

*Mike Simpson, Executive Director of the Arts of Collin County, stands by a model of the future arts hall
photo by Chris Fritchie*



Imagine a fantastic 2,100 seat performing arts hall that includes additional rooms for recitals, rehearsals, community events, art education, private events and art displays just a few miles from our communities. A venue where families can sit in a beautiful sloping meadow in front of the performing arts hall and listen to outdoor music performances, watch movies under the stars or just relax and enjoy a picnic with the natural backdrop of mature trees and creeks that wind through the arts park.

There will also be hike and bike trails winding their way through the arts park that will be part of the six city hike and bike trail that will someday extend all the way to White Rock Lake. The cities of Allen, Frisco and Plano working with the Arts of Collin County Commission created this vision: "The Arts of Collin County will create an environment where all the residents can share and enjoy in the full diversity and vitality of the arts." While the above three cities are "owner" cities, the cities of Melissa and Fairview have joined as "member" cities, contributing to the on-going maintenance and operation of this unique performing arts hall and park.

There are many benefits to our citizens by having this venue and among them is the positive impact on the quality of life it provides our families. It nurtures the children and adults who part of the more than 100 local arts organizations in this area. It provides for the enrichment of our lives with local, affordable and convenient arts and cultural events. Local artists, musicians, dancers, painters and sculptors will have a place to perform and exhibit their talents. The impact on the arts education will be huge and impact thousands of talented children in our schools. There will be something for everyone to enjoy in this arts hall and the arts park.

The one aspect of the value of the arts on a community, county, state and the nation often overlooked, is the econom-

The Economic Impact of the Arts

By Mike Simpson

A FEW YEARS FROM NOW, hopefully by mid-2012, families in this area will be driving to a beautiful, one-of-a-kind, performing arts hall and arts park near the intersection of State Highway 121 and Custer Road. As they drive along SH 121 and exit at Exchange Parkway, they enter a setting of rolling terrain with thousands of trees and Rowlett Creek winding through a 124-acre site that looks like something you might see in East Texas or in the Hill Country.

These families may be on their way to see a performance by the Plano Sympho-

ny Orchestra, a Broadway show such as The Lion King, Jersey Boys or Phantom of the Opera or a concert by the talented Andre Bocelli. They may also be going to see their sons or daughters perform in a musical special of all the high schools in the area or an art show by the talented artists in this region. No matter what the area of interest, the Arts of Collin County performing arts hall and arts park, will be just minutes away from the families of Allen, Frisco, McKinney, Plano and other cities throughout the Collin County and Denton County area.



ic impact these facilities bring. While we may talk about the enrichment and education values and how arts and culture can offer something for everyone, the economic impact is seldom discussed.

In a study conducted by the Americans for the Arts organization, called Arts & Economic Prosperity III, the impact of the nonprofit arts and culture industry was documented in 156 communities in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Data was collected from 6,080 arts and culture organizations and almost 95,000 attendees. Economists for the project from the Georgia Institute of Technology customized models for the various population groups. The nation's largest 12,662 cities were then assigned to these population groups to determine the national impact of its findings.

The summary showed that from 2000-2005, the nonprofit arts and culture industry grew by 24 percent from \$134 billion to \$166.2 billion. Spending by the organizations using the arts facilities grew to \$63.1 billion, up 19 percent from 2000. Spending by the audiences on event-related items grew to \$103.1 billion up 28 percent from 2000. (1) The study showed that the industry supported 5.7 million full-time equivalent jobs with a household income of \$104.2 billion and generated \$29.6 billion in local, state and federal government revenue. The study further

showed that event-related expenditures for things like restaurants, parking, hotels and retail generated \$27.79 per person in addition to the cost of admission. This is based on an average of in-town and out of town attendees.

Projections currently show the impact of the Arts of Collin County performing arts hall and arts park to be in excess of \$1 billion.

In a 2006 study conducted by Deloitte & Touche USA LLP for the North Texas Business for Culture and the Arts (NTBCA), the firm reported that the nonprofit arts and cultural organizations in North Texas would add more than \$828.5 million to the region's economy. Projections currently show the impact to be in excess of \$1 billion.

What will the Arts of Collin County (ACC) performing arts hall and arts park mean to the economy in this area? It is projected that over \$25 million annually will be the economic value of this project. Keep in mind that in addition to

the ticket sales there are all of the event-related expenditures that come with a concert, ballet, symphony or other arts event. Patrons will be spending money at restaurants, hotels, retail stores and for food, beverage and gift shop items while at the events.

It is no surprise that performing arts halls are being found in many of the outlying cities surrounding major metropolitan areas. These facilities can be found in cities like Rockville, Md., Thousand Oaks, Calif.; Mesa, Ariz.; Cobb County, Ga.; Carmel, Ind.; Appleton, Wis. and in Bethesda, Md. to name a few. The Strathmore Performing Arts Center in Bethesda, Md. is a perfect example. Elliot Pfanstiehl, President and CEO of The Strathmore Performing Arts Center, said that their center, located in Montgomery County Md. has been extremely successful because they get patrons from Northern Virginia, Maryland and Washington, DC. The Baltimore Symphony Orchestra was looking for a second location in which to perform, the National Philharmonic Choral performs there and they have other groups such as the Washington Performing Arts Society, Maryland Classic Youth Orchestra and the City Dance Ensemble all as residents. We will have no problem filling the ACC with arts groups and performances for all ages.



Computer rendering of Arts Hall interior (left); Meadow Performance (above) renderings provided by Arts of Collin County

In the Deloitte & Touche study referenced earlier, this important comment was made: "Over the last decade in the U.S., many cities and states have begun to examine how and to what extent arts and cultural institutions contribute to their economies. The fact is, money given to and earned by arts and cultural agencies does not just disappear; it provides jobs and contributes to the wealth of the region." In addition to all the benefits to our families; cities, counties and states are learning the value these arts facilities play in a business's decision to relocate or expand. In the case of the Arts of Collin County performing arts hall and arts park, this will mean \$25 million annually to our communities.

(1) Source: Arts & Economic Prosperity III, a study conducted by the Americans for the Arts.

Mike Simpson is the former Mayor of Frisco and was recently appointed Executive Director of the Arts of Collin County.



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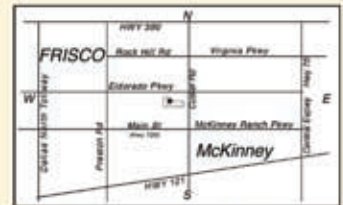
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