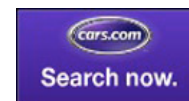




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Arts groups get funds to improve SoFA area

By Sal Pizarro Mercury News Posted: 09/18/2011 12:00:00 AM PDT

Arts groups get funds to improve SoFA area

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Two San Jose groups are getting big money from a private-public collaboration that'll allow them to continue the transformation of downtown's SoFA arts district.

ZER01 and 1stACT Silicon Valley are getting \$500,000 each from Arts Place, an initiative of 11 big foundations -- including the Ford Foundation, the James Irvine Foundation and John S. and James L. Knight Foundation -- working with the National Endowment for the Arts. They were two of five Bay Area organizations to receive grants, out of 34 nationwide that aim to put the arts at the center of economic development.

So what will be done with all that money? For starters, 1stACT plans to turn Gore Park -- the strip of grass and concrete at William and South First streets -- into an urban plaza and an "outdoor living room" for SoFA.

Connie Martinez, the managing director/CEO for 1stACT, said, "SoFA is beginning to pop and transforming Gore Park will take the work that's been done to a new level."

ZER01 -- best known for the 01SJ Biennial art-tech festival -- will be putting down roots in SoFA with the ZER01 Garage. The allusion to the birthplace of Hewlett-Packard is no coincidence, as this will be a place where the principles of artistic creativity will be applied to real world challenges.

Honestly, I'm not sure how either project will turn out. But both organizations have put a lot of sweat into making downtown San Jose a more interesting place, so I'm looking forward

to seeing what they create.

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CLASS ACT: Faysal Sohail, a venture capitalist at CMEA Capital in San Francisco, was honored with the Pioneer Business Award on Thursday at the Silicon Valley Education Foundation's Pioneers & Purpose gala.

More than 500 people attended the seventh annual event at San Jose's Fairmont Hotel, which also honored the Tech Museum, Mouse Squad of California, hands-on engineering program FIRST and East Side Union High School District's Jose Valdez Summer Math Institute.

FOSTERS' FRIENDS: It took five years from conception to ribbon cutting, but Unity Care Group has its Unity Place II project close to the finish line. The eight-unit complex off Monterey Highway in South San Jose is being refurbished to provide housing for former foster youth who have aged out of the system but also have become parents

themselves.

At the ribbon-cutting ceremony Thursday, Unity Care CEO Andre Chapman praised the San Jose Conservation Corps' Youth Build program, which worked with licensed contractors to renovate the apartment complex, originally built in 1962.

Unity Care expects finishing touches on the units -- which are clean and safe, but nothing fancy -- to be finished in the next few weeks. The units still need to be furnished, though, and any individuals or companies that are interested in making in-kind donations can contact Donna Knowlton at 408-510-3480, ext. 101.

HE'S ALRIGHT: Kenny Loggins, who played the Mountain Winery this week, checked into the fabulous 10th floor penthouse at the Hotel De Anza. The staff got worried when Loggins checked out of the suite a day early and practically ran out the door to a waiting town car.

General Manager Alison McKennon checked in with the singer's tour manager and was reassured that he loved the penthouse and was disappointed that he had to rush out because he previously had made plans in San Francisco.

"Next time he comes to San Jose, he'll think twice about doing that again!" she said.



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LOOKING AHEAD: Just days before Rosh Hashana, Santa Clara County performers will be affirming the Jewish experience in "Long Live Life!" an event at the Retro Dome next Sunday that features the San Jose Chamber Orchestra.

Directed and narrated by Willow Glen resident Daniel Helfgot, the event is a remembrance of the Jewish experience through music composed at a concentration camp. Tickets to the 7 p.m. performance are \$50 and include a post-show reception. They're available only through presale at www.theretrodome.com or by calling 408-404-7711.

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