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Here's what was received.

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2022 Create the Vote Candidate Survey

Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts on Arts and Culture in advance of the 2022 election. We'll post your responses on our website so that voters can make informed decisions about who will best represent the Arts and Culture community at the legislature.

We ask that you complete the survey by Friday, September 23rd. **We know your time is limited so we understand that your responses will be brief.**

Don't miss out on this important opportunity to be an Arts champion!

Email *

jim.magic@gmail.com

Please share your name

Jim Irwin

What office and district are you a candidate for?

CT House Representative - 61st District

Every town in Connecticut can boast cultural assets that contribute to a vibrant community and improve the quality of life for its residents.

What are some exciting arts and cultural events and organizations that you have experienced in your community?

Our Library has an Art Gallery which exhibits various local artists over the entire year. It is open to the public daily. The Suffield Players is an active community theatre group that produces a full season of four plays every year at Historic Mapleton Hall, as well as a presenting a number of staged readings at the Library. Culturally, we celebrate the history of our region through the restored Phelps-Hatheway House and Gardens as well as the King House Museum and the historic Old Newgate Prison, as well as inspiring interest in our more recent history at the New England Air Museum

If elected, will you work to strengthen the arts and culture community in the town(s) you serve? If so, how? If not, why?

I believe that exposure to the arts, in general, is essential to the development of a well-rounded person. Expanding the cultural programming available through our Libraries would be a good first step. Also, emphasis on local theatre, as well as local cultural music events could be heightened through the funding of school field trips and interactive experiences.

Sandwiched between Boston and New York, Connecticut is often dismissed as a “pass through” state when it comes to tourism. Yet, our state has many world class arts institutions and a rich cultural landscape.

Why do you think arts and culture are important in Connecticut? What is unique about our state’s arts and culture?

The impressive thing about the arts in Connecticut is the length of time that they have been here! Connecticut is home to a treasure trove of Classic American architecture, fine arts, and early crafts, and industries, as well.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, many people discovered that arts and creativity play a critical role in helping us cope with emotional stress and sustain our mental health. Art helped us process loss, fight loneliness, stay connected and feel hopeful.

Can you share a way that the arts have helped you, your family or your community get through the difficult times of Covid? How will that experience influence choices about the arts you would make as a legislator?

The arts have always offered individuals the opportunity to rise above the pressures and stress of everyday life with an appreciation of the vision and creativity of their fellow human beings. That was as true at the Globe Theatre 500 years ago as it is today at the Goodspeed Opera House at East Haddam. Exposure to all of the fine arts offers all people the opportunity to "seem to leave this troubled world behind".

The arts and creativity have a proven track record of economic benefit to our state. The National Endowment for the Arts’ Office of Research & Analysis and the Bureau of Economic Analysis report that, in 2020, arts and cultural production in Connecticut added \$8.9 billion to our economy and accounted for 3.2 percent of our gross state product, while the arts and cultural industries employed 49,159 workers with wages and benefits totaling more than \$5.1 billion. (https://nasaa-arts.org/nasaa_research/creative-economy-state-profiles/)

Despite these contributions, the arts have historically been first on the chopping block when it comes to budget priorities. What would you do to help keep arts and creativity funded in our state at a level that recognizes their economic importance?

The facts that you have cited above speak for themselves. As a person who holds an MFA, and who made my living in the fine arts as a theatrical designer, producer/director, manager and entrepreneur, I am aware very of the financial contribution that cultural institutions have made to my community. I would work to see that these benefits are recognized, encouraged and supported.

Connecticut has not had an Arts Education Specialist at the State Department of Education (SDE) since 2016, when the last specialist left. This position is critical to assuring that our State and National Arts Education Standards are consistently implemented in all of Connecticut's school districts, especially those in under-resourced communities where students' access to the Arts is often extremely limited compared to affluent communities.

If elected, would you support refilling the Arts Education Specialist at SDE? If not, why?

Yes, I would