

**Senator John**

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**From:** Port Polson Players [portpolsonplayers@compuplus.net]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 08, 2005 8:24 AM  
**To:** senatorjohn@bresnan.net  
**Subject:** MVFA

John:

I know you're probably already in session by now and this won't reach you in time, but I wanted to forward it on to you anyhow, just so you know.

Thanks.

-Neal

February 7, 2005

Montana Legislature Cultural and Aesthetic Committee:

Please accept this letter of support for the proposal from the Mission Valley Friends of the Arts to establish a part-time position for the performing arts in our community. I have been an educator in the school system and member of the Polson community for 27 years, 17 of which have been as principal of Cherry Valley elementary school. During that time, I have had many opportunities to witness the profound and positive impact the performing arts has had on the children and youth of our community.

The Port Polson Players produce an annual childrens' show that often times includes up to 200 children. Twice, I have performed with the children and seen behind the scenes how Neal and Karen Lewing build the childrens' confidence and performing skills. We have significant poverty in our community. Nearly 60% of the children who attend Cherry Valley are eligible for free and reduced meals under federal guidelines. In addition, the Port Polson Players work with our high school students to produce two plays per year. Unfortunately, Polson High School is without the benefit of a drama program. Therefore, the Port Polson Players productions are a strong contribution to our high school students' education. Also, a summer theatre camp is offered to children and youth annually.

The performing arts help our children not only gain a strong sense of self, but aid them in meeting Montana State academic standards in the communication arts. I fully endorse this proposal and urge you to fund the requested position.

Thank you for your consideration of the Mission Valley Friends of the Arts proposal.

Sincerely,

Elaine Meeks, Principal  
Cherry Valley Elementary School

## Senator John

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**From:** Port Polson Players [portpolsonplayers@compuplus.net]  
**Sent:** Sunday, February 06, 2005 4:23 PM  
**To:** SENATORJOHN@BRESNAN.NET  
**Subject:** C & A Grant

Dear John:

Thank you for sitting on the Cultural and Aesthetic Grant review committee. I was looking forward to attending the session to testify on behalf of the Mission Valley Friends of the Arts grant request. However, due to the intensity of our production schedule, I'll be unable to attend.

I did, though, want you to be aware of the basics, since I wrote the grant. It was the first such proposal I'd ever written and I realize some of its language may be unclear; in fact, it was initially not recommended for consideration. Still, I'd like to take a second to state the case succinctly.

The Mission Valley Friends of the Arts (MVFA) is a non-profit arts support organization, formed in 1989. Its mission statement is two-fold. 1) To support artistic and educational programs by 2) providing a performance venue. As you know, this venue is in the form of the old log clubhouse on the Polson golf course, now the John Dowdall Theatre. MVFA holds the lease on the city-owned building, which was recently extended to 20 years. Over \$100,000.00 has been raised since MVFA was formed, all of which has been put into the building and its day-to-day affairs; no salaries are paid.

Since 1997, the Administrators of the MVFA have conducted an ever-increasing job description that at first only included day-to-day affairs and fund raising. Currently, the position's duties have increased to include contracting for improvements to the building, producing an annual newsletter, conducting an annual membership drive, bookkeeping, physical maintenance of the building, grant writing, and program development, at the same time providing the actual product which attracts revenue in the first place. Not only have these duties been provided for 8 years on a volunteer basis but also the personnel who have carried out these duties have paid additional costs out-of-pocket.

The growth of the MVFA and its services to the economy and education of the rural community it serves is now such that it is becoming increasingly difficult to expect this position to be continued on a volunteer basis. Therefore, we are asking for funding for a ½-time paid administrative salary.

Most similar arts organizations in Montana have either a ½-time or full-time paid administrative position in place. If this committee decides not to fund this request, either in part or in full, could the committee offer validation by sanctioning the request?

If you have other questions I can answer, please contact me. Otherwise, I thank you in advance for your time and your support.

Sincerely,

- Neal Lewing

2/8/2005