

RTO/ERO reaches out

by Kimberly Brathwaite and Madalina Hubert



DAREarts © Alan Dunlop

DAREarts children learn to dance.

It is a well known fact that helping people in their local communities and abroad is a gift shared by many members of RTO/ERO. Whether it's helping members suffering from Alzheimer's disease, educating children with fewer opportunities or providing a community resource these members find a way to be of service at the grassroots level.

Helping kids with arts education

On Thanksgiving weekend, 'at risk' children and their families had the chance to see high-level cultural artistry by Shen Yun Performing Arts thanks to RTO/ERO members and staff.

Acclaimed for performances of Chinese classical dance and music that convey the beauty and goodness of traditional culture, New York based Shen Yun has enchanted audiences in over 100 cities around the world.

"The kids were just beaming," says Marilyn Field, founder of DAREarts, a Canadian organization that fosters arts education for youth in difficult socioeconomic conditions. It was especially meaningful to have the families accompany the children, explains Field. "It gives them a chance to do something with their children that is so positive and beautiful at the same time."

Shen Yun is returning to Canada in January and several RTO/ERO Districts have taken the lead to help more kids see the show.

“It’s appealing because we’re helping. It’s a service to an outside community and a wellness opportunity for our District members,” says Joanne Weeks, president of District 13, Hamilton-Wentworth-Haldimand.

Mary Durst, First Vice President of District 27, Ottawa sees this as a prototype for future projects to support arts education for children. “The bottom line is to do anything we can do at the local level to support arts education,” says Durst.

“I think it’s a perfect partnership”, concludes Field. “We share a passion for helping children. This partnership is a wonderful way to continue that legacy.”

Relive the Talbots

Margaret Hull, District 41, Elgin started volunteering at the Tyrconnell Heritage Society as a guide. Every spring and summer the heritage society hosts the Relive the Talbot Settlement at the

Backus-Page House Museum for school children and the general public to educate them about the historic Talbot settlement and show them what life was like back then.

Hull and a few other RTO/ERO members who also volunteer, thought it was a great organization for the Project – Service to Others grant.

Part of the money we got went to getting toys that children would have played with at the time,” said Hull.

She explains that they prepare special experiences for kids in grade 3 and 7. The grade 3 students learn about pioneer living, while the grade 7 students focus on the War of 1812.

The staff and guides at the settlement are dressed in period clothing. There are artisans and re-enactors as well that help to set the scene. While the grade 3 students learn how to shear and quill, the grade 7 students interact with the re-enactors. They are taught how to do a militia march and even take part in a battle. “They are attacked and this is the highlight of their day,” laughs Hulls.

She explains that it’s a great project to be involved in. “The feedback has been fantastic,” says Hull. “It’s a terrific resource in our community and I am so excited to share with the children.”



PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE TYRCONNELL HERITAGE SOCIETY

A staff member at the Talbot Settlement demonstrates how to spin wool using a spindle.



PHOTO: COURTESY OF SHEN YUN PERFORMING ARTS

Shen Yun, the world's premier Chinese dance and music company.

For every ticket bought by an RTO/ERO member, family and friends 20% will help kids see the show. To participate in this initiative, contact:

Kitchener-Waterloo – Jan 6-8
519.578.1570
code: RTO

Ottawa – January 10-11
613.314.4291
code: RETTEACHER

Hamilton – Jan.19-20
905.689.0781
code: RTO

Mississauga – Jan. 22-23
416.248.1168
code: RTO

Shen Yun will also be performing in Vancouver and Winnipeg. For more information visit, www.ShenYunPerformingArts.com