

Dear Tulsa World,

Recently our family participated in a student exchange program through our son's elementary school. Our school hosted 15 French students and two chaperones from Tulsa's Sister City, Amiens, France. We planned a whirlwind two weeks of field trips, excursions, and experiences for them while they were in Tulsa. On the itinerary was everything ranging from cultural museums, a Thunder Basketball game, Gathering Place, chili cook-off, fishing, Greenwood District, and a Thanksgiving potluck in March!

At the end of the exchange, the children (ages 10-11) overwhelmingly spoke about their favorite experience as being the day trip they took to Woolaroc Museum and Wildlife Preserve. How cool it was to see real bison and learn about Native American History! This is also notable because the experience was made possible by the generous support of a program called Explore Oklahoma, which provided funds needed for an activity bus to transport the students to Bartlesville. Explore Oklahoma is one of many programs funded by the Foundation for Tulsa Schools fundraiser: ARTrageous.

ARTrageous is taking place May 11, 2024, at the OKPOP Museum, and will feature a gallery of student art and live musical performances showcasing the rich talent within the Tulsa Public Schools fine arts department. The event is the signature fundraiser for Foundation for Tulsa Schools.

In fact, ARTrageous helps to fund many programs that impact Tulsa Public School students including Grants for Great Ideas (Grants for Great Ideas helps to fund teacher-centric ideas for STEAM and student-focused enrichment opportunities), Partners in Education, Explore Oklahoma, Educator Supply Day, and Any Given Child. Just this year students at our schools have experienced performances with Tulsa Opera, Tulsa Ballet, Tulsa Signature Symphony, and more via the Any Given Child Program, a collaborative initiative started by the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

Not everyone is an artist, but everyone can benefit, learn, grow, and expand their hearts because of the arts. Art embodies the human spirit and illuminates all that we see around us. Art in any form, visual, musical, or immersive, brings people to a mutual place where conversation, thought, and imagination collide. A staff member at the National Endowment for Arts sums it up well, "The arts matter because we matter, and our stories matter. We are moving miracles, walking creators engaging in a cosmic dance. The art we express is timeless." –Mohammed Sheriff.¹

We must ask ourselves as Tulsans, why do the arts matter to us? For starters, students in TPS represent 62 countries spanning across 77 learning communities. 80% are economically disadvantaged, and 36% are multi-language learners. TPS is diverse. It is unique. It is special. It deserves help. We are neighbors and community members who strive to make a difference so let's start at the very beginning, a very good place to start don't you think? "When you read you begin with A-B-C, when you sing you begin with Do-Re-Mi." If you recognize this little ditty in this OpEd then someone introduced you to the arts. Aren't you glad they did?²

¹ <https://www.arts.gov/stories/blog/2015/why-arts-matter>

² The Sound of Music, music by Richard Rodgers, lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II, and a book by Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse

We need to start by simply saying yes to constitutionally-mandated public education, yes to the arts, yes to raising well-rounded humans who are more than their test scores. Tulsans need to understand how hard the volunteers and staff at Foundation for Tulsa Schools work with community organizations to give back to our students. As parents of kiddos who attend Tulsa Public Schools (three of them!), we are particularly grateful for the opportunities granted to them via this Foundation which allows them to experience the arts with their peers. Thank you Foundation for Tulsa Schools!

Please plan to join us at ARTrageous on May 11, and support our teachers and our kids.

ARTrageous, a night filled with art, music, and live performances! The event will begin at 6pm with a gallery of student art and live musical performances followed by dinner at 7:30pm and a showcase of the rich talent within the Tulsa Public Schools fine arts department. Join the community that supports public education and have an ARTrageously good time!

Date: May 11, 2024 @ 6 PM

Dress: Artfully cocktail attire

Tickets: <https://foundationfortulsaschools.org/artrageous/>

Jennifer White is a humanitarian attorney with YWCA Tulsa. She is also a volunteer with PTA, the Tulsa Ballet, Boston Avenue UMC, and has recently performed on stage with Theatre Tulsa. She also serves on the City of Tulsa Sales Tax Oversight Committee which oversees several art-related community projects funded by the Vision sales tax such as the Gilcrease Museum expansion and the Tulsa PAC renovations. She and her husband Brad White have an elementary, middle and high school student within TPS. Brad White is a Financial Advisor with Willow Oak Wealth and serves on the Board for Foundation for Tulsa Schools and the Tulsa Boys Home Board.