

Amado & J.B. Peña Art Has Heart News

Executive Director's Notes



Executive Director
Mike DeVault

I hope this newsletter finds everyone doing well. In the last newsletter, I asked that everyone keep my sister-in-law, Mary Gielstra in your thoughts as she began her battle with breast cancer. I will have an update later but she is doing better. However, I now have the unhappy task of conveying that our board member, Lisa Bear Goldman, is in the same fight. I'd like to report that Lisa is doing well as she begins the arduous task of treatment. Of course, everyone wishes her well, and I hope we will all keep her in our thoughts and prayers as she begins this difficult journey.

Over the Christmas holidays, I had a chance to watch an important documentary, entitled "Price of Admission: America's Student Debt Crisis" which was aired on CNBC. I have long had an interest in this subject and student debt is an underpinning of the Art Has Heart Foundation and one of the reasons that I found this position compelling.

After I returned home, I was determined to do some additional research about the state of current affairs in the student debt area and what I found actually shocked me. I know this subject probably makes for boring reading but I have decided to make it a significant part of this newsletter as both a reminder of why we do what we do and, also, because it is an important subject bubbling just below the surface of our national consciousness.

This newsletter, therefore, has a bit of a different slant than most but I hope you enjoy it. I also want to take this opportunity to wish each of you a happy, healthy, prosperous, and safe new year. ♥

Mike R. DeVault

Student Debt Crisis

The information in the next few paragraphs has been culled from numerous articles and from the TV documentary mentioned above.

Let's start with these staggering facts

- Student debt is growing at a rate of \$2,853.88/second. That's right; per second!
- Student debt is likely to pass the one trillion dollar mark in 2012.
- 67% of all college graduates graduate with debt.
- Student debt averages \$24,000/student for graduates of public institutions.
- Student debt has now surpassed the country's total credit card debt.



- Outstanding student loans now total over \$875,000,000,000 (billion).

"For most American students, a four-year college degree is affordable only when they consider loans. The situation has been made worse by the recession that dried up jobs for graduates. The unemployment rate for college graduates is the highest on record. Lack of employment opportunities, inability to refinance, and the lack of options to

Student Debt Crisis (con't.)

wipe out the debt in bankruptcy means the students are left with a crushing lifelong burden, affecting their credit histories and long term spending capabilities". The inability of students to refinance the debt repayment adds yet another unfortunate level to the circumstances in which many students find themselves. If you own a house, you can always refinance the debt in a way that is beneficial to you, financially. Students don't have that option, unfortunately.

This is all happening because many states are significantly in debt themselves and they have cut funding to education programs both K-12 and post-secondary. Because of reduced funds coming from their states, the colleges and universities have put the burden of replacing those funds on students. The cost of a college education is increasing two to three times the rate of inflation. Amazingly, college costs are rising faster than the cost of medical care. There are some public policy experts that equate the student debt crisis with the on-going housing crisis although this may actually end up worse.

A recent article with the title, "*Student Debt Crisis Threatens US Economy*" the opening paragraph says:

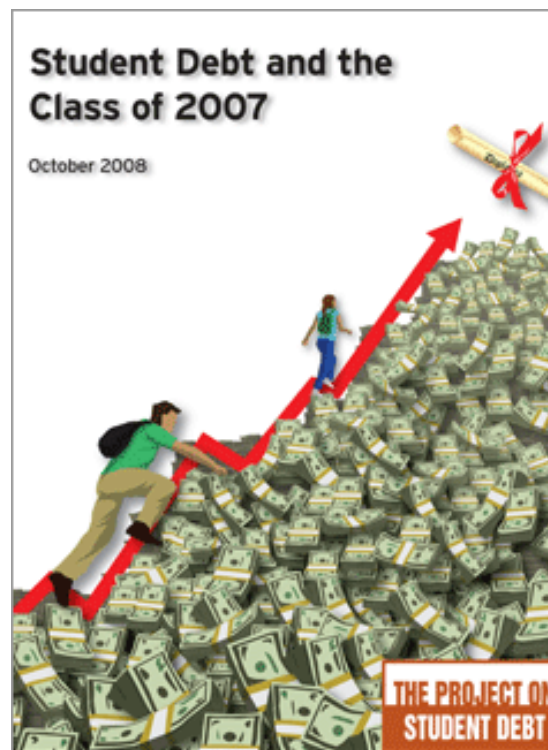
"A series of independent studies and reports at various levels are jolting Americans out of their sense of lull over a looming crisis that has been in the offing for quite some time now, but has been largely ignored. The growing student debt in colleges and universities across the nation seems to be headed in the direction of the massive foreclosure crisis, going by recent date released by the U.S. Department of Education."

I already mentioned that the accumulated debt of all student borrowers is at \$875 billion and heading toward one trillion dollars with the average student loan debt at \$24,000. It's difficult to remember all those years ago when I finished college but I know I did so without debt

and I suspect many of you would tell the same story. It is stunning to me how much this aspect of a college education has changed. I often wonder what my parents and I would have done if the situation today existed when I went to college.

We have anecdotal evidence through Art Has Heart that some students do not bother to attend college, even though they are certainly qualified, because their parents are not willing to co-sign any student loan for them. This is especially true of students that are first generation college students. We had that exact situation a few years ago and if Art Has Heart had not awarded a scholarship to one particular student, they would not have been able to attend.

Art Has Heart is a small organization and we certainly are not able to impact this overall situation in any significant way but we are able to impact it on an individual basis. There is not an exact way to calculate the foundation's impact but stop and consider what the interest loan repayment amount might be for the 400 students that have received scholarships from us and in each case reduced the amount of their borrowing. I suspect if we could actually calculate the amount, it would be a significant



number.

If you have ever paid extra principal on your mortgage you know that, over time, can significantly reduce the amount of interest you pay over the life of the loan. Art Has Heart scholarships represent the same thing by reducing the amount of borrowed money, the interest accruals are also reduced for the student. I wish we could do more or that there were more organizations trying to do the same thing.

Every gift you make to Art Has Heart keeps us in the game and that seems very important in light of what is happening in the student debt system. ♥

Tracking the New (revised) Website

When I sent out the last newsletter in the fall, I mentioned that the new website was ready. Oops! It was not ready when I mentioned it although I thought so at the time. Anyway, the foundation has a revised website and I hope many of you have stopped by for a look. It is a vast improvement of the last one and should be helpful to our student visitors, as well. We are still adding features and the next aspect to be added will be a donation protocol where individuals can donate through PayPal. PayPal is the industry standard for using credit cards for transactions.

Alex Igancio helped design and build the new website and he is working on the PayPal feature now. There are two facets of the website that I want to mention to you.

The first is that the new website has a hidden counting feature. I get what is called a "dashboard" report at the end of each month that gives us a lot of detail about traffic to the site. For example, in the month of December, the website had 49 visitors with 116 pageviews. That comes out to 2.37 pages visited per visitor. In December, 82% of the visitors were new to the website. Nearly 50% of our visitors came to the site through a search engine (Google, Yahoo, Bing, etc), 25% came from a referring site (i.e. Peña Gallery website), and another 25% came from direct traffic (the visitor typed the website address). The system also provides the amount of time an average visitor spends on the site. In December, the time was 1:03.

I am already trying to figure out how to get visitors to see more

pages on the site and spend a longer amount of time exploring it. I cannot believe that a technology is available that gives us so much information. It is our challenge to figure out how to maximize the potential benefits. If you have any ideas, please send them along.

The second feature that I want to mention is the front (home) page. This page was built as a bulletin board. In other words, as there is news, I can post it to the front page with a simple email. The New Year's greeting that is at the top of the page now was added by the simple process of an email. When the email is sent, the message gets posted within three minutes. A visitor can scroll the front page from most to least current message and, over time, should accumulate a lot of information.

This new system is real easy to work with and I reminded about the "it's so easy that a caveman can do it" commercial. In this case, it is so easy that even your Executive Director can do it. If you haven't been to the site, please do so and help increase our numbers. Please look around and take in all the aspects of the new website. This newsletter will be posted on the website by the time you receive it in the mail. If you enjoy reading things on the web, you will be able to do so with this newsletter and a number of prior ones. ♥



Help send strength for the fight

While no authority on breast cancer, I know it is an awful disease and affects far too many women. It seems to strike in many families and just about everyone knows someone who has been struck with it. Within our Art Has Heart family, JB Peña is a breast cancer survivor and Lisa Bear Goldman is on her way to being one, as well.

I have not spoken to Lisa but I get regular emails from two close friends of hers that keep me, as well as many of her friends and colleagues, up-to-date on her progress. She has had her surgery and is now in the treatment phase. I understand that her spirits are high and that she is progressing through this ordeal with her usual positive nature. If you would like to send Lisa a note of encouragement, which I know she would appreciate, the address is: *Lisa Bear Goldman, 14 Valle Escondido, Placitas, NM 87043*

You may be thinking that you really don't know Lisa. Well, Art Has Heart is a small family and we all know one another even when that is not true in the strictest

sense. I hope everyone takes the time to send her a note of best wishes and for a complete recovery.

I hate to close this section without providing an update on my sister-in-law, who many of you know about, indirectly, because of her husband, Glenn, who helps Amado at some art shows and is always present at Legacy Art Albuquerque. Mary finished four grueling months of chemotherapy at Thanksgiving. Mary had a unique situation with her cancer and I wish I could explain it but I can't do so adequately.

Even though she did not have a family predisposition to cancer and the x-rays at the end of treatment didn't show any remaining issues, her doctors recommended another surgery to be certain. This surgery occurred two days after Christmas and, again, everything was positive. The bottom line is that she is, hopefully, on the road to full recovery. Thanks to all of you who ask about her or sent positive thoughts or prayers her way after I mentioned this in the last newsletter. ♥



Legacy XI

We are on our way to Legacy XI. St. Pius has a new development director, Steve Ross, and this will be his first excursion into the waters of Legacy. As I have told him, there is a great deal more to Legacy than meets the eye. As the event has grown in scope over the years, the tasks behind that growth have also increased. In other words, there is much to be done to bring this event weekend to completion.

The Legacy XI committee had its first meeting in early January with another meeting scheduled in February. David DeVary is the featured artist, and the featured art entitled "Heidi" is pictured below. The event is scheduled for May 6 and 7. If you haven't ever attended or haven't been here in a few years, we certainly would love to have you join us.

We have finally attracted a big media sponsor. The **New Mexico Magazine**, published by the State of New Mexico, Department of Tourism, has signed on with us. They have a circulation of about 140,000 households and a readership of nearly 500,000. They have given us a half-page advertisement in their April issue and we are very anxious to see if it spurs additional interest. ♥



Amado named...

...the featured artist for the 2011, 40th annual Albuquerque International Balloon Festival. This, of course, is a big honor but it will have some disadvantages, also.

As many of you know, the balloon festival operates for two weeks, October 1 to October 9. The days begin early (dawn) and as the official artist, Amado will have to rise early everyday to fulfill his obligations to the festival and the public. He will have to be on the balloon grounds each day to sign the official poster and other festival memorabilia. Oh, the price of success! ♥

Update on the Documentary

The Peña documentary had a hiccup but is now back on track. The original writer of the script resigned over the summer, and it took some time to indentify a new writer and get a script put together.

As has been noted earlier, all the filming was completed last spring but weaving all of it into an interesting narrative took much longer. It is anticipated that the documentary will be completed and available later this spring. Lou Diamond Phillips is still doing the voiceover material. ♥

♥ Bye for now ♥

All of the recent newsletters are posted at the new website and this one will be there, as well. I hope everyone visits the website and visits often.

There seems to be some bad karma surrounding Art Has Heart these days. In addition to what is going on with Lisa Bear Goldman, I learned from Holly Dunn that her mother had both a heart attack and stroke recently. Since Holly is the primary caregiver, I know her life has been very hectic and distressing. She asked that I pray for her and I ask all of you to do the same.

I also received sad news from J.B. Peña just as I was finishing this newsletter. Board of Director's member, Barbara Harjo, lost her sister in January. I don't have any details to share with you but it would be nice if everyone sent her an expression of sympathy and a kind word. Her address is 1516 N.W. 35th, Oklahoma City, OK 73118.

That is all for this newsletter. Hopefully, I'll get one more newsletter written before Legacy but, if not, soon after.

Blessings and best wishes. ♥

