

Cultural Council off to good start, says executive director

The Cultural Council of Santa Cruz County is off and running, its president and its executive director reported to the Rotary Club Wednesday.

The organization — formed by volunteers to coordinate a large assortment of efforts in the arts and expand cultural activities — is making progress, executive director Yankee Johnson said. It's strongly involved in historic preservation, directs the efforts of some 50 artists who work with elementary school students, and encourages artistic self-expression in ways ranging from chamber music to (seriously) low-rider automobiles.

"Yes, those are art too," said Johnson. "The arts help a community celebrate itself, make a state-

ment, and those cars represent self-expression."

The Council is good business too, said organizer and president Harold Hyde. It can coordinate cultural activities which didn't even have a central calendar before, help them manage their business affairs, encourage public and private financial support and encourage activities which will attract visitors to performances and exhibits.

The Council's budget for fiscal 1982 is \$387,000. Some of it represents contributions from school districts and other public agencies and the California Arts Council, but large chunks have come not only from foundations but also from private businesses and individuals in the county.

"The county's cultural life is strong and it can get stronger," said Johnson. As groups become more successful, physical needs for facilities can better be defined and met, he added — a better approach than building theaters and galleries first and then looking around for things to fill them.

The Council has no official position on the controversial plan for Wingspread, the theater-arts complex proposed for the Porter-Sesnon property near Cabrillo College. Hyde explained that some Council directors actively favor it and others oppose it, and the board declines to split itself over a specific physical facility proposal, preferring to stick with programs and organizations, its major purposes.

The arts-in-schools effort has been the Council's earliest success, Johnson said. "The idea isn't to turn every child into an artist, but rather to help them enrich their lives by learning better to express themselves."

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