

An Artist for Kari Birdseye

By Vicki Byrum Dennis, October 17, 2018

As an artist and arts advocate, I want to share with my fellow Benicians why I am supporting Kari Birdseye for City Council. In addition to her firm commitment to make Benicia a safer and healthier community while maintaining our small-town charm, I appreciate Kari's strong support for our local arts organizations and artists. Kari is a long-time supporter and patron of local artists, of Arts Benicia's Open Studios weekend, and the many other arts and cultural events hosted annually in Benicia. She understands how important the arts are to our cultural identity. She sees the value of the creative energy to be found in The Arsenal and in other studios and galleries throughout town, and she understands the depth of our artists' dedication and commitment to Benicia. Speaking as an artist, I know that Kari gets it.

But the arts are bigger than the sum of its parts, and Kari knows that too. She understands that the arts have a significant economic impact throughout the nation, California, and here in Benicia. Benicia is known throughout the Bay Area and beyond as a unique artist community, a lovely, walkable waterfront city where one can spend a day or a weekend seeing great art by well-respected artists, many known nationally and internationally, who choose to live, work and showcase their work here. And as a result, people come.

According to a report issued last year by Americans for the Arts, the nonprofit arts and culture sector is a \$4.7 million industry in the City of Benicia, one that supports 149 full-time equivalent jobs and generates \$414,000 in local and state government revenue. In FY 2015, residents and non-residents spent \$1.8 million in Benicia as they attended arts and cultural events and that doesn't count the cost of admission. These dollars were spent in local businesses on things like meals, snacks, gifts, souvenirs, transportation, lodging, and more.

As a candidate, Kari frequently and with passion reminds voters of the importance of the arts to our city. If she is elected, she has pledged to explore even more opportunities for the City to collaborate with and promote our arts community. The arts are good business for Benicia, and Kari recognizes that. I urge you to vote for Kari Birdseye on Nov. 6.

Vicki Byrum Dennis

Benicia