



2018 Arts in Corrections

Contra Costa County Jail Demonstration Project

Evaluation Report

Project started May 1 and extending through August 31, 2018

Report submitted by Roger Renn, AC5 Managing Director

Fiscal Arrangements

\$2,662.87 CA Lawyers for the Arts

Administrative Services: 750.00

Teaching artist: 1,620.00

Art Supplies: \$292.87

\$67.34 Contra Costa County

Art Supplies: \$67.34 (paid by Office of the Sheriff)

\$2,730.21 = Total

Memorandum of Understanding

Contra Costa County – California Lawyers for the Arts

- **Alma Robinson**, Executive Director, California Lawyers for the Arts, Fort Mason Center 2 Marina Blvd., Building C, Room 265, San Francisco, CA 94123
- **Contra Costa County Administrator's Office**, 651 Pine Street, 10th Floor, Martinez, CA 94553

The Project:

California Lawyers for the Arts and Contra Costa County through its Arts and Culture Commission agreed to collaborate in order to provide arts programming for inmates at the Contra Costa County Office of the Sheriff, Marsh Creek Detention Facility, under the auspices of CLA's Arts in Corrections County Jails Demonstration Project.

The purpose of this collaboration was to place high quality teaching artists in the Marsh Creek

Detention Facility to teach drawing classes to inmates. A teaching artist provided oversight and support to the participating inmates and surveyed the participants as part of a statewide evaluation of arts programs in county jails. Contra Costa County agreed to disseminate the results of this project to CLA in order to inform elected county leaders and statewide associations involved in public policy, the arts and criminal justice.

The Arts and Culture Commission of Contra Costa County coordinated drawing classes with program staff at Marsh Creek Detention Facility, selected an artist for a 12-week drawing program, assisted the artists in scheduling a program at the jail (Appendix A) and paid the artists for services and supplies. Commissioner Ledezma and Managing Director Roger Renn attended relevant planning meetings, observed ongoing classes and ensured that the participants completed the surveys provided by the California Lawyers for the Arts. These completed surveys are included (Appendix B) and will be added to CLA's master evaluation report. Once CLA receives Contra Costa's surveys, CLA will send an updated evaluation report describing the impact of the project to jail staff and other local leaders to AC5.

By the Numbers:

This demonstration project was a success based on observations made during the art classes and responses to the survey given during the last class. The survey was prepared by the California Lawyers and is standardized throughout the State for the purpose of providing information to local officials and statewide professional associations about the benefits of arts programs. Twenty-four surveys were completed by men ranging in age from 17 to 62. The average age was 35. Caucasian and Hispanic represented 75% of the group. Fifty-five percent had completed high school.

When asked if they do art on their own, 55% were doing art or music as a child and 55% were still doing art or music as a teenager. The number declined to 25% as an adult. 75 percent stated, "I look forward to art classes more than any other activity," and an even higher percentage felt better about themselves after taking a few art classes and stated the arts

programs provides a safe place to explore their creativity.

Seventy-five percent of the participating inmates responded in the survey that they are less stressful and less frustrated when working on their art and were better able to express their emotions. Eighty-eight percent claimed they were better able to communicate with others and they enjoyed better relationships with other inmates since their involvement in the art program.

The survey revealed that inmates felt that there was less racial tension in the art program than elsewhere in the facility; that people interact differently inside the arts program and they had a better relationship with jail staff.

The survey also found that inmates had tried things that they had never expected to try.

Responses included:

“Everyone is in a good, joyous mood.” “All barriers are put aside.” “Cool – fun – dope.” “Everyone gets along all the time.” **“I laugh while enjoying the art class.”**

When asked how they felt when in the art space, responses included:

- ❖ **I feel like I’m in an actual art class not in jail**
- ❖ I feel good even if my drawing skills are not good
- ❖ My spirit is lifted and I want to continue art
- ❖ **I feel less stress, calm, laughter, happier, mellow and peace of mind**

When asked what changes have you made in your life, responses included:

- ❖ **I want to continue art and will attend art classes when I get out**
- ❖ I now express my artistic value - I can speak my mind and my ideas
- ❖ It has opened my mind and I’m more creative

Over half told the instructor that they wanted their artwork exhibited for the public to see and understand.

The Impact:

The Arts in Corrections County Jail Demonstration offered 12 workshops at Marsh Creek Detention Facility between May 1 and August 31, 2018. Allison Jacobs instructed all classes. She introduced a variety of drawing and painting techniques and showed respect for each student as she taught. Many inmates asked for more or longer classes. They stated that the class offered new and good things for them.

While monitoring classes in person, both Mr. Renn, AC5 Managing Director and AC5 Commissioner Ledezma noted the quiet room while inmates were on task doing their art. They were caught up in something that demanded all their attention and made them focus on it. Comments were made about how comfortable they felt; how they wanted to laugh and felt less stress.

Ms. Jacobs reinforced the idea that the practice of art could lead to a career. She explained that most artists were self-employed, a good option for many leaving jail. In these classes the teaching artist instilled confidence, a desire to complete a task, curiosity about the world and a sense of self-worth. Inmates were beginning to recognize that individuals have the capacity to improve themselves and that, in the process of art, they were finding artistic expression.

The impact of these twelve art classes reached only a small fraction of the jail population. However, for the participating inmates it was a profound experience. Art has the ability to connect with people regardless of reading or writing skills, regardless of wealth and regardless of ethnic background. Because art allows for exploration, has few rules and opens minds, many adults find that art brings back their human spirit. It is hard to explain exactly how or why drawing, or the expression of art, is so profound, yet it is. Moreover, because it does, it can be a tool for correctional administrators to use to create a better environment inside the facilities.

BENEFITS:

One of the benefits of this collaboration was that CLA provided new resources, technical assistance and mutual support for Contra Costa County in order to implement the project.

Contra Costa County Office of the Sheriff was able to obtain additional financial support for the continuation and future development of this program. The Sheriff is committed to extending this art program four additional months by paying the cost of the Artist. Patty Grant, Director, Inmate Services, CCC Sheriff's Office, stated that the Office has secured funding for the current Fiscal Year and their intention is to request funding for next Fiscal Year. Ms. Grant said. "We appreciate AC5 working with us and getting this program started. We will continue it as a Sheriff's Office program for as long as Jody and I can identify funding."

We would like to continue to offer Arts in Corrections because of the impact we have outlined above. We see that individuals have the capacity to improve themselves. We believe that effectively engaging inmates in the process of art encourage artistic expression. We are confident that this program, rooted in the desire to improve the lives of inmates, does allow them to reduce stress, think positively and increase self-esteem. These benefits can provide a gateway for further education, interest in learning new things and better reentry outcomes.

Appendix A

Schedule of classes Marsh Creek Detention Facility

- May 14th (Safety Training)
- May 21st (session 1) (Monday/May 28th = Memorial Day)
- June 4th (session 2)
- June 11th (session 3)
- June 18th (session 4)
- June 25th (session 5)
- July 23rd and July 27th (session 6 and 7)
- Aug. 6th and Aug 10th (session 8 and 9)
- August 13th (session #10)
- Aug 20th (session #11)
- Aug 27th (FINAL session #12)

Patty Grant

Director, Inmate Services

Inmate Services, Office of the Sheriff

5555 Giant Highway, Richmond, CA. 94806

Jody Sicheneder

Administrative Services Assistant III

Inmate Services, Office of the Sheriff

5555 Giant Highway, Richmond, CA. 94806

Office: 510-262-4204

Allison Jacobs

Teaching Artist

Starry Nite Studios

1736 Diamond Springs Ct. Brentwood, Ca. 94513

Appendix B

24 Participant's Surveys – attached

Arts & Culture Commission of Contra Costa County

LaMar Anderson, At large II

Marija Nelson Bleir, District II

Y'Anad Burrell, At Large I

Silvia Ledezma, District I (Project Manager for Arts in Corrections)

Teresa Snook O'Riva, District V

Petural Shelton, District III

Elizabeth Wood, District IV

Roger Renn, Managing Director

Julia Taylor, Executive Director

