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Last Words from the Operations Manager

EXTRAORDINARY SUPPORT AND THE MOST IMPORTANT THING



Early in November, Board President Sally Windle sent a letter to our members and supporters, informing them that two of the three HVAC systems that have served ArtSpace so well over the years (more than 25, as it happens, probably well past their sell-by dates) were in need of replacement.

Although, as President Windle noted, we had the funds in the Century Endowment Fund to pay for the new systems, tapping the Endowment, even if necessary, was not the way we would have chosen to go.

So the letter asked for emergency donations to limit the drain on funds that should remain whole in the interests of the future of the organization.

The response was immediate as members and supporters stepped up to help. Perhaps we shouldn't have been surprised. But it was gratifying, even humbling, to be made freshly aware that support for ArtSpace is more than lip-service, more than "Likes" on Facebook, that it goes to the heart of what people value and are willing to pay for.

I was interviewing then-Director Ellen Nelson once long ago in preparation for an article I was writing about her, and I asked what the most challenging thing was in running an art center. Ellen answered in sentences that have stayed with me: "Bill," she said, "it's the money. It's always about the money."

"The money" is why ArtSpace, along with other non-profits, is always hustling*. Encore, the Symphony, the OSPCA -- we all know fundamental truths: there are no government funds to pay our bills; there are no real, mega-watt sales from which to make a tidy profit; we don't have stock issues. Rather, we

have *Rally in the Square* and *Wine and Whiskers* and *Trivia Night* and *Geranium Sales*.

Ellen was right, but my question wasn't. Or, at least, it wasn't the only question. I should have asked her, "What's the most *rewarding* thing about running an art center?" Her answer, like mine, would have been quite different.

For the most rewarding thing about running an art center is bringing artists and art-lovers together in a common enterprise: an attempt to make the place we live in a better place; a move to put the human mind, heart, spirit, and creative impulses and achievements where they belong -- at the center of human endeavor. It's why we do what we do, and why artists do what they do. And it's why we *hustle*. Because, although "the money" isn't the only thing, it's a crucial part of being able to do the most important thing.

So, here's a hearty thank you to those members and supporters who stepped up. And an invitation to any who haven't (yet) to join us in cultivating and promoting that most important thing.

Best,
 Bill Sullivan

* As in Pete Rose's Charlie Hustle, not Paul Newman's pool shark.