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State of the ARTS

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State of the ARTS

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Slinging Mud to Save History

The 1847 Olivas Adobe has been at the center of our city's social and cultural life as Ventura grew from a Native American Chumash village to a Mission-era Spanish and Mexican settlement that received one of the

earliest charters when California became part of the United States. Parties there were legendary – including one to celebrate the election of Abraham Lincoln!



This past year an innovative program put this historic site back in the national spotlight as youthful mud-slinging preservationists helped garner three major grants to preserve this landmark and went to our nation's White House to accept "Save Our History" accolades from First Lady Laura Bush.

Just when did mudslinging become a positive state of affairs? In 2005 the Cultural Affairs Division of the City of Ventura Community Services Department won a \$10,000 "Save Our History" grant from the History Channel with a proposal to enlist Anacapa Middle School students in an "Adobe Mud-Slingers Project" to "foster an appreciation of the City's cultural heritage and a stewardship of its historic resources."

This collaboration with the Ventura Unified School District is one more step in an ambitious ongoing program to preserve the architecture and the spirit of this historic place by connecting residents of all ages with "living" events that allow them to tell Ventura's—and America's—story today and in the future through special history-themed events, tours and a popular outdoor music series.

The first objective of the grant was to restore a perimeter wall of the Adobe badly in need of repair. Students and teachers received a special "Mud-Slinger" manual that presented a history of the site and explained the process of adobe plastering in preparation for their visit to meet the "Mud-Slinger" team. The team consisted of historic architect Gil Sanchez, historic preservationist Daryl Allen and site staff at the adobe. Mr. Sanchez conducted a detailed building tour to point out to students the signs of the structure's deterioration. Students learned about adobe ingredients and how to mix and apply them before donning "Mud-Slinger" protective clothing to take up their hands-on roles as adobe sifters, mixers and plasterers.

Specialists and city staff oversaw work at each workstation, answered student questions and talked about the issues of preservation. Over a three-day period, students mixed adobe, filled holes in the adobe walls, and plastered them with a trowel. But it wasn't all work! After a lunch break, they viewed a slide presentation

INSIDE:

- Slinging Mud to Save History
- Letter from Kerry
- Insights
- Public Art Update
- Creating Connections
- Art Mixers
- Eye on Education Arts Showcase
- Arts Explosion
- Peek Behind the Curtain
- Discover What Makes VENTURA scream
- A Conspiracy of the Arts
- Celebrate Fall Festival Style!
- Harvest Artwalk
- Holiday Street Festival

led by Daryl Allen that focused on the deterioration and preservation of adobe structures throughout the Southwest. An Olivas Adobe Historical Interpreter led them on a special "talking walls" tour inside the Olivas Adobe, where they enjoyed stories about Ventura's first family, the Olivas.

A second grant objective was to develop a means for periodic maintenance in partnership with the schools. The success of the project shows it can serve as a sound prototype for similar projects for students as the City seeks to obtain further funding. A third objective was to raise awareness of the adobe within the community, a goal achieved through extensive publicity generated beyond the participation of the students, teachers and parents directly involved. Visits to the adobe, by residents and tourists, have increased since the completion of "Adobe Mud-Slingers."



Promoting service learning and volunteerism among students was another objective achieved. Students interviewed following their experience showed a heightened awareness of the importance of helping and doing something significant for their community. Hispanic students and parents who participated gained insight into their heritage. One student, whose father had been a mason in Mexico, became one of our most enthusiastic volunteer workers.

When the City submitted the final "Mud-Slingers" grant report to the History Channel, it was selected as a finalist in the "Save Our History" National Honors. Cultural Affairs Division Supervisor Georgeanne Lees, Anacapa Middle School history teacher Jerry Mittelholtz and student representatives Phillip Long, Gabrielle Montanez, Braulio Terrazas, and Katelynn Vargas were invited to Washington, D.C., where they were named the recipient of the "Save Our History Classroom Award." They received this honor from First Lady Laura Bush in a private ceremony at the White House on Monday, June 5 after a private tour. Following this ceremony, the group was honored at a National Honors Luncheon at the Washington Public Library, and received an additional \$10,000 in recognition of the "Save Our History Classroom Award."

The "Mud-Slingers" is just part of the city's commitment to the preservation and maintenance of historic sites, as it seeks funding sources to finance the highly specialized work necessary to safeguard our historic treasures. The City wrote a grant to the California Cultural and Historic Endowment, and was awarded a \$1,076,000 grant, which is being matched by the City of Ventura. These funds will be used to renovate the Olivas Adobe structures through a seismic retrofit of both the large and small adobes on site, enabling them to withstand earthquake-related forces.

Rehabilitation of the larger two-story adobe, stabilization of the smaller adobe, development of the small adobe as an archaeological exhibit space, energy efficient upgrades to the lighting/electrical systems, a storage facility, signage and landscaping improvements will also be completed under the grant. Furthermore, a "Friends of the Olivas Adobe" fund is being established as a non-profit organization. The intent is to have a pass-through, endowment-designated fund that will grow through individual, tax-deductible donations, awards and grants. The purpose of the fund is

to support and sustain the adobe programs, grounds, signage, exhibits and facilities that provide a benefit to our community.

The Olivas Adobe is an important cultural and educational resource. During the school year, it attracts more than 5,000 fourth graders, with teachers and parents from Ventura and other Southern California schools participating in the hands-on outreach program. Olivas Adobe has initiated new fee-based tours on weekends from 11 am to 4 pm to encourage patrons to step back into Rancho history as costumed Olivas Adobe Historical Interpreter (OAHI) docents lead a 45-minute journey through Ventura's only adobe mansion. Tour revenues will help preserve the Olivas Adobe for future generations.

The OAHI docents created a new program called Summer Exhibits at the Olivas Adobe. During the month of July, portraits by Beatrice Benzien were displayed. Ms. Benzien was the caretaker's daughter when the Olivas property was Max Fleischmann's Duck Club, and she is the last person alive to have lived at the Olivas Adobe. Along with her artwork, a DVD ran which captured Beatrice's oral history recounting her years at the Olivas. In August, Master Gardeners celebrated the Adobe's season of "green thoughts in the green shade" each weekend with tours, speakers and a display of community projects promoting home gardening today and Ranch flora from the past. In September, patrons relived Southern California's Fleishmann Era through vintage images from local museum and gallery archives.

Every June, the City presents the annual folk cultural family event "Cowboys, Heroes & Outlaws: Passport to the American West" at the rancho-era Olivas Adobe. This popular event is designed to stimulate interest in and to preserve American Cowboy Western heritage with cultural workshops and demonstrations, period entertainment, interpreters as historic figures, a children's "Cowboy College," and a Native American Village. This special event brings professional folk culture activities and performances to children and families, as well as, draws from the wealth of volunteer and business resources within the community. On June 3 this past year, approximately 1,500 enjoyed a great interactive, art/history day at this award-winning program.



About 4,000 people visited the Olivas Adobe for the popular summer-long outdoor Music Under the Stars concert series during the 2006 season. From July 8 through September 9, patrons enjoyed ten Saturday nights of great music and dancing when the Cultural Affairs Division presented this popular concert series from 7:30 to 9:30 pm outdoors in the courtyard. Every December, the Olivas Adobe Historical Interpreters offer a free gift to the community through their Olivas Adobe Candlelight Tour. Patrons dine on delicious treats and enjoy live holiday music, and tour the historic 1847 home of Don Raymndo Olivas where costumed skits are presented that bring history and old fashioned holiday celebrations to life.

The Olivas Adobe continues to be a major cultural heritage destination, integrating the influence of the Olivas family and property into the fabric of the Ventura community through a year round series of popular events.

It teaches us our past, promotes pride, and influences our present and future perspective. And today, the Olivas Adobe unites residents of all ages in a common cause of site preservation and celebrations that are the lifeblood of any community.

Besides the big special events mentioned above, the site is also a popular spot for weddings, family reunions and atmospheric business meetings. For Olivas Adobe rental, tour and programming information, please call Cultural Affairs Coordinator Gina Reyes at 658-4728.

Letter from Kerry Cultural Affairs Manager

Let's celebrate! Our cultural landscape in Ventura continues to thrive – ever changing with the seasons and by the creative people who shape it. *State of the Arts* is full of articles covering fall and winter's exciting new and returning events, cultural classes and tours.

This is also a great time to fete and salute the new and "seasoned" people who are working to create the cultural landscape that defines us as a community. We hope you are attending our monthly Art Mixers (see article) and check our website cityofventura.net for the fall date of our capstone "pARTY" of the year – the 2006 Mayor's Arts Awards.

Mayor Carl Morehouse will bestow four awards – for Arts Leader, Arts Educator, Artist in the Community, and Special Initiative – during the special reception. Now in its second year, the Mayor's Awards aim to honor major contributions by individuals, organizations, and businesses to the arts; to cultivate greater visibility and understanding of the value of the arts; and to build new leadership and develop patrons for the arts. While the awards are non-monetary, each recipient receives a unique artwork commissioned from a local artist each year. This year artist Lis Schwitters has created a limited-edition work on paper titled "Mark of Distinction."

There are plenty of new faces on the Cultural Affairs team (see articles below) and we are especially excited to welcome arts leader Eric Wallner as our new Cultural Affairs Supervisor. Also, we are seeking out you, our community's most creative members, as we form the new Cultural Marketing Task Force.

In the 2005 Ventura Cultural Plan: Creating California's New Art City, a key policy area is marketing and creating broad-based public awareness of local and regional cultural offerings. With the cultural plan as a guiding document, the mission of the task force will be to identify opportunities for cross marketing, addressing barriers to building broader awareness and participation in the arts by all residents and visitors. The task force will meet quarterly to provide a forum to develop and facilitate comprehensive cultural marketing activities, including cultural tourism, collective marketing, and outreach projects. Locations will vary to showcase cultural venues. Everyone is welcome, so please join me for the inaugural meeting on Thursday, October 12, 6-8 pm in the City Hall Community Meeting Room, 501 Poli Street.

The talent and commitment of creative people I encounter everyday constantly amaze me! I celebrate each of you as "shapers of change" who are defining our dynamic cultural scene.



Cultural Affairs Appointments



Eric Wallner
Cultural Affairs Supervisor

The City of Ventura is pleased to announce the hire of Eric Wallner to the position of Cultural Affairs Supervisor. Moving to Ventura from Washington, D.C., Eric most recently taught Arts Policy and Audience Development courses within the Master of Arts Management program at George Mason University and served as a lead consultant for the Creative Capital Foundation's State Research Initiative.

Eric Wallner has over fifteen years of experience working with a wide range of nonprofit arts organizations including the Queens Council on the Arts, New York Foundation for the Arts, Learning Through Education in the Arts (LEAP), New Langton Arts, Ohio Alliance for Arts Education, Painted Bride Art Center (Philadelphia, PA), and OPERA America. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Art/Semiotics from Brown University and a Master's degree in Arts Policy and Administration from Ohio State University where he was the recipient of the Barnett Fellowship, and was an Arts Administration Fellow at the National Endowment for the Arts. As a Research Associate at the Urban Institute, a Washington D.C.-based think tank, he spent three years as a researcher on Investing in Creativity: A Study of the Support Structure for U.S. and was a co-project manager for the design and construction of a national database of artist resources now known as NYFA Source (www.nyfa.org). Other projects he worked on included Community Partnerships for Cultural Participation and the Performing Arts Research Coalition – a 10-city survey of arts participation in partnership with five national performing arts service organizations.

As Cultural Affairs Supervisor, Eric will be overseeing the Cultural Funding Program, Technical Assistance Program, Special Events, Mayor's Arts Awards, *State of the Arts* newsletter and, among other responsibilities, working with the Visitors and Convention Bureau. "Eric brings a diverse and deep knowledge of arts administration and the cultural landscape to the City of Ventura," says Cultural Affairs Manager Kerry Adams Hapner. "His national perspective will serve as a great resource to our arts community, and his personal commitment to the arts will be a great asset to the Cultural Affairs team."

Eric Wallner can be reached at ewallner@ci.ventura.ca.us or at (805) 677-3911.



Lisa Zaid
Public Art Program
Project Manager

Lisa Zaid joins the Cultural Affairs Division as Project Manager for the Public Art Program after working as the Program Assistant in the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. At the museum, Lisa oversaw a budget in excess of \$2 million, developed and coordinated all aspects of the doctoral and postdoctoral fellowship program, and identified and created outreach program opportunities through pod casting and Internet 2 projects for the Center.

At Scripps College, where she received her BA in Philosophy, Lisa was a representative to the Board of Trustees and elected Academic Chair for a committee of twelve, elected student leaders, which established an annual cultural diversity arts program involving 80% of the student body. A native of Ventura, Lisa attended

Buena High School and looks forward to this opportunity to return and contribute to her home community. She enjoys working with artists and has been impressed with the City's transformation over the last decade, especially with regards to its ever-evolving support for the arts and cultural programming.



Deborah Hazen
WAV Project Coordinator

Deborah Hazen is the new project coordinator for the Working Artist Ventura (WAV) project. Deborah has extensive experience with arts-related projects, given her 9-year stint as the Human Resources Manager for the J. Paul Getty Museum. As a patron, fan and frequent participant in the arts community for many years in Los Angeles, and now here in Ventura, Deborah said that she is "thrilled to be part of such a creative, unique and inclusive community effort" such as WAV. Her administrative coordination, mediation skills, undergraduate degree in Spanish Language and Linguistics, and Master's degree in Psychology will make her a valuable addition to the WAV project team. She will become a central point of contact for questions and suggestions related to the Working Artists Ventura project and will serve as a general information resource to artists, businesses and other members of the Ventura community as this project continues to move forward.



Laurel Anderson
Cultural Affairs Specialist

Laurel Anderson relocated to Ventura in January and joined the Cultural Affairs team in April of this year. She works part time in the Cultural Affairs Division and is currently pursuing a Masters in Youth Development from Clemson University. She is getting to know the community and all the wonderful things it has to offer. In her free time, she volunteers with youth serving programs and participates in local events. She enjoys cooking, outside activities and meeting new people. She actively looks for ways to serve the community.

New Cultural Affairs Commissioners



Anthony Strauss

In April, the City Council appointed Anthony (Tony) Strauss to the Cultural Affairs Commission. Commissioner Strauss is filling the vacancy created by former Chair Ed Summers when he was appointed to the City Council. Tony brings a breadth of community and cultural experience to this Council Advisory Group. He has been involved in the Ventura Music Festival, the San Buenaventura Foundation for the Arts, and the Bell Arts Factory. And, his two daughters are successful artists. Tony is the principal at Strauss Uritz, a professional law practice based in downtown Ventura, where he applies his extensive experience in settling and mediating complex disputes.

In July, the City Council unanimously approved the expansion of the Cultural Affairs Commission from five to seven members with two new appointments for Marie Lakin and Mark Hartley. The goal of the expansion is to increase diversity and participation in the Ventura's cultural programs. Additionally, the two new members will increase the capacity of the Commission to fulfill the goals of the 2005 Cultural Plan, including the creation of a Cultural Marketing Task Force.



Marie Lakin

No stranger to public service, Marie Lakin has enjoyed an active role in civic life. With a Bachelor's degree in journalism and graphic design, Marie works as a graphic designer and editor for the public relations firm of Whisenhurst Communications. She also serves on the board of San Buenaventura Heritage, which oversees Ventura's historic Dudley House as well as the boards of the Grant Park Conservancy, Ventura Education Partnership and Save Our Schools.



Mark Hartley

Mark Hartley, principle of the Fitzgerald Hartley management firm based in both downtown Ventura and Nashville, has been in the music industry for over 35 years. Among his firm's roster are LeAnn Rimes, Vince Gill, The Robert Cray Band, Dwight Yoakum, and Toto. Mark also serves on the board of the Academy of Country Music and is also a board member of Downtown Ventura organization, working with the community towards the continued revitalization and development of the Downtown Cultural District.

Insights

Interviews with Cultural Affairs Coordinator Michelle Godoy encourage a creative exchange of ideas, processes and artistic thought through glimpses of people involved in a variety of artistic disciplines.



Pam Cohen

Dancer, choreographer, teacher

MG: What was your first creative project?
PC: Forming Slippers n' Masks Youth Dance Theatre through City of Ventura's Cultural Arts – the program is now in its 26th year!

MG: The latest CD you bought is?
PC: *Alice in Wonderland* soundtrack – I'm always preparing for the next show!

MG: What inspires you?
PC: I am inspired daily by the gleam in children's eyes as they prance about the floor leaping and twirling to their favorite music.

MG: If you could choose any career, other than your current one, what would it be?
PC: I would have become a child psychologist, however, I sometimes feel I am currently doing that as well.

MG: If you could own any artwork, which one would you chose?
PC: A Degas painting or sculpture.

MG: Your favorite artist is...?
PC: Mikhail Baryshnikov, he's a true master who continues to challenge himself and the world of dance with new and ever evolving, creative works of art. He never seems to slow down.

MG: How do you define art?
PC: The expression of self.

MG: What are your immediate and long-range goals?
PC: To continue teaching the children of Ventura County to express themselves through dance, have a respect for the arts, and make the arts a part of their lives forever.



Cherie Brant

Author, VCMH&A docent,
FOTM board member

MG: What was your first creative project? Moment?

CB: I remember sculpting in grammar school and the excitement of having my pieces fired.

MG: How would you describe your role in Ventura's historical and cultural scene?

CB: I hope to increase awareness and appreciation for the special qualities found here by publicizing stories about the history of Ventura's people and places.

MG: What was the last book you read? Currently reading?

CB: *The Third Chimpanzee* by Jared Diamond. Getting ready to read *The World is Flat* by Thomas Friedman.

MG: What first triggered your interest in history?

CB: Probably from growing up in a small town in Michigan that was established in the 1830s. It is filled with buildings and homes from many different architectural periods and includes events like being on the route of the underground railroad.

MG: If you could choose any career, other than your current one, what would it be?

CB: Can't think of anything more fun than being a writer.

MG: If you could own any artwork, which one would you choose?

CB: I would enjoy owning artwork created by many of our local talented artists. My volunteer work with Focus on the Masters has opened my eyes to the robust art scene in Ventura County.

MG: How do you define art?

CB: Well, whenever a government entity or municipality places an art piece in a public place, we find out art is in the eye of the beholder.

MG: Proudest personal achievement?

CB: My latest is finishing my new book, *Keys to the County: Touring Historic Ventura County*.

MG: What is your goal next year? 5 years?

CB: To keep writing and volunteering in the community.

Public Art Update

Tortilla Flats

A beloved community mural is close to returning to the public eye! *Tortilla Flats* commemorates a neighborhood razed during the construction of the 101 freeway, so it is only poetic justice that a permanent version of this public artwork will be installed in an underpass of that same freeway at Figueroa Street.



In 1995 artists Moses Mora and MB Hanrahan coordinated a community art project. Using oral histories, vintage images and interviews, they captured in vignettes the stories, memories, and lives of the largely Latino families who lived in Tortilla Flats in a large mural consisting of 6' high wood panels over 510' feet in length. After five years of environmental wear and tear the mural's individual panels were taken down and dis-

seminated to the community, after a grass roots committee was unable to raise sufficient funds to restore the heavily weathered artwork.

Flash forward to 2002. The City of Ventura Public Art Program selected this same artist team to reinterpret their very successful temporary community art project as the permanent public artwork component of the Figueroa Street Improvements Project, fulfilling the expressed desire of the community to save the Tortilla Flats Mural. Working closely with City engineers the artists developed a series of four large frameworks to hold the painted panels and ceramic tiles that portray over seventy historic neighborhood photographs. The project is scheduled for completion near the end of 2006 and a street festival will be held as part of the dedication ceremony.

As is with all great projects, this one continues to evolve with the artists' partnership with the Ventura County Arts Council, which has become the fiscal receiver for the Tortilla Flats Archival Project, whose aim is to preserve the legacy of Tortilla Flats – all the stories and lives of the people who lived in the early to mid-20th century in Westside Ventura neighborhoods whose heart was Tortilla Flats. Those wishing to donate to the archive project may send checks made payable to Ventura County Arts Council and write "Tortilla Flats" under memo. Mail to P.O. Box 2641, Ventura, CA 93002. To donate by credit card you may call (805) 658-2213. For more info: e-mail tortillaflatsvc@hotmail.com or contact Denise Sindelar, Public Art Supervisor at dsindelar@ci.ventura.ca.us.

The Wave

Delighted Pierpont Community neighbors met on July 8 to celebrate new improvements to Marina Park, located at Pierpont Boulevard and Greenock Lane, with an unveiling of a new glass mosaic at the park entrance. The City's Senior Civil Engineering Tech Bernie Heck-enlively designed the beautiful artwork as a watercolor; artist Larissa Strauss re-created it in glass mosaic.



The designer has named the 26-foot-long concrete signage wall that, varies in height from four to six feet, *The Wave*. It is "textured to indicate the sand that greets the surf" and invites the viewer to "ride the swells." A marine scene in glass mosaic depicts two pelicans, inspired by Dixon Merrith's "Pelican Poem," which the designer fondly recalls "Dad recited to me as a child, just as my grandfather used to recite it to him". The artwork celebrates "the pelicans' presence on this planet for 40 million years, their magnificent wingspans that can reach 6 feet, and that our pelicans, *Pelicanus Occidentalis*, came back from the brink of extinction after the clean up of poisons in our environment."

"Each piece of the glass mosaic is individually cut into the shape I want," said Larissa Strauss about her first public artwork "and comprises thousands and thousands of pieces" over the artwork's 100 square-foot dimensions. "The largest piece is perhaps 2 x 2 inches and the smallest are mere shreds or slivers of color." The artist, largely self-taught, has been working in the stained glass medium for over six years and has her studio at the Bell Arts Factory. Her work, exhibited in a sold out show at Fox Fine Jewelry in January, is popularly collected throughout Ventura County.

Making Lemonade

Thille Park – the City of Ventura's newest neighborhood recreation site at Saratoga Avenue and Thille Street – opened with a free "family affair" celebration on Saturday, July 15, with old-fashioned-picnic games, prizes, entertainment, and special guest, Nancy Mooslin, creator of the park's kinetic sculpture *Making Lemonade*.



Greystone Homes designed, constructed and dedicated this five-acre park in accordance with an approved development agreement with the City of Ventura. The site, formerly lemon orchards, is now bordered on all sides by new residential housing. Featuring two playground areas, a full basketball court, a gazebo, landscaped paths and other amenities, Thille Park is now ready to serve as a major recreational site for residents in the neighborhood.

The City of Ventura Public Art Program commissioned, through a competitive process, art work documenting Ventura's cultural resources and the site's agricultural history. The resulting sculpture, entitled *Making Lemonade*, located near the playground area, is an 18' painted steel wind-driven kinetic sculpture designed to turn a full 360 degrees on a central axis. The top six feet, comprised of a series of interactive parts, was designed to move in a way distinctive to weathervanes in that the individual parts move independently in the wind, ensuring an almost always highly interactive work of art.

The title *Making Lemonade* is a whimsical reference to the old adage "when life gives you lemons, make lemonade." Situated in what was formerly a lemon grove, this work, artist Nancy Mooslin says, expresses the optimistic view that although the city may have lost a lemon orchard, it gains a community recreation site that will provide enjoyment for years to come.

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Westside Stories

Westside's newest artwork, created by Helle Schlarling-Todd, was finally dedicated on August 4 at its Park Row and Ventura Avenue location. The world-famous mosaic and glasswork artist worked for five years to create artwork enhancements at twin sites – the other is located at the intersection of Stanley Avenue and the Ventura River Trail. The new works are designed to complement the urban development goals of the Westside Improvement Project – to reinforce the unique historic, cultural and geographic qualities that give the Westside neighborhood its distinctive character.

The works serve as twin gateway markers for the Westside neighborhood, that through the images depicted, honor the past economic and cultural contributions of this cherished historic district. For *Westside Stories* Scharling-Todd designed nine-foot triangular galvanized steel pillars that support decorative panels of tile and Italian glass mosaics as well as patterned intersections and crosswalks. The gateways incorporate symbols of Ventura's historic peoples through geometric patterns evocative of Native American and Latin American textile and basketry weavings and architecture. Citrus and



oil imagery recall the neighborhood's economic and cultural past. The project was funded through the CIP 2% for public art program. Check out more of Ventura's Public Art Program at 658-4793 or cityofventura.net.

Arts Explosion

year-end blowout!

Arts Explosion – now in its third year of presenting free family friendly arts encounters by talented local artists and arts organizations to a public of all ages in the Downtown Cultural District – continues with a rush of exciting year-end events sponsored by local businesses and presented by the San Buenaventura Foundation for the Arts in partnership with the City of Ventura Cultural Affairs Division.

“Fire & Light Festival”

It's art all day, dance all night at this third annual tour de force by our city's most creative visual and performing artists, featuring gallery exhibits, live music and a performance by Danza Azteca Cuahutemoc before the spectacular after-sunset



sound and light show of the fire dancers by the sea! This event is presented on the same weekend as the annual Aloha Festival at the California Street Promenade and Beach in Ventura. Saturday, September 16, 12-8 pm (Free) presented by San Buenaventura Artists' Union and sponsored by Fred Evans Team RE/MAX Gold Coast Realtors.

“Order in the Court”

There's no chance of order - not in the legal sense – in this former courtroom as Ventura College's best opera, theater and music students mount a “defense” of Gilbert & Sullivan's first musical collaboration, *Trial by Jury*. This delightfully zany one-act comedy about a woman spurned in marriage, her unfaithful paramour, and the colorful judge who takes sympathy on her takes place in City Council Chambers of City Hall of Ventura, once the county's superior court on Saturday, September 23, 1pm & 3pm (Free), during the new Erle Stanley Gardner Mystery Festival, presented by Ventura College Opera & Musical Theatre with Ventura College singers, and sponsored by the Meister Family Foundation.

“Best of High School Art”

Check out the cutting edge of today's art as Ventura, Buena and Foothill High School students display their best works in all mediums for a special critique by a well-known professional master at the Bell Arts Factory, 432 North Ventura Avenue in Ventura on Saturday, October 14, noon (Free), presented by San Buenaventura Foundation for the Arts, and sponsored by Santa Barbara Bank & Trust.

“Coffeehouse Concert for Kids”



Get coffee-klatch cozy and casual with Camerata musicians who perform pieces, ask for your questions and invite young audience members to make some noise as they play along at Celtic Carma at The Livery, 34 North Palm

Street in Ventura on Sunday, November 5, 6pm (Free), Presented by Camerata Pacifica and sponsored by UBS Financial Services.

“Peter and the Wolf”

Artistic Director Nuvi Mehta is sure to captivate young music lovers with his “show and tell” on “What is Rhythm?” before 17 orchestra members join him for Prokofiev's perennial classic, which introduces musical

instruments and the sound of the orchestra to children. This tale of a boy and his animal friends who capture a wolf will feature a special guest narrator and is sure to delight the entire family at the Serra Center, San Buenaventura Mission, 211 East Main Street in Ventura on Saturday, December 9, 2 pm (Free), presented by The Ventura Music Festival and sponsored by Mainstreet Architects + Planners, Inc.

For more details on Arts Explosion events and prize drawings, and a complete calendar of community cultural events, visit www.venturaarts.org or call 805-653-6100.

Art Mixers spell pARTty!

Mix different art-loving people together, add great appetizers and conversations and shake it up at a different restaurant every month – and you've got the recipe for the City of Ventura Cultural Affairs Division's new monthly social hour called “Art Mixers” on first Wednesdays, 6-7:30 pm.

“It's for artists, arts supporters and art groups – and, in fact, everyone interested in the arts,” said organizer and ArtWalks coordinator Robin Elander. “It's about meeting interesting people involved in the arts who want to have fun together!”



“The Mixers' primary directive is to help everyone who has a stake in the arts to expand their social and business circle in this

relaxed networking environment,” Elander continued. “Bring promotional materials about your events to place at our welcome table. But, most of all, just bring yourself – there's no (boring) formal program! Enjoy this rare social hour with old friends, meet people you may know by phone or email but don't get to see outside work and even make brand new contacts.”

Other goals of the Art Mixers are to unwind and recharge creative juices; find out about upcoming events and programs; collaborate with other artists and groups in new and exciting ways; and get to know City of Ventura Cultural Affairs Division staff and how to participate in city programs, events and grants. The next two Art Mixers are on September 6 at Table 13, 185 E. Santa Clara St.; and October 4, Landmark 78, 211 E Santa Clara St, with more to follow.

Eye on Education Arts Showcase

Are you an artist, performer or arts organization with proven educational programs? Are you currently teaching in the schools or have you wanted to make your programs available but don't know how to get through to the decision makers at the school district level? Your solution is here! It's the Arts Showcase – on Wednesday September 27, from 2 to 6 pm at the Ventura Unified School District Education Center (the old Kinko's site) at 255 West Stanley Avenue.

Presented by the Ventura Education Partnership Art Collaborative (VEPAC) the Showcase is an opportunity for arts organizations, individual artists and performers of all disciplines to present a sampling of their programs to educators, administrators, parent groups and potential funders.

The Showcase stage will host mini-performances throughout the afternoon and canopied booths on the premises will offer your exhibits and hands-on activities to promote bringing arts back into the classroom. The Arts Showcase is an important step in encouraging artists and educators to mingle and dialogue with each

other about inviting the arts back into in the core curriculum. For more information about this extraordinary first-time event contact VEPAC member Betsy Chess at 643-0110.

Creating the Connections

Gwendolyn Alley & Michelle Chapin

Creating the Connections is an occasional series on the arts community connecting with the broader community “outside the box” of traditional programs.

This summer poet Gwendolyn Alley offered a free six-week “creativity workshop” for over two dozen at-risk-girls (mostly ages 12-14) culminating in an ARTLIFE-style publication and art exhibit at the Artbarn during the Summer ArtWalk.

“We're using writing and art to produce deeper reflections about who we are and who we want to be – providing a safe place to learn how to do writing practice and channel creativity into positive ends,” said Alley. “We are pleased with how the program has gone; the girls are enjoying what we're doing, and have opened up as the weeks have progressed. We will do it again in the fall starting the last Thursday in September to early November; we are working with a counselor at Carbrillo to target the girls who might be helped most.”

This Cultural Funding Program Art Fellow, Ventura College English professor and cultural activist who organizes the monthly Spoken Word Salon at Zoey's and produced this spring's “The 3:15 [experiment] Fiesta” created the project in partnership with Melissa Pereida of Ojai, Lynne Okun of Kids' Arts, a \$500 grant from Soroptimists of Camarillo and a \$300 grant from Poets & Writers.

This spring sculptor Michele Chapin, owner of Stone-works Studios, worked with the City of Ventura Community Development Department to design and implement the Saticoy Wells Art Outreach Project for Youth. She worked with fifth grade students of teachers Debbie Tygel and Alex Wulff to map out the best and worst aspects of their community in words and images as part of the civic engagement process to express their wishes for changes and improvements to be made as part of a new Saticoy Wells Community Plan.



“Students Casey Sturgeon & Cody Hays” photo by Shaf

The students used disposable cameras donated by Target to generate 648 images, and Longs Drugstore donated their development as digital images in CD format. Image Source donated the printing and mounting of photos selected for the exhibition. After viewing them the students created commentaries to accompany their photographs.



“basketball hoop” photo by student Andrew G.

“These are powerful images that sometimes focus on the simplest things – all from the view of community residents we often overlook – our youth,” said Chapin. “The photographs capture the charm, beauty, mystery and controversy of the Saticoy-Wells neighborhood. I thank the city, artists, school and local businesses for their support that allowed these students to express their wishes for the future of their community.”

Peek Behind the Curtain at Future Thespians

by Kathryn Dippong Lawson

Young boys with paint smeared clothes laughed and joked with each other during an improv game of Bus Stop. Several young ladies in long skirts and jazz shoes stretched languidly on the floor in the basement of a neighboring church, while they chatted on their cell phones. A pianist – also the male lead – tinkered with transposing a song. In the background, two brothers – they looked like they might be more comfortable on a basketball court – worked on some stage business. And it was only a lunch break!

I'd just spent an amazing afternoon at the Rubicon Theatre's Summer Musical Theatre Camp taking a peek behind the curtain of its production of *Bye, Bye, Birdie*. The camp offered children ages 10-18 the opportunity to work in our city's professional theatre with award-winning directors, designers, choreographers and musicians, AND, the show on stage and the work behind the scenes was going to be ALL THEIRS.

"These kids are a pretty unusual group," choreographer Stefoni Burgi commented. "They give up spending the summer at the beach or the pool to rehearse every day, including Saturdays from 10 to 5." It must take one to know one, because she teaches theatre for nine months at Ventura High School, and then spends her summers brilliantly choreographing musical theatre.

Production manager Christina Burck and her assistant technical director Alexis Miles guided eight boys and one shy young lady down the street to the Church of Religious Science basement to observe the actors' first run-through of their contributions as technical theatre camp participants. The students were excited and proud of their work, anxious to see how the actors would receive it. Both women directors were radiant and joking as they trudged down the street obviously pleased to be working with this gangly group of theatre "techies."

Director, producer, actor, graphic artist, and essentially jack-of-all-trades Brian McDonald loves his job, you can tell, as he grinned – his dark eyes twinkled with glee- and watched an actor try a new approach to a line. He has been directing the Rubicon's fee-based summer program for five years and every year the kids surprise and delight him with their sincere desire to be immersed in theatre. The first year the Rubicon program had only 16 kids, but it must now turn some kids away through an intensive audition process.

A new addition in this its fifth year has been an acting program for intermediate and advanced actors who wanted to focus more on the craft of acting. The production *Our Town* gave actors an opportunity to work

with dialects and script analysis to further hone their skills. Brian sees the program at the Rubicon only expanding from here. "There are other opportunities for children to explore theater in Ventura. The City offers innovative classes and camp through The Cultural Affairs Division. There are many community theatres. Kids may even have a program at their school. But this is where we want them to come when they are ready for the commitment of more intensive study."

As for the kids, they have come from all over Ventura County, about a third of them have been here before, but I couldn't tell you which ones were first timers. They were eager, almost giddy, as they stepped onto the taped-out stage for the show's opening number. All were watching with rapt attention, engrossed, focused as the scenes shift and moved through the rehearsal. They were serious, silly, fearless, innocent and completely willing to step out of their comfort zone for the authenticity of the show. McDonald and his team have created a nurturing environment for personal growth, an essential element to any performance venue.

As for myself, I tip my hat to the young actor who ran tech in one show and

took the lead in *Our Town*; and to the boy who embraced the role of "Conrad Birdie," even though he had never set foot on a stage before; and to the dozens of youthful faces willing to give up one of the sunniest summers in history only to be warmed by the spotlight and cheered by the applause.

If you are interested in the Rubicon Theatre's youth acting programs during the year, visit www.rubicontheatre.org.

Discover what makes VENTURA Scream

It's that "spook-tacular" time of year for the irresistibly scary October and November "nocTOURnaLS" of world-famous ghost buster and historian Richard Senate! Teens and adults enroll to take a walk on (or bus to) the wild side of haunts like the old hospital, Courthouse, city adobes and downtown buildings to witness possible "spirit captures" with their cameras and hear chilling details about our city's weird and mysterious history from a master storyteller about padres, pioneers and even a postman, who still delivers in his stovepipe hat!



Not noire enough for you? Discover Ventura tours also delve into the places and cases of Erle Stanely Gardner – our city is celebrating our most famous lawyer who authored innumerable Perry Mason novels with a new festival in September; another tour trails the crime and trial scenes of infamous killer Ma Duncan.

If you'd rather explore Ventura's more healing arts, there are wonderful spa tours, and art treks to our upscale galleries and the new Bell Arts Factory of artist studios (once upon a time a mattress plant), plus pilgrimages to downtown's fabulous new culinary hot spots for wine and food.

We cater to history and heritage architecture buffs, too, with walks and bus tours to our rich trove of landmarks, architectural districts, Old Mission, gardens and even City Hall, full of masterpieces from the Municipal Art Collection

You'll travel around the city by foot, bus or bicycle with entertaining and knowledgeable guides. For more information, please call 805.658.4726 or register for tours under eRecreation at www.cityofventura.net. Tickets are also available daily through the Ventura Visitors and Convention Bureau at 805.648.2150. Special Group Tours may be booked with a minimum of 12 participants and two weeks notice.

A Conspiracy of the Arts

Erle Stanley Gardner Mystery Festival

Whodunit? It's going to take you more than a week-end-long investigation through many "crime scenes" to find out the answers these questions:

"Who got framed?" (Hint: probably a painter did it). Who gets shot in the "Slaughter on Tenth Avenue"? (Whether you guess dance hall girl or mobster, the criminally good performance is a showstopper.) And who is "Always Winning Cases"? (Hint: think, or rather drink, wine.)

"A Conspiracy of the Arts" is going on in Ventura as dancers, poets, painters, thespians, even opera singers, magicians and oenologists, prepare for the "Erle Stanley Gardner Mystery Festival" on September 21-24. It's the first official celebration of our city's most famous lawyer and author of the Perry Mason detective series.

Gardner practiced law in Ventura in the twenties and thirties at the Old Courthouse (now City Hall) from his law offices (still preserved a block away).

On the second floor of the First National Bank building, Gardner, writing off the record, created his fictional hero, detective and defense attorney, Perry Mason.



To celebrate Perry's birthplace, many artists, arts organizations and businesses are hosting mystery-themed events throughout the Ventura Downtown Cultural District and at Ventura Harbor, the Olivas Adobe and Ventura College.

Festival sleuths can pick up their first clues "on the case of" the mystery festival at many sites.

The Ventura County Museum of History and Art (100 E Main St) will display first editions of Perry Mason novels with illustrated covers, and author memora-

abilia, such as vintage photographs, correspondence, even Gardner's office clock and phone, plus a complete bibliography of his oeuvre for further investigation and research (hours: 10 am to 5 pm, Tuesday through Sunday, exhibit included in \$4 admission to the museum).

The San Buenaventura Artists' Union Gallery (330 South California Street) will "close the case" on its month-long exhibit of "BookArt," featuring multiple art pieces using any book format in a range of sizes, media and subjects, during the festival weekend (hours: Wednesday to Saturday 12 to 6 pm, Sunday noon to 5 pm, free). The AUG will also be the site of two spoken word performances. Local writers will be "Speaking of Mysteries" during a free open reading of original poems and brief prose pieces on a mystery theme on Thursday at 7:30 pm. On Saturday spend "An Evening with Suzanne Lummis," a scion of the historic Southern California Lummis family, who will present "an evening of spoken word and noir poetry" at 7:30 pm (\$5 admission).

Every afternoon (Thursday to Sunday, 1-5 pm, with an early opening at 11 am on Saturday) festival goes 21 years and up can find out who is "Always Winning Cases" in the La Playa Room of the Marriott Hotel (2055 East Harbor Boulevard) as the Raymond Burr Vineyard presents a complimentary wine tasting and the opportunity to meet Robert Benevides, Burr's partner and colleague of 35 years. The vineyard is named after the late actor who starred in the long-running Perry Mason TV series. And meet actress Barbara Hale who portrayed Perry's assistant Della Street on the series on Saturday from 3 to 5 pm!

A free book signing and reading by Susan Kandel, author of *I Dreamed I Married Perry Mason*, will be held near the lawyer's original offices at The Main California Artist, 494 E. Main St., on Sunday from noon to 2 pm.

As part of extended "The Olivas Adobe in the 1930s" exhibit, costumed docents will offer site tours of Ventura's California Rancho as it looked during the Gardner years when yeast king Max Fleischmann used it as his Duck Club for hunters, complete with classic cars on the grounds (Su 11 am-3 pm) Admission: \$5/adult). The adobe, located at 4200 Olivas Park Drive, also hosts a free 2 pm Sunday talk and book signing by historian Richard Senate, author of *Erle Stanley Gardner's Ventura*.

Spend "An Evening with Perry Mason" on Thursday at 7 pm at the Ventura College Library (4667 Telegraph Rd) with a panel examining the life of Erle Stanley Gardner in Ventura and various perspectives on his work, including an interactive discussion of one of his novels. The event is free and offers refreshments. The College is also mounting a weeklong exhibit of Gardner memorabilia in the library.

Ventura College Theatre will expose audiences to "The Case of the Irate Witness," adapted from Gardner's novel by Howard Leader as part of its student one-act play festival on Friday and Saturday at 8 pm and Sunday at 3 pm with a repeat weekend September 29 and 30 and October 1. Admission is \$7/adults and \$5/students, staff and seniors.

There's no chance for "Order in the Court" which is what Ventura College Opera & Musical Theatre is calling their production of Gilbert & Sullivan's *Trial by Jury*, presented by the San Buenaventura Foundations for



the Arts as part of the free annual Arts Explosion series. The performance of this witty, tuneful operetta takes place in City Council Chambers of City Hall of Ventura, once the county's Superior Court where Gardner presented legal cases on Saturday at 1 & 3pm.

Thursday night at 8 pm magician James Kasmir and actress Katherine Boring offer an intimate interactive "theatrical séance" performance in "The Court of Last Resort" – in Ventura City Hall's Santa Cruz Room (501 Poli St), which was formerly the county's Night Court. The séance will be repeated on Friday and Saturday from 6 to 7 pm. (tickets \$20 at the door).

Friday and Saturday at 7 pm, and Sunday at 2 pm, the Ventura County Ballet Company will perform in the City Hall Atrium (501 Poli), where paddy wagons used to disgorge the county's criminals to their jail cells. "Slaughter on 10th Avenue" – the fully costumed short ballet from the Rodgers and Hart musical *On Your Toes* features a Broadway parody of Russian ballet as hooper and gangster vie for the love of the dance hall girl and mobsters watch (and take aim) from their box seats (\$5 for ages 10 and up).

The first annual Plaza Park Arts & Craft Book Fair will be Gardner-themed on Saturday, September 23, from 10 am to 4 pm, at Plaza Park, corner of Santa Clara and Chestnut Street. Artists, non-profits and book vendors will turn Ventura's classic downtown park into a literary dream for all, play area for children, Classic Car Show and Mike Garibaldi Frick's *Big Book Installation*.

Plaza Park's central Gazebo will feature music and entertainment from Gardner's era of the 20s and 30s. Ines Monguio – the award-winning artist and curator of the San Buenaventura Artist Union's "BookArt" exhibit – will offer two free one-hour bookmaking workshops for children at 11 am and 12:30 pm.

OK, just "Who Got Framed?" It will cost you (\$50 per person), but you may get to take home a framed piece of pricey art if you guess right during this special Saturday soiree (6-9 pm) of wine, light food and lavish exhibit of Ventura County's many artists at the Buenaventura Harbor Village Gallery (1591 Spinnaker Drive, Suite 117C). But here's the "catch": amongst the gallery of uncovered artwork is a veiled masterpiece with only a small square "eye hole" to peek through. A

few clues about its maker will also be provided. If you guess the artist correctly, you then qualify for a drawing to take home this very valuable piece of art for "half a C note."

Two tours (each offered twice) by Gardner expert and author Richard Senate will cover in two hours many aspects of Gardner's life and works. During the "Erle Stanley Gardner Tour" visit the courtroom and sites where the mystery writer tried cases, worked and lived. Senate will link the author and his fictional creation Perry Mason to real moments in history on Friday at 6 pm and Saturday at 3:30 pm. "In the Steps of Perry Mason" Senate asks the question, did Gardner fashion high-minded Perry after himself? He discusses how the author created his hero and how Ventura looked during the writer's lifetime on Saturday at 1 pm and Sunday at 10 am. All tours are \$15 and meet at the City Hall front steps. To register for tours call 658-4726 or click eRecreation at cityofventura.net.

The Erle Stanley Gardner Ventura Mystery Festival offers a labyrinth of experiences to investigate, many free to the public. For further clues on venues and fees and special hotel packages visit the official website, www.venturamysteryfestival.com or call 805.654.7830.



Erle Stanley Gardner

Celebrate Fall Festival Style!



Photo by Robyn Malter

It's an "Imagination Celebration for Kids" as the Barranca Vista Center's beloved Fall Festival moves to the Main Street mini-park between Oak and Palm Streets during Harvest ArtWalk in the Downtown Cultural District on November 4 between 1 and 4 pm. The festival provides a way for Barranca Vista teachers and students to show off their achievements as well as invite the public to view upcoming classes through a visual and performing arts showcase and lots of hands-on arts activities for all ages.

Performances by Pam Cohen's dance students, Bobbi Monroe's Polynesian dancers and Jackie Ringhof's line dances are just a few of the performances to be highlighted. Christina Houlberg, Larry Scott, Susan Kaufman and Young Rembrandts will provide hands-on arts activities for all ages. Other highlights will include aikido demos, body hoops, drumming and so much more. This is a great way to draw attention to classes already going on and to give the public a chance to preview the new winter programs.

Harvest ArtWalk

Featured Artist Lisa Skyheart Marshall

The public will have the opportunity to meet Harvest ArtWalk 2006 Featured Artist Lisa Skyheart Marshall and view her paintings at Le Monde Emporium, 542 E. Main St., in downtown Ventura on Saturday, November 4 between 1-9 pm. Skyheart, whose whimsical acrylic titled "Lumpy" is ArtWalk's featured painting, the nineteenth "Featured Artist" since the City of Ventura Cultural Affairs Division began using original artwork by area artists, selected by their peers, to promote the city's tri-annual ArtWalks on its posters, postcards, guides and other publicity materials. Lisa will sign posters of her featured artwork from 3 to 5 pm during the event.



Lisa Skyheart Marshall's colorful little paintings are inhabited by quirky people and small animals and birds. Inspired by the human experience, Lisa has been known to daydream and eavesdrop. "We are all weird in our

own way," she says. Lisa often adds small bits of original prose to her work, such as stories, which are often witty, and at other times a subtle comment on current events. Flowers are also a favorite subject, especially nasturtiums, as well as insects and lizards. Lisa works in acrylic, sometimes adding colored pencil, and prefers to work in a small size format, usually painting on the frames. Lisa has been a resident of Ojai since the age of one. She paints at her home studio full time and is represented by the Orovoros Gallery, East Matilija, Suite 112, in Ojai. She is a member of the Buenaventura Art Association, Studio Channel Islands Art Center, and the Ojai Art Center. Her work can also be seen on www.ourovoros.com.



During Harvest ArtWalk over 150 Southern California artists exhibit work at more than 70 downtown locations plus 20 performances and a free shuttle. This self-guided walking tour brings together area artists, studios, galleries, downtown merchants and visitors of all ages in a celebration of visual art. For more information on the ArtWalk go to www.venturartwalk.org.



Holiday Street Festival of DeLights

Purchase unique handcrafted gifts, enjoy holiday music and food and catch up with friends during the City of Ventura's 30th annual "Holiday Street Festival" on Sunday, December 3 from 10 AM to 4 PM in the Downtown Cultural District. Stretching nine blocks along downtown's Main Street from Fir Street to Ventura Avenue, the fair – whose theme this year is "Festival of DeLights" – hosts approximately 300 participating artisans and fine artists, entertainment on six stages, over 40 booths offering an assortment of foods, and activities for all ages throughout the day. Community groups interested in performing on the California & Santa Clara Street Stage should contact the festival office at 654.7830 by October 1.

The blazing jorocho trio El Son del Pueblo – which has toured the West Coast from San Diego to Portland – plays traditional and evolving music from Veracruz, Mexico at the Food Court Stage. Local fav "Deep C" will groove the crowds at the Fir & Main Street Stage, and, for those who enjoy the music of South America, Duchicela – the July 4th Street Fair's crowd favorite – makes a return engagement from 10 am to 4 pm at the Mini Park on Main Street. Benise, a band with a big national and local following, returns to the Oak & Main Street Stage from 10 AM to 4 PM. Band leader and composer Roni Benise, who taught

himself Spanish guitar at age 11, creates unique Flamenco flavored sound-scapes inspired by his worldwide travels. Benise CDs and DVDs make wonderful holiday gifts.

Kids' attractions include Buckaroo Pony Rides, Train Rides, Mobile Rock USA and jolly jumps at Mission Park. The Ventura County Museum of History and Art is open free to the public during the Holiday Street Festival. Holy Cross School will be holding its fundraiser on the campus grounds.

Over 300 participating crafters and fine artists make for wonderful shopping at the Holiday Street Festival offering exquisite jewelry, woodworks and metal art – even one of a kind handbags made from laminated newspaper! More than 40 food vendors will offer delectable fare from casual California to world exotic – ranging from Kettle Korn and hot dogs to turkey legs and gyros. Admission is free to the event presented by the City of Ventura Cultural Affairs Division and many business sponsors. For further information visit the street fair website at www.venturastreetfair.com or call (805) 654-7830.



New Cultural Classes for the Year End

New fall and holiday arts classes with a family focus plus some old favorites with a twist are being offered at the Barranca Vista Center, 7050 Ralston, in Ventura. Ceramics instructors Michelle Nonles and Michele Foster, both successful working artists, are planning richly varied courses for all ages, including "Kids Clay" and "Adult Hand Built Ceramics." Foster's ceramics classes will be held in her studio at the Bell Arts Factory (432 North Ventura Ave). Or take an "Angels for the Holidays" class taught by a real angel! Instructor Angel Jones will teach students in how to make wings, halos and other angel accessories, perfect to dress up your child – or yourself – for those special holiday costume performances.

There are also plenty of other inexpensive holiday gift-making classes to inspire new decoration ideas or promote family closeness as kids and parents explore imagination, global thinking and creative ways together. Jef Richardson will help you separate health fact from fiction in his "Health Fitness & Nutrition" workshops. Enroll for or check out all of these classes by clicking eRecreation at www.cityofventura.net or looking through our new community magazine My Ventura that was mailed to your home in August. Registration is open now.

