

Should DMA Receptions Be Free?

Written by Letter to Editor

Tuesday, 12 February 2002 18:00

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Editor's note: After receiving Larry DeVilbiss' letter criticizing the Davenport Museum of Art for charging admission to student receptions, we solicited a response from the museum. Both are printed below.

Student Reception Should Be Free

I am writing this letter as an educator, a parent, a Davenport taxpayer, and a very outspoken advocate of the arts in our Quad Cities communities. For more than 10 years, the Davenport Museum of Art (DMA) has provided space and facilities in the Wiese auditorium for the Davenport schools, and other area districts, to exhibit the visual-art accomplishments of their students. The past few years, the museum has also secured area sponsors to provide a free two-hour Sunday reception with punch, cookies, and ice cream to honor these budding artists.

These free student exhibitions have always been a winning proposition for all involved. For many of these students and their families, these receptions have been their first introduction to the wonders and benefits of the Davenport Museum of Art. In return, the DMA has gained some area supporters and future patrons. The art educators of Quad Cities were able to showcase the relevance and quality of art in education.

Unfortunately the DMA board has recently adopted a new policy that will charge the family, friends, and supporters of these students \$2 per adult to attend the reception. I appreciate the fact that the museum, like all other tax-supported institutions, is desperate for money. However, I feel that the DMA is attempting to raise a few hundred dollars at the expense of area educators and the future support of the museum. The students have produced the work. The art teachers have taught the lessons and prepared and hung the work. There is not a current rotating exhibit in the museum to warrant an admission fee. What are the students' supporters being charged for?

The DMA has asked the community to have faith in the future of the arts in the Quad Cities as we build the new museum. I ask the DMA to have the same faith in the future of the artists of the Quad Cities. Help area art educators to introduce our Davenport Museum of Art to the children and families of the area. Don't jeopardize the future for a few dollars.

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**Larry DeVilbiss,
Davenport**

Museum Strives for Sustainable Programs

I am writing this letter in response to Larry DeVilbiss' comments regarding student art-exhibition receptions at the Davenport Museum of Art. In reviewing his comments and concerns, we find we must acknowledge that this new policy was instituted quickly and with limited opportunity for dialogue. For that we offer a sincere apology.

We have always intended that part of the benefit of attending the art receptions would be family exposure to the art-museum experience. Traveling exhibitions are often part of that experience; when they are not available, work from our permanent collection is displayed in the upper and lower galleries. This change in policy is part of the process of transformation that the museum has just begun. Our goal is to develop sustainable programs and methods of operations that will enhance the quality of life for the entire region.

The student art exhibitions are displayed for a two-week period in the Wiese wing of the building. Anyone unwilling or unable to pay the \$2 fee to attend the student-art reception is welcome to come and view the exhibition free of charge during the other hours the museum is open to the public. The parents and students attending during the receptions will receive refreshments and a picture of themselves with their artwork. In addition, one student from each of the 49 elementary and eight middle schools from throughout our region will receive a summer art-camp scholarship.

We are and always have been very much interested in maintaining, and enhancing, our relationship throughout the community. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this policy or new creative programming ideas with any parent, art educator, or interested citizen. Contact the Davenport Museum of Art by calling 326-7804 or visit our Web site at (<http://www.art-dma.org>).

**Glen Gierke, Jr.,
President, DMA Board of Trustees,
Davenport**