



Victor Valley Arts and Education Center (VVAEC), a 501c3 nonprofit
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F/Y 2014 ANNUAL REPORT: California Corporate # C3576949

July 1, 2013 – June 30, 2014

***Our mission** is to enrich the lives of the Victor Valley community by advancing access to the arts and educational opportunities, particularly those that advance artistic pursuits.*

OUR VISION

We are very pleased to have completed our first full year of operation. What we have learned in this first year is that nonprofits, like all corporations, must evolve. Sometimes, the original vision is realized and at other times you begin to explore ways to fulfill your public benefit mission to serve your community in other ways. Our dream, upon starting our nonprofit in 2013, was to build a state-of-the art performing arts complex of which the California Mojave High Desert could be proud. We hoped to galvanize our fellow citizens into realizing the value of having top-named artists right here in our own backyard. Our proximity between Los Angeles and Las Vegas places us in a unique position in terms of booking artists between these two major concert locales. We certainly plan to still pursue that dream as our primary focus. My personal love of the arts and exposure to performances from childhood, combined with over twenty years-experience in arts management, prompted me to want to share that appreciation of how the arts can transform us with the residents of my new home in the desert.

The best gift I was ever given was the arts. My mum gave me those on a silver platter. Growing up, her and my grandmother would take me to ballets, classical concerts, even smoky jazz clubs I wasn't supposed to be in!
Jill Scott

Yet we have also come to recognize that in a community that has never had a strong focus on professional performing arts, and where there is an average 25% poverty rate that we may face many challenges in realizing our goals. Another challenge that became apparent to us was that unlike most cities, the High Desert's population of over 450,000 people is made up of separate cities, towns and unincorporated municipalities stretched across a wide physical radius, some connected and some not. There are the four connected cities and towns of Victorville, Hesperia, Apple Valley, and Adelanto. Then, 40 miles from here but still part of the High Desert is Barstow. From there the list goes on of small towns and municipalities, including the small town of Hinckley, 47 miles away, and the subject of the movie "Erin Brockovich." Each has its own mayors, government councils and structures. There is no one governing board. This, too, adds a level of complexity when one endeavors to build a performing arts center where each municipality has its own structure.

Nevertheless, this first year has been one of reaching out, announcing ourselves, making connections, taking meetings with various government officials, and gauging the enthusiasm and level of support we might realize from various members of the community.

Every existing concert hall started with a few people, rich or poor, recognizing that their communities would be enriched with a place to watch plays, dance performances, and listen to musical recitals and vocalists. Hopefully, our nonprofit will be the catalyst for that to happen one day in the California Mojave High Desert.

David Siwisa James, Executive Director

SUMMARY STATEMENT

Our FY 2014 ending marked our first full year of operation. Victor Valley Arts and Education Center (VVAEC) was founded in February 2013 and incorporated May 28, 2013. The primary mission of the nonprofit was to build the first state-of-the-art performing arts complex in the High Desert and to also possibly start a community network TV station. All organizing efforts and research were to this end.

On July 10, 2013 we held our first advisory committee meeting with a group of thirteen people. The advisory committee was designed to be an active volunteer group that helped with community outreach. The first board meeting was held on August 5, 2013 where the initial board was seated, the bylaws were adopted by the board, and Davida S. James, the nonprofit's founder, was appointed as Chair and the Executive Director. The initial board of directors consisted of: Davida S. James (Chair), Edward Friedman, Esq. (Vice Chair), Becky Jordan (Treasurer), Dr. Barbara Morrow Williams (Secretary), and David H. Smith. The board also authorized Ms. James and Ms. Jordan to open a bank account. Three board members were residents of the High Desert, while Mr. Friedman and Mr. Smith live in Los Angeles.

We submitted our IRS 501-c-3 tax-exempt application on August 16, 2013. Our nonprofit received its 501-c-3 tax-exempt determination letter and status in December 2013, retroactive to our incorporation date.

BANKING / FINANCES

In addition to our savings and checking accounts at Desert Community Bank (DCB), we also opened an account with the High Desert Community Foundation (HDCF).

Our closing balance on June 30, 2014 was \$1,340.00. In the course of our first fiscal year, we also received a \$10,000 grant to create a creative arts presentation.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

We were very fortunate to have the faith and support of our board of directors. Throughout the year, we had changes in our board. Dr. Barbara Morrow Williams and Becky Jordan resigned. Dr. Mary Langer Thompson and Joseph Moon joined the board. We maintained five board members along with original members Davida S. James, Edward Friedman and David H. Smith. Friedman and Smith reside in Los Angeles and the other three board members live in the High Desert.

CALIFORNIA ATTORNEY GENERAL ANNUAL REGISTRATION

We were current with our RF-1 filing for the California Attorney General's Office. It is this registration that gives you the legal right to solicit money as a charity.

DEVELOPMENT / GRANTS

We began to research various grant opportunities and solicit donations from volunteers and our board. Most of our initial money this year came from our board of directors. In May, we participated in the High Desert's first "Give BIG San Bernardino" fundraiser. Special "Give

Big” fundraisers have become very popular throughout the country. We were in the top third in terms of donations received for High Desert nonprofits.

EQUIPMENT

Because of the ARPIE grant we received, we purchased sound and presentation equipment that is now part of our ongoing inventory. Our inventory now includes a wireless PA system, microphones, chairs, scripts, tables and a printer donated by a donor. The value of the sound equipment and our printer is \$1215.

HIGH DESERT COMMUNITY FOUNDATION (HDCF) AFFILIATION

HDCF is part of a nationwide network of community foundations that serve as an umbrella organization for nonprofits that do not have their own 501c3 status. Some of the affiliate organizations do have 501c3 status. Our membership with them serves three purposes: 1) Donors can contribute to our nonprofit – via the HDCF website – and still get a tax credit, and 2) we can apply for foundation grants through HDCF as our fiscal sponsor. That means that the grant award is made out to HDCF, on our behalf yet we spend the funds. And 3) there is a very positive and supportive fellowship with the organization and its members.

IRS FORM 990-N POSTCARD FILING

For F/Y ending 2014 annual IRS tax filing, we filed the 990-N Post Card prior to the November 30th deadline. Nonprofits earning less than \$50,000 a year are only required to file the 990-N postcard.

PROGRAMS:

As we began to get our footing this first year, it became more evident just how monumental a task building a performing arts complex would be and just how long term. So we determined to find other ways to keep our arts focus. Among those was delving into presentations.

LOVE LETTERS & MUSICAL NOTES

In December, 2013, during our first seven months of operation, we were awarded a \$10,000 arts grant through our affiliation with the High Desert Community Foundation. The grant was made possible by the James Irvine Foundation and administered by the Community Foundation serving the Counties of Riverside and San Bernardino. Of the 33 nonprofits that applied, we were one of nine that received the award. This was quite a coup for a nonprofit that had just incorporated seven months before and was awarded a grant over arts organizations that had been in business for decades. We were quite honored.



Actor Nick Young, Davida S. James, Stephanie Brynjolfson, actress and director

The grant project that we developed was called *Love Letters and Musical Notes*. The period of performance was December through June, with the major events being held in May, 2014 and a culminating event for the grantor held in June. We produced the award-winning play “Love Letters” by A.R. Gurney in various settings such as community centers and senior citizen centers servicing low-income residents, and other such venues to reach a population that is generally underserved in the arts. Our director, Stephanie Brynjolfson also taught acting to some of the residents in the target populations in these communities.



Seniors David “Turk” McNeil and Hazel Young, with director Stephanie Brynjolfson
ADELANTO SENIOR CENTER



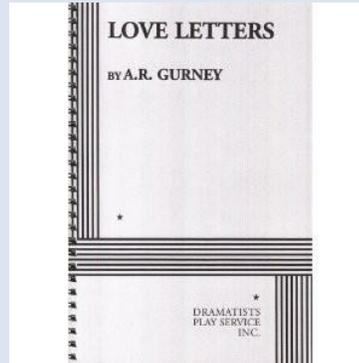
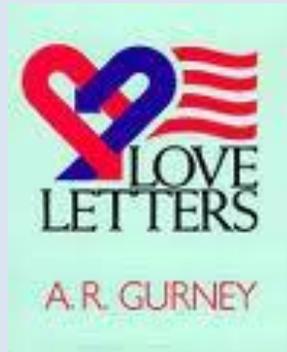
We partnered with Paul Starks of “Parade of Pianos” to also engage some of the students for whom Parade of Pianos provides scholarships. They were to provide music as part of the performance.



Starks and “Parade of Pianos” scholarship recipient helping youngsters have a magical hands-on experience with musical instruments.

The grant was targeted to go to an arts nonprofit with the objective to embrace and advance the diverse way that we experience the arts. The awardee was to reach low-income and/or ethnically diverse populations that have been traditionally underserved by nonprofit arts organizations. In addition, the arts engagement project needed to actively engage the

targeted communities by having them participate in the project and also put on performances in nontraditional arts venues.



Published material on the play “Love Letters” describes it as a unique and imaginative theatre piece which, in the words of the author A.R. Gurney, “needs no theatre, no lengthy rehearsal, no special set, no memorization of lines, and no commitment from its two actors beyond the night of performance.” Love Letters is comprised of letters exchanged over a lifetime between two people who grew up together, went their separate ways, but continued to share confidences. As the actors read the letters aloud, what is created is an evocative, touching, frequently funny but always telling pair of character studies in which what is implied is as revealing and meaningful as what is actually written down. Written in 1988, the play was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize.

“I am on the VVAEC Advisory Committee and this partnership is a perfect blend between our goal to build a concert hall and the work Parade of Pianos does providing music scholarships to students,” said Starks.

We had the play translated into Spanish and had at least one production planned. Unfortunately, casting problems forced us to cancel the Spanish-language performances.

Our nonprofit considers ourselves lucky to have secured the services of Stephanie Brynjolfson, a respected actress and director in frequent productions at the High Desert Center for the Arts, to be the theatrical director on the project. Brynjolfson had also starred as Melissa in a production of “Love Letters” at Victor Valley College in 2011.

“Love Letters is such a subtle, yet powerful play,” Brynjolfson said. “What is wonderful is that we have an amazing opportunity to work with novice actors and give them the guidance they need to present a credible performance in the genre of reader’s theater, a widely popular and effective art form.”

The centers we reached out to were very receptive to the project. After months of planning and rehearsals with novice actors, we presented “Love Letters” at Hesperia Senior Living, Village Oaks Apartments, Victorville Senior Citizens Club, and Adelanto Senior Citizens Club. We were also engaged later in the year to present the play at The Aspen Clubhouse in the DelWebb private gated community.

In addition to “Love Letters,” Stephanie did a fantastic job with a staged reading of “Steel Magnolias” for the women from “A Better Way Domestic Violence Center” which we presented at the Victorville Community Center. Pictured below:



“VVAEC is to be applauded for the grant they were just awarded,” said Lisa Lawrence, executive director of the High Desert Community Foundation. “Love Letters and Musical Notes will allow some every day folks to star in an award-winning play and bring an arts event to their communities.”

A BIG SUCCESS

There are many ways to measure the success of an event. Certainly, for many theaters it is dollars and cents. If the profits exceed the expenses, the event is a success. In our case, we did not have huge numbers. But these are the measurements that meant the most to us. And 82-year old woman at one senior center came up to one of our board members and said, “I’ve never seen a play before. That was great.” At another senior center, two hearing impaired residents attended and another person was signing for them. And in one of the buildings where our director gave acting lessons to a resident so she could star in the play, the female lead told us that she had loved acting in high school and us putting on the play encouraged her to get back into it. For us, the numbers were not huge...but the rewards – as noted above – made this a rousing success.

In June, we attended a closing event in Riverside, California that the Community Foundation produced gathering all the grant recipients together.

STAFFING / VOLUNTEERS

VVAEC operates with the help of volunteers and the occasional paid freelancer. We have no paid staff as of yet. Our CEO receives a \$25 reimbursement for the extra phone she has on her cell plan for the nonprofit’s phone line. We have other volunteers who help when we have events. We have also been fortunate to have Sharon Mordecai, a skilled web designer, volunteer to create a website for us.

CONCLUSION

“Civilizations are not remembered by their business people, their bankers or lawyers. They’re remembered by the arts.” **Eli Broad**