

Arts Gone Wild, An Ode To Joy

“Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness”; the canon of American law is clear that governments have a responsibility to insure these unalienable rights.

Granted by simply being human, these rights cannot be taken away. This concept marched out of Roman law, survived the plague of medieval depredations, was scribed in the tents and tenets of early Islam and is alive and well today. Pretentious as it is however, I would have said the pursuit of joy, not happiness.

Joy eclipses happiness. It is deeper and intricately sewn into the fabric of man’s soul. Joy transcends obtaining desires. Lust, wealth and political office may be desires yet they do not necessarily visit joy. Joy is beyond happiness as happiness is beyond pleasure. It resides in our core, resonating our entire being

Martin Seligman, American psychologist and writer noted that joy is not the “the pleasant life” or “the good life” achieved by enhancing our lives. Joy abides and abounds when we pursue “the meaningful life” born of mobilizing our gifts for purposes greater than ourselves.

The Declaration of Independence tells us that the pursuit of joy is a national goal. Every municipality should expose children to it as well as endlessly educate them in joy’s pursuit; shouldn’t we all?

Can you measure the cost of joy’s pursuit? Paradoxically, joy becomes prohibitively expensive the more you fail to pursue it. Rarest of currencies, its investment returns everlasting interest and when divided among friends it multiplies! Turning John Keats’ immortal phrase, a thing of joy is a beauty forever. The Arts Gone Wild Gala was a thing of joy.

Joy reverberated in the thunderous applause, the angelic soaring of Holly Stell’s and VOENA’s voices and powerful North Bay Opera arias. It pulsed in the jazz rhythms emanating from Dalt Williams and Keith Stout and echoed off Anita Darbonne’ Company D’s dance troupe’s happy feet. It swelled in the harmonic strains of the Suzuki Strings, declared itself in the powerful script of Anthony Finocchiaro and held us rapt in the wise musings by all-things-strings virtuoso, Carlos Reyes. It delighted eyes and ears in the verse and visions under the careful caress of Janet Manalo and Suzanne Bruce and wowed us in the generosity of the Vice Mayor, John Mraz. We reveled in joy’s good humors emanating from Fairfield Civic Theatre’s, “Pirates of Penzance”

Joy misted the gleaming eyes of our Mayor; Harry Price who, as with the City Manager, Sean Quinn, was bubbling like a Little Leaguer wishing the bottom of the ninth would never arrive. Joy shook my heart as graphic artist Paul Fondersmith and photographer Jane Higgins shared how the evening lit a light in their lives. Joy feasted on delectable delights brought by Carole Warren and friends, Klaus Jacobi, the Symphony and Magpies.

Mark Twain said, “ May your walls know joy” On May 22, every wall of the Fairfield Center for the Creative Arts (FCCA) did just that thanks to city leaders, Cadets mentor Officer Christina Golez, Margaret Miller and pageant winners past and present, Darsen Long and his amazing technical team, Oliver and building staff, businesses and wineries, arts impresarios and especially my left and right arms, Mike Wright and my rock, Madame P.

You can invite joy into your life by staging celebrations. So on behalf of citizens young, old and yet to be of Fairfield, I invite us all to press on and build FCCA to be all that it can be.

Have I made the argument that it is our patriotic duty to build upon the recent success of the May 22 Gala, perhaps? Certainly however, we share a duty as citizens and civic leaders alike to heed President Jefferson's timeless notion that we the people must take those steps that ensure our unalienable rights to joy and institute those policies, procedures and politics which facilitate that right.

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