

Mike DeFazio  
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300 Bailey Avenue  
Uniontown, PA 15401

Date: 9/30/2020

To Whom It May Concern:

It is with great enthusiasm that I write this letter of support for the Rural Arts Collaborative (RAC).

The Laurel Highlands School District has greatly benefitted from our partnership with the Rural Arts Collaborative. Through their visiting artist and outreach programs, hundreds of our students have had outstanding educational experiences in the arts that they would not have otherwise had access too. RAC visiting artist residencies with James Simon and Laura Jean McLaughlin were particularly successful. Each residency resulted in a largescale public art piece created by the students in collaboration with the visiting artist and the art teachers. Students were also able to create their own works of art in various media under the guidance of the visiting artists. Our students are still talking about these residencies several years after their completion! That speaks to the positive impact this programming has had on our student body.

The planning, scheduling and creative coordinating of these residencies has been handled by Carmelle Nickens, founder and manager of the Rural Arts Collaborative. Ms. Nickens has worked tirelessly to ensure that our residencies are successful. All aspects of the processes have been clear and well organized.

I highly recommend the Rural Arts Collaborative, and will continue to support its' effort to expand access to arts programming for students in Southwestern Pennsylvania.

Sincerely,

Mike DeFazio

Fine Arts Department Chair