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Art can bring communities together

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Editor, the Advocate:

I recently attended Art Advocacy Day 2017 in Austin because I wanted to learn how to effectively communicate the following for our newly formed nonprofit, Hallet Oak Gallery:

- A nonprofit has a unique motivation, which is to support both the artist and the community.

- Although our nonprofit does receive some support, expenses are still incurred in building maintenance and event hosting, so nominal fees must be charged for some events.

- Ongoing marketing is necessary to support the artists' continuing with their work.

At the Art for Advocacy Day, after much briefing from the Texans for the Arts Foundation who hosted the event, I met with Sydney Watts, legislative director. She kindly mentioned that she loved Hallettsville.

Next, I stopped in at Senator Lois Kolkhorst's office and visited with communications aide Daniel Manks. I explained that Hallet Oak Gallery in Hallettsville was inspiring and exercising minds! I touched on the important topic of funding for the arts and explained art can make a difference in people's lives.

I relayed the story of a young girl who won an art contest at the gallery, in which the Texas Society of Architects would judge the entries. Her mother told me the recognition for her artistic talent built up her daughter's self-confidence.

I learned at the conference that supporting the arts in cities brings bountiful rewards, in ways too numerous to count. Benefits include inspiring artists, creating jobs, encouraging continued education, bringing people together from all socioeconomic backgrounds and positively impacting the economics of tourism.

Hallet Oak Gallery is hosting a First Day of Spring Chalk Art Celebration from 2-6 p.m. March 20 with music by Chris Rybak. Schools and families are invited to chalk the parking space in front of Hallet Oak Gallery from 2-6 p.m. Refreshments will be served inside the gallery. Admission is free and open to the public.

At a time when the political climate seems to be so divisive, perhaps art can serve as a bridge, bringing communities together.

Mieko Mahi, founder and executive director of Hallet Oak Gallery, Hallettsville