

It's ^{all} ~~None~~ of Your Business

Connecting With The Community=Smart Business

We teach in isolation. Students practice in isolation. Connecting a studio (or collegiate chapter or local association) with the community can alleviate isolation. More importantly, it is a smart business choice.

The more parents and potential clients see your studio as an integral part of the community, the more they see your studio as an organization with added value and as a *business* in the community.

Community outreach or engagement is essential marketing. It showcases your studio's presence as a small business. It connects students with local audiences and peers. It enhances our perspective of where we fit as citizens in the greater community. It allows the studio to give back to the community. Additionally, when intimately connected with the community, one is aware of changes in demographics, cultural trends and other socio-economic factors that will ultimately influence studio growth. A business cannot survive in isolation.

Market research shows that the current generation of parents values the *experience* of an activity as much as the outcome. Building memories is as important as learning to play the

piano. Further, millennial parents are more likely than previous generations to patronize businesses that support a cause and will often pay more.

The consumer buying process starts with awareness of a need or problem and, eventually, possible solutions. Consumers rely heavily on information from friends and sources they trust. Being known in the community builds awareness for future referrals. Read about the complete consumer buying process in "Studio Marketing: Creating Value, Meeting Needs" in the December/January 2016/2017 *American Music Teacher*.

Many aspects of marketing and building a brand are based on the idea of a pipeline—the notion that at any given time there are customers in the beginning, middle and final stages of choosing a product or service provider. Therefore, marketing efforts need to be ongoing. Further, there is a well-known principle that a consumer needs to hear and see something several times, in different ways, before making a decision. Community engagement on a regular basis manifests both of these principles through sustained, ongoing interactions with potential clients.

becoming involved in the community. It is often described as a passive activity, such as a performance at a retirement home.

Community engagement is broadly defined as the process of working collaboratively with others in the community. The Indiana Arts Commission (in.gov/arts/) describes community engagement as an "active, two-way relationship in which...both parties experience change. Mutual activity and involvement are keys...it is not activity based, such as in collaboration or marketing to diverse audiences, nor is it solely program-based." Many community engagement activities are jointly planned and implemented with community partners, such as a recital performance at a retirement home that is developed with the seniors to elicit song requests and interactive discussion about the selections.

For purposes of this column, community outreach and community engagement are used interchangeably and refer to *any* type of activity between a studio/collegiate chapter/local association and the community.

There is also a trend, especially in the grant-making world and local government, that recognizes the arts as a means to strengthen communities, create more vibrant cities, or act as a catalyst or convener to address issues of social justice, crime prevention and diversity. Partnerships with social service agencies and local government entities are new avenues for community engagement while increasing arts awareness and visibility.

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Community Outreach Or Community Engagement

In recent years, there has been a trend to distinguish between community outreach and community engagement, especially in grant-making circles and in higher education when defining service-learning requirements.

Community outreach is broadly defined as reaching out to others and

Ways To Connect

There is no shortage of possibilities for a studio or collegiate chapter or local association to interact with the community. Here are some ideas:

- Performance in a public venue, especially in unexpected or informal venues: street performances on keyboard in a downtown shopping area; outdoor park concert; performance at a prison, community center, hospital lobby, museum or art gallery; or faith-based venue.
- Festival or competition, such as a Bach festival for students of any instrument. My collegiate chapter holds an annual "Butler Children's Festival" for ages 7–12 who study any instrument. The free event features an afternoon of music games and activities organized by university students.
- A fundraising or charity-based event, such as a studio team for Relay for Life or donation of music lessons to a silent auction. The MTNA Collegiate Chapter at University of Oklahoma sponsors an ongoing project, Piano Matchmaker, to accept donations

of used pianos, which are then matched to a student in need. The chapter raises funds to pay for the first tuning. As an individual, Heather Smith in Utah initiated a collaborative fundraising project for a new recital venue between an art gallery + local music teachers + private foundations + city/county government. Read more in "Fundraising: Who Cares?" in the December/January 2017/2018 *American Music Teacher*.

- City-based events, such as a studio entry in a local parade or a booth at a city festival that promotes the benefits of arts education.
- Projects with community partners. Project Inspirare, an initiative of the Ohio University Collegiate Chapter, has multiple initiatives that connect college students with the community of Athens, including free monthly concerts, a piano upkeep fund, public school presentations, and "Music at the Movies." (www.projectinspirare.org)
- Participation as a studio or association in the local Chamber of Commerce or civic group events.

- Participation in local advocacy issues, such as school board meetings related to arts in the curriculum.

These are just a few ideas. I'm sure you can add more!

What about funding? While some engagement projects might require more time and planning than funding, others will require seed money or project funds. MTNA has a new grant opportunity—Community Engagement Grants. These grants are available to individuals, local and state affiliates, and collegiate chapters; the next deadline is May 1, 2018. Community Engagement Grants "focus on projects that engage the community in making music, appreciating music or attending live music events." (<https://www.mtnafoundation.org/mtna-grants/community-engagement-grants/>)

Connect with the community. Enhance studio marketing and presence. Increase students' civic awareness and peer interactions. Strengthen the local community. Everyone wins! ■

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