With some regret, I have tendered my resignation to the River Music Experience (RME). The past two years have been a very interesting time for me. Certainly, I gained a fair share of life experience. The great people that I have met and worked with, through our educational programs, River Roots Live fest, and Redstone Room events, have time and again demonstrated their appreciation for our mission. I thank each of you for the opportunity to work and play together. My staff was awesome. I laud their passion for our purpose and their tenacity for hanging in there with me through thick and thin.

I am proud of the accomplishments and progress that we made during my tenure as president of the RME. When I arrived in the Quad Cities in March 2005, downtown Davenport was a virtual ghost town. In that short span, the joint results of RME, the Figge, Bucktown, the sky bridge, Centro, and other projects in activating this neighborhood have been amazing. On a memorable Friday eve in September, you may have witnessed 300 people enjoying RMX Live in the RME courtyard, a sell-out of 250 mostly college-aged people in the Redstone Room, the restaurants packed, the sidewalks busy, and a sky bridge full of kids. It was undeniable that the dream of an energized and utilized downtown had come a step closer to reality. From my experience, without an active downtown, Davenport is just a word you write on a return address. Downtown *is* a community's identity.

The Quad Cities are in a pivotal position, and the future will be greatly affected by what happens in downtown Davenport. Our population is shrinking, largely due to the fact that young people do not have the lifestyle options that other areas have. College graduates are least likely to stay in the state. We are competing with cities of comparable size that long ago recognized what we are just starting to address. Our greatest asset is an attractive but sedentary downtown that watches over an economically untapped riverfront. The vehement distrust of city government and progressive ideas in general is the symptom of a widespread disease that is compounded by the inability of the area to act and promote itself as one economic tool. When the lack of new industry and shrinking tax base begin to financially cripple the citizens, perhaps we'll see the cooperation needed to force joint development. Of course, the question at that time will be: "Is it too late?" We are chasing cities that long ago began addressing issues that are still being fought about here. Certainly the RME is only a small part of the fix, but at the least we identified a problem area and began addressing it accordingly.

Lastly, I feel obligated to share a couple of things I've learned about not-for-profits:

(1) It is not enough to build something. A realistic plan for sustainability over a number of years is critical. It is a rare case indeed that any not-for-profit will be built on the back of its own revenues.

(2) There are two distinctly different types of volunteers required to build a fledgling not-for-profit: a capital board to launch and build a project, and an impassioned cultural board to sustain it. The wisdom to recognize that dynamic will save all involved a lot of heartache.

I strongly encourage the current board of directors to continue to seek out additional membership that will represent musicians, industry personnel, and music fans that bring new networks of support with them.

I wish the best for the RME and its mission. I put plenty of blood and tears into it, as have a lot of other good people that care about its success. The RME is a formidable and unique asset to this area. If it succeeds, it will encourage other businesses to give downtown a try. And when downtown begins to happen, prosperity will become a realistic goal, not an abstract concept.

Lon Bozarth

Davenport

Pet Issues Could Hold School Board Back

Thanks to Paul Castro and Tom Luton for their six years of service as elected directors of the Bettendorf Community School District. Good things happened during their watch.

Congratulations to newcomers Betsy Justis and Scott Tinsman. My take is that the future of Jefferson Elementary School was their issue to seek election to the Bettendorf School Board. If they have not done so already, Ms. Justis and Mr. Tinsman will soon learn that there are many complex issues and challenges requiring directors' time, good thinking, and energies. Among them are setting policy, approving the expenditure of funds, approving curriculum, approving budgets, setting tax rates, deciding potential student-expulsion cases, evaluating the superintendent, advocating on behalf of the district, and more.

For the board of directors to be effective and to forward the district, the work of and the future of the district must not be held hostage to any pet issue/project, such as the future of Jefferson Elementary School. Coupling any pet issue to other business or needs of the district can lead to organizational paralysis. Additionally, as elected directors, Ms. Justis and Mr. Tinsman must soon learn to keep ahead of them the interests of about 4,000 Bettendorf Community School District students.

Richard Wahlstrand

Davenport

RiverPoint Ballet's *Alice* a Magical Experience

My daughters recently began dancing for RiverPoint Ballet in Moline, and they were thrilled to participate in this year's production of *Alice in Wonderland*. I want to thank you for providing coverage of this event in your paper and informing the public of this performance. In watching *Alice*, I was reminded again of how incredibly fortunate I am to live in an area so rich with culture. My family moved to the Quad Cities from Chicago, and we have experienced performing-art presentations here that would have been impossible to afford or a huge hassle to get to in the Windy City, yet the caliber of these performances rivals anything we took in there. Not only was *Alice* a showcase of the dancers' talent and extraordinary training, but the splendor of the costumes, music, and backdrops, set in the glorious Scottish Rite Cathedral, made it a magical experience. The fact that the ballet was a one-of-a-kind production, choreographed and set to music by Artistic Director Susan Snider, made it all even more remarkable. I am very appreciative of your help in getting the word out about this event. I know that without your support, it would be impossible for the show to go on.

Mary Pat Bay

Bettendorf