and to start to create conferences or events like ArtsFairfax, we bring them all together and highlight those who are really doing well.

Just basic communication and I think the press plays a big, big part in this. I do think that the press has to highlight what we have. What art does for us and the benefits because we need to get it down to the individual citizen to appreciate and understand what they have and that will help.

The issue with art is that it is always competing against other social services for funding. That is a big issue. Everybody wants to support the food banks and those things. They don't want anybody to be hungry, they don't want anybody to be without health care, so there are some competing

issues that we have to address.

But I know that art is key to community health. I have observed that. [One] night I was in Loudon County at an event that was celebrating an organization that teaches children music. Those children are with handicaps. The organization has done remarkable work. They also work with stroke victims at our hospitals here in Fairfax teaching stroke victims to sing so they can learn to talk again.

What is the name of the group?

TADLOCK: The name of the group is A Place To Be. They are phenomenal, just watching what they have done to help these people in distress. There was one story that they have been telling and I have met the gentleman. He had a skiing accident. Severe brain damage, lost all functions, was just a vegetable basically and this guy from A Place To Be started working with him just to get him to grunt, to make a noise. Well, this gentleman is now, two years later, when they said he would never speak or talk or walk or any of that, he is walking around, he is talking, he has some visible speech impediments, but he can sing. Music therapy is an element that needs to be highlighted. I've seen firsthand the difference it's made, so that brings art to health care. Art touches all aspects of our lives. It just makes you feel better. Art brings us back to who we are supposed to be. It puts us back in the present moment and takes away the stressors.



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“When charities come together and they focus their resources together to address a problem, they are much more successful than when they try to do it alone.”

K. Lynn Tadlock