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(Neb.)-Arts Advocacy Speaker Visits Chadron State College Classroom

By: Roxie Graham-Marski Posted at: 11/06/2013 01:18 PM



(CHADRON)-Some Chadron State College students were recently awarded the opportunity to hear directly from Marian Fey, director of Nebraskans for the Arts. Fey was recently a guest of the FYI 169S class, "Without the Arts, You're Only Half a Brain," taught by Dr. Sandy Schaefer and Mary Donahue.

Fey said non-profit arts organizations in Nebraska are responsible for \$174 million in business, have 6,500 full-time equivalent employees and produce \$10.5 million in state revenue. This does not include any private, for-profit studios.

"We need to advocate to add the A to STEM to make STEAM," she told the audience in the graphics lab in the basement of Memorial Hall. STEM is an acronym used in education for science, technology, engineering and math.

Fey cited a number of high-profile government and industry leaders who were accomplished musicians or otherwise embraced the arts. She quoted statistics that indicate that students involved in the arts are more likely to have higher academic achievement in high school and college. "Some say the arts attract smart kids, but I say the arts bring out innate intelligence in all of us," she said. "Don't wait for a crisis; get to know your lawmakers now. Establish a relationship with them, and then it won't be the first time when you talk to them about an issue. Tell your stories to these people - especially the impact the arts have made on your life," she said.

She also urged students in the room to register to vote and compose an elevator speech to advocate the arts when an opportunity presents itself. Students can join Nebraskans for the Arts for \$10.

Fey explained that in the 501(c)(3) portion of the organization, she can only advocate, educating those in power and the public, not lobby. When the time comes for lobbying, the organization can activate their 501(c)(4) and hire registered lobbyists in attempts to more directly influence policy makers.

She explained that all lobbying is advocacy, but not all advocacy is lobbying. Her organization cannot use donations to the 501(c)(3) portion of the organization for lobbying.

Fey said the budget for her one-person shop including rent, salary, and supplies is \$100,000. The organization's Website is nebraskansforthearts.org.

—Tena L. Cook, Interim Marketing Coordinator