



Newman's Chamber of Commerce ushered in the holiday season with a host of activities Saturday, including Santa's arrival, the traditional tree-lighting, craft booths, entertainment and much more. A beaming Zoe Munoz was among those sharing Christmas wishes with Santa. The lit Christmas tree, downtown decorations and neon marquee of the West Side Theatre left downtown Newman with a festive holiday feel as the evening drew to a close. See A8 for additional photos.

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Vibrant creative arts program envisioned for schools

NEWMAN - A blueprint to incorporate a coordinated visual and performing arts element into the curriculum at all grade levels - while providing the teacher training and facilities needed to support an ambitious creative arts program over the long haul - will be presented to the school board Monday.

Members of the committee which put together the plan envision the day when every student has the opportunity to participate in a performing, visual or graphic arts program of their choice and to showcase the local talent

which takes many different forms.

"You ask any educator or parent, and they will tell you that it is imperative that we allow the creative arts to be a part of our schools," explained Jeri Hamera, the district's director of curriculum.

The creative arts are a natural in a community which takes justifiable pride in its strong heritage of theatre arts, she reflected.

A vibrant visual and performing arts program could encompass numerous disciplines - from dance to music to drama - can enrich

students' experience while exposing them to creative new opportunities, Hamera reflected.

That's not to say that the district is devoid of fine arts currently, she stressed.

From a strong visual arts program at the high school and middle school to a solid music program, there are examples of where the Newman-Crows Landing district shines in the art arena.

"There is already a lot going on here," Hamera pointed out.

But there is no coordinated top-to-bottom plan for visu-

al and performing arts, and when a new grant funding program was started last year the district saw an opportunity to create just that.

"We get \$48,000 a year and are now in our second year," Hamera said. "We have not spent money, so we have a good fund to kick things off with.

"We elected to keep the funding at the district level to create a comprehensive visual and performing arts plan," she went on. "Creating the plan was optional, but we

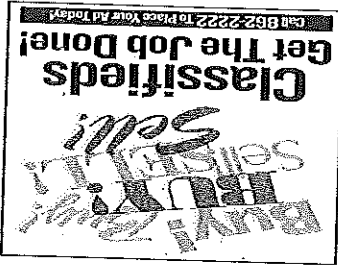
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ents. One challenge, though, is to incorporate the creative arts into school days already packed with state academic standards which teachers must meet.

"We only have six hours a day of instructional time. How do we do this and make it meaningful? The visual and performing arts can't be another thing on top of what they're already doing," Ham-era stressed. "It has to be embedded and support what they are doing in the class-room."

Ultimately, Hamera be-lieves, a strong creative arts program will prove richly beneficial to students.

"Our focus is that every student, every year, will have at least one opportunity to participate in a visual or performing arts program," she said. "It is all about opportunity."

wanted everybody to under-stand how the money was going to be spent and to be able to look at whether it was meeting our goals."

The visual and perform-ing arts plan is designed to create a sustainable program with the necessary support systems in place.

"We need to look at mate-rials, facilities, curriculum and professional develop-ment," Hamera stated. "We took a look at the status of the creative arts in our district, where we were strong and where the holes are. How do we create a music program that leads to more robust numbers at the junior high and more opportunities at the high school level? How do we make it so that students with an aptitude for drawing don't have to wait until high school before they get that oppor-tunity?"

The committee envisions the community and staff teaming up to let their col-lective talents shine, and cel-ebrating the arts with events such as open houses which showcase student art and tal-

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He went on to tell the jury how they will hear how the incident turned almost into a mob situation when the defen-dant and his group began to leave the party and the others started following them. "Not escorting them out but follow-ing out," he contended, with threats and challenges from the party-goers."

Carson contends Basley was frightened and warned the group to "get back" as he was getting into his vehicle. "Basley did not intend to hurt anybody or kill anybody," the attorney stated.

"At the end of the trial the court will instruct you on what is allowable and what is jus-tifiable in shooting," Carson told the jury. He asked them to reserve judgment until both sides have been heard.

"I expect the facts to prove our defense and to find out what really happened that night," he concluded.

Testimony for the prosecu-tion was to continue on Tuesday morning with more witnesses and evidence being introduced. Baker told Mattos Newspapers expects to close his case by Thursday, at which time the defense will begin calling its witnesses.

*Jeri Hamera
Hamera Onclsd. #12, ca. us
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