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Act One, Tucson Mayor Jonathan Rothschild's Great Start Program Combine to Involve More Students in the Arts

Tucson Mayor Jonathan Rothschild, Act One, several arts organizations and three school superintendents came together on Wednesday, January 24, 2018, at the Tucson Museum of Art to announce the combining of the Mayor's Great Start program with Act One, an organization that provides field trips to art and cultural events for K-12 students in Title 1 schools.

In January of last year, Mayor Rothschild launched his Great Start program, which ultimately provided more than 2,100 passes to art and cultural institutions for distribution by Tucson area school districts.

This year, the mayor is joining forces with Act One, which provides schools with free transportation as well as free admission. Act One has capacity to bring more than 7,700 students on educational arts field trips during the 2017-18 school year, ranging from theater, music and dance performances to museum and botanical garden tours.

"Act One has been doing a great job for K-12 students, particularly with funding transportation, which is often a barrier to field trips, especially in Title 1 schools," said Mayor Rothschild. "More Tucsonans need to know about this program. For a small amount of money, we can help give all students access to the arts."

He notes that as a nonprofit organization, Act One funds its work through donations; just \$25 pays for a student to experience a play, a concert or a museum.

Act One has been partnering with Tucson arts organizations and schools for six years and, at the end of this school year, will have brought nearly 35,000 students on arts field trips. Geri Wright, executive director of Act One, notes that at-risk students exposed to the arts are more engaged in class, have increased attendance and are more likely to graduate from high school.

"We believe that a field trip experience to an arts organization can be a life experience, especially for students in Title 1 schools that very often have never left their neighborhoods," Wright said. "The artforms are exceptional, but to these students, it's the whole experience: traveling into the city, the grandeur of the museum or concert hall, dressing up because it's a special day."

Superintendents Dr. Gabriel Trujillo from Tucson Unified School District, Steven Holmes from Sunnyside Unified School District and Todd Jaeger from Flowing Wells Unified School District spoke about the importance of arts experiences for their students.

"... it's the arts that can really have the potential to change the life of the 21st-century learner, because it's the arts that connect both sides of the brain necessary for 21st-century success. The right and the left side, the creative and the logistical," Trujillo said.

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Superintendent Holmes from Sunnyside said that music was an important part of his education as a Sunnyside student.

"I truly believe it was arts education that was actually that bridge for me to get into college and the university and to where I'm at today. So, I'm a big believer in arts education, not only in the classroom but in the experiences," Holmes noted.

Act One works hand in hand with 15 arts organizations to focus on bringing students who otherwise wouldn't be able to go on a field trip, working with the teachers to make sure students are prepared for their field trip and providing tools to use in the classroom to tie the arts experience to their curriculum.

One of those partners is the Tucson Museum of Art, and CEO Jeremy Mikolajczak shared that it was an arts field trip in school that set him on his path in the arts.

"It's often said there's that one piece of art or one performance that changes a person and for me that was Diego Rivera's Detroit Industry mural at the Detroit Institute of Art. It changed my course of my life forever. It was the first time I felt empowerment in a piece of art. Without that school trip as a young child, I don't know where I would be today."

For more information about the Act One field trip program, visit www.act1az.org.

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