

# Keeping creativity alive in youngsters

By Vicki Barber

I just watched the movie "Avatar" and I have friends telling me I should be watching the TV show "Glee". I love to visit art museums when I'm traveling, although I'm certainly not one who can draw a straight line without a ruler. I'm as left brained a thinker and doer as most education administrators, yet part of my job is to foster those who can create, build, and provide the arts, music, and drama that so appeal to the right side of our ever active brains.

With so many of our schools cutting back on "frills" these days because of funds and increased academic pressures, where do we find the support for those children whose talents lie in the creative arts? In El Dorado County since 1958, it's been at Sugarloaf Fine Arts Camp. It wasn't always called Sugarloaf and it wasn't always at the Sly Park Environmental Education Center, but the 52-year-old summer camp has always had the express purpose of allowing students to explore the arts and their own abilities to express those arts.



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A child started somewhere to dream up the visual graphics from Avatar. Somewhere there was permission and encouragement to go beyond the boundaries of what we know every day. That permission created a science fiction planet filled with eight

foot tall creatures with vibrant colors, yellow eyes, cat-like ears, and very long tails whose hair braid ends connect with the other living species on the planet as well as the vibrancy of the life force itself. That's not textbook "stuff." That's imagination and vision.

A child started somewhere to create music, sing, dance, and be in the Glee Club. How do they hit notes like that? When the rest of us may be afraid to dance or sing, or, even worse, be different in front of others, for some young people creating music is like breathing. If they didn't do it, they'd suffocate. So where do they have the opportunity to try out their wings?

Leonardo da Vinci said, "There are three classes of people: those who see, those who see when they are shown, those who do not see." A picture is worth a thousand words. Sometimes art expresses what we can't even find the words to say. Da Vinci was once a child. The entire world is grateful he found a way to express his art for the rest of us to enjoy. There are children like da Vinci today who are ready to express the art that the rest of us want to see.

So Sugarloaf Fine Arts Camp has existed for its 52 years to encourage middle school and high school students to find out what they can do in music, theater, photography, and dance. Each year students explore the boundaries of their favorite creative expression. Who knows what's beyond "Avatar" or who's our next American Idol? Perhaps an even better discovery may be one who can find a way to paint a landscape to go over a fireplace in grandpa's house just because it feels good to do it.

You can find information about Sugarloaf Fine Arts Camp [here](#).

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