

New arts alliance has diversity in mind

Englewood Creative Arts begins its journey

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ENGLEWOOD — A new arts alliance joins the mix in Englewood.

This grassroots group seeks to provide mentorship, education and acceptance through foundational classes in all mediums of art.

It's under the umbrella of the Englewood Community Coalition that was originally funded by the CDC to combat alcohol and drug related consequences among community members. Englewood Creative Arts has similar goals, but through the creative arts and self-expression.

Stage manager and Director of Community Alliances Jeff Dillion was enthusiastic to explain what the group has planned along with what he would like to see happen.

“We're just starting out,” Dillion said. “Right now, it's about community awareness and thinking of ideas for programming.”

ECA recently had a general body meeting in which community members could learn and share ideas amongst the group.

“We gave out 138 flyers, and around 12 people came,” he said. “That's not bad at all.”

What makes ECA unique is their focus on creating programming rather than the presentation.

Similar to The Hermitage artists retreat on Manasota Key, ECA wants to provide a professional program in which all community members can partake in and explore the arts.

The format would focus on professionally driven circumstances.

. Mentors and volunteers would help guide students through classes over a period of time. Options could range from summer programs to school-year programs.

. At the end of the classes, the students will have the option of presenting what they've learned.

“We want the programming to be accessible and affordable through scholarships for all financial demographics,” Dillion said. “Englewood has a focus on retirement, so we want to broaden the horizons for artistic programming.”

Dillion wants to see more diversity in art forms within

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the community like theater, creative writing and improv.

“Kids and adults are welcome — there’s no such thing as a bad idea,” he said. “This is a safe and creative environment that will help develop foundational tools.”

ECA also has a strong focus around collaboration and support with the other artistic entities in the Englewood area. Partnership is emphasized.

“We want to create relationships with the other alliances,” he said. “We’re here to help and support not compete with others.”

With this ideology in mind, Dillion was able to secure a partnership with the Englewood Arts Center, a branch of the Ringling College of Art and Design, for programming they are designing.

The exhibit at EAC will be called “Bullets to Band-Aids,” which will focus on combining the written stories of veterans with visual arts. ECA will then provide improv classes over the period of two to four weeks for the veterans.

“We’re really excited for this,” Dillion said. “Both the improv and collaboration.”

Dillion will also be out in the community for the Englewood Community Resource Fair beginning at 10 a.m. Dec. 3 at Pioneer Plaza, 325 W. Dearborn St.

“We’re hoping to provide something unique rather than just talking at a table and passing out pamphlets,” he said. “It’ll give us a chance to show what we’re all about.”

Partnerships like the one with EAC is what Dillion is seeking out as his group begins to grow and develop. Volunteers, sponsorships and scholarship support is also a priority for the group.

“There’s no limit to what we can do because it’s just the beginning,” he said. “The arts can really help gain confidence, provide a sense of awareness and connect the body with the mind.”

For more information, visit englewoodcreativearts.org or call [941-681-0091](tel:941-681-0091).



Jeff Dillion represents the Englewood Creative Arts group during Red Ribbon Week at Englewood Elementary School.

