



**Written Testimony in Support of FY 2015 Appropriations**

**For the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA):**

***Five ways that NEA makes a big difference in small communities***

Submitted by Pamela Hogan, Executive Director, Fender Museum of the Arts Foundation

House Appropriations Subcommittee on the Interior, Environment and Related Agencies

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My name is Pamela Hogan, I am here as the executive director of the Fender® Museum of the Arts Foundation in Corona, California, a city of Riverside County in Inland Southern California that borders Los Angeles and Orange Counties. I am pleased to submit written testimony supporting FY 2015 funding for the National Endowment for the Arts at \$155 million and to tell you the story of our arts organization and the benefits it has received as a NEA grantee. I represent young families with school-age children that come to music lessons at the Kids Rock Free® (KRF) School of Music just starting on their musical journey. KRF is a member of the Americans for the Arts and has had the pleasure of a band of our advanced students, the Fender Benders, performing at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts a few years ago. I'm glad to be here during Cherry Blossom time. The City is beautiful and that is a great reason to visit and celebrate the splendor of arts and culture. Thank you for the opportunity to be here.

First, I want to give you a little bit of history about our Center and then I will tell you how a \$10,000 grant from the NEA has impacted our Kids Rock Free family. As Representative Calvert knows Fender® Musical Instruments Corporation has a factory in Corona. About 16 years ago, a public private partnership between the City of Corona, Fender Corporation and a newly formed nonprofit built the Fender Center for the Performing Arts that houses a museum to honor the legacy of Leo Fender and the influence of Fender guitars on contemporary music. In the process, the founders developed a vision of children and youth filling the Center with music. The Kids Rock Free School of Music was born. Local supporters, artists and other music-related businesses stepped in to equip the school and provide initial support. Fender guitars line the walls, Roland keyboards and electronic drums await aspiring students. Kids Rock Free, or KRF as we know it, has given well over **200,000 lessons** since it began.

Thank you for allowing me the time to set the stage. Fast forward to today where kids continue to pour in our doors to pluck guitars off the wall to plug into amps and where others sit at those drum sets and keyboards to learn and make music. Now they are also performing all over the community and country through one opportunity or another. I would like to tell you about five distinct ways that this amazing organization and our KRF kids were touched and helped by a NEA grant this year like five notes are the heart of every song.

**First, support from NEA lends credibility to the service provided to children.** Before one dollar of a NEA grant arrives our organization has already benefited. We go through a somewhat rigorous process of applying for the grant which obliges us to clearly describe our programming and to recruit partners that will help us meet the required support of 1:1 matching dollars. In fact, on average, leveraging the NEA grant award usually results in a local match of \$9 of support for every dollar awarded by NEA. Upon notification of the award we let all of our stakeholders and the surrounding publics know we were approved. NEA's endorsement of our organization with a

grant gives immediate credibility to the programs we provide and the impacts we have on the community. People become more aware of our programs. Families want to send their children to lessons at the Center, audiences want to attend our concerts, and organizations want to partner with ours.

**Second, support from NEA drives new opportunities.** The mission of our music school is to promote increased access to music education. KRF turns no one away for inability to pay for lessons. With the help of the NEA grant we can sponsor more children to begin their musical journey. I have had the good fortune to witness the development of students first hand. I first met Tyler, a scholarship student, when he took the stage at an Off-Road event where one of our sponsors invited our band to perform. His mother told me that despite his excitement to be the band's new drummer his shyness almost caused him to turn down the opportunity. As the band took the stage and direction from their instructor, even Tyler moved with great determination. With the downbeat the crowd was drawn into dancing and singing along. I watched each young performer with pride and saw Tyler who looked like he was playing in physical pain, hunched over his drums; his face barely visible. Once off the stage his relief and exhilaration were palpable. How could you fear and love something so completely? Today, he plays with confidence, his head held high. Tyler has used music and growing self-esteem to open doors to opportunities that he couldn't face previously. Last week he told me about the things he is doing to prepare a portfolio for his college applications in two years. He will be the first in his family to attend college. He certainly no longer hides behind his drums on stage or off. Today he starts working in the KRF office as part of a pre-apprenticeship program where he will help other students develop their talents and self-esteem.

Some of the benefits of music education are more obvious than others. We see, and parents report to us, that students demonstrate more discipline, good teamwork, better grades and a broad affability that only comes with good self-esteem. Would Amanda have tried out for the television show American Idol at age 17 and won a Golden Ticket to Hollywood if she had not had the support of her KRF family? Not only do our students get lessons at Kids Rock Free they get support and encouragement to pursue their dreams.

There is a host of research that has made the connection between music education and the changes in brain development that prepare students to be more open to learning through verbal cues and spatial reasoning. What parent would turn down the key to giving their children a head start to academic success?

We know that there are some families that cannot afford to pay for music lessons for their children. That is where the NEA grant comes in. The extra support enables us to cover costs of opening access to music education. The numbers of youth that don't have music education has climbed sharply with the decline in arts programs at California public schools. The ratio of music teachers to students in our local school district is more than six times the national average of one teacher to 400 students. In our region 20 dedicated music teachers serve 53,000 students. That's one teacher to 2,650 students. This despite the research that links better grades, lower drop-out rates and more college attendance to music students over non-music students.

Another factor that increased the need for scholarships at our after-school program was the economic downturn that put so many local families out of work and their homes in foreclosure. Corona is in the metropolitan area that was among the top three in the nation that suffered most

from foreclosures just a few years ago. Just as many nonprofits saw increased demand for service, KRF experienced increased requests for free tuition. For all the benefits that students enjoy that I mentioned earlier, we don't turn anyone away for inability to pay. What I like about including students that lack the opportunity through public school or family means is the discovery that sometimes comes from a student experiencing something that she felt in her heart but didn't know how to give wings. Children benefit from the lessons we provide in such a personal way, giving voice to a part of their brain that was untapped.

**The third impact we experience from NEA support is how it leverages support from others.** Kids Rock Free has been very fortunate to garner corporate partners to help achieve our mission. I mentioned the ones that supplied instruments; there are many others that supplied other equipment and museum exhibits. Some sent volunteers and many sponsored the benefit events held to raise funds to support the program. We are very fortunate to have corporate offices of Lucas Oil Incorporated and MAV-TV in Corona. The business has been very generous in their support. And it is with pride they can say they give to put music in kids' lives, as NEA does. But Inland Southern California is not a bastion of corporate headquarters. Over the life of the Center, there has been a change in other corporations' community support to structured-giving programs through grant applications; where giving is based less on a personal relationship and more on how we present on paper. It is more relevant than ever that KRF have the endorsement of an NEA grant award. In a line of applicants, KRF now stands out from the rest. This is also true in direct donor relations. KRF participates in an annual one-day, on-line giving campaign called GiveBigRiversideCounty.org where donors are encouraged to give locally in support of the services that make our community great. Each of the 100<sup>+</sup> participating organizations is showcased online with how it impacts the community. The NEA grant and what we accomplish with those funds are important components of our story.

A new part of that story is that the NEA grant enabled us to work with a public school teacher and principal that wanted help bringing music to their students. To engage these students in music we are providing KRF lessons at the school site to youth that don't have the means to get to the Fender Center or resources to pay for lessons. We think these students will benefit in such a way that will best prepare them for success in high school, and we expect this experience will serve as a model to a new way of serving youth at many sites in our community.

**The number four way that support from NEA helps us is how it also builds communities.** The culture of our community is founded in the region's history of the citrus industry and the Fender legacy. Music binds our residents and develops local pride. Because people raise families where there is a cultural sense of belonging, we work hard to make KRF a community asset that incorporates the community. With the NEA grant we are able to invite the community to enjoy music and be part of it. Concerts are family affairs. Parents of the students in our program are asked to volunteer an hour of service for every hour their children receive in free lessons. The volunteer requirement serves two important purposes: it extends the capacity of our small staff to accomplish bigger things and it gives the parents a role in improving our school and our community. Parents aren't the only ones that help us extend our reach, we have interns, scout groups and service clubs helping out and last week, NBC-4LA announced on air how volunteers can find meaningful work with us.

KRF has also been very fortunate in working with well-known artists that donate their time to perform at our center and involve our kids in their performances. A notable example is Steve

Miller of The Steve Miller Band, who has even invited some our student musicians on stage with him in locations around the country. The KRF family tree has many branches.

We owe it to these partners and to the NEA to build the arts community in Corona and that is why we are a founding member of a new arts council called Arts Alive which is bridging the arts in Corona. Arts Alive is a group of arts organizations, artists and patrons that are joining forces to promote local arts and culture to the community through awareness of the numerous existing arts activities. We also plan to develop new opportunities in the arts. With all of our voices advocating for the arts, the message has wider impact.

One of the things that Arts Alive wants people to know is that arts organizations strengthen our local economy by employing staff and purchasing local services. In a 2010 study of Riverside County nonprofit arts and culture organizations<sup>1</sup> the fiscal impact of local jobs and event-related spending is well over \$86 million. When people attend local arts events the economic benefits reach beyond the cost of admission. Audiences spend money on things like meals, parking, and babysitters which is good for local merchants. The average spending is \$29.11 per attendee which also generates local and state government revenue. In addition, local and regional business owners sponsor our community events with their marketing and charitable dollars that help support our music education mission.

**Fifth in my list of how support from NEA has impacted our KRF kids is the way that NEA funding ensures the giving of music as a lifelong gift.** The NEA grant has opened doors for our students. There are so many resources on line, through its partners and via leveraged support. We welcome families from all walks of life and because music knows neither age nor gender we share many types of music, different ways to experience it and ways to take it with you. We know that learning to play an instrument is hard work. Our students put in many long hours in classes, in practice and in performing. It is something they will take with them for a lifetime. Whether they choose to pursue a college education majoring in music or whatever their path, it is a safe bet that the developing creativity that was a part of their music education will impact their careers and lifelong ambitions. Creativity and team work are two of the top ten talents that employers seek in new candidates as they employ innovation to stay ahead of competition. Musicians demonstrate the ultimate teamwork in performing a musical piece.

In conclusion, I've shared with you just five ways that NEA has made KRF a better place and by connection Inland Southern California a place for families to prosper. The credibility of NEA leverages gifts for KRF, opens new doors for the organization and our students, provides resources that build communities and assures that music and creativity are lifelong gifts we all can enjoy. A community without culture doesn't foster pride or compassion nor does it build prosperity. I submit to you that arts and culture are worth our time and money to bridge a legacy of the past with a bright future. Five notes are usually a pretty good start to a song; I think this one is worth continuing.

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<sup>1</sup> Arts & Economic Prosperity IV: The Economic Impact of Nonprofit Arts and Culture Organizations and Their Audiences in Riverside County ([www.AmericansfortheArts.org](http://www.AmericansfortheArts.org))