

DRAWN

A blank canvas,



Pictured L to R: Maaik Mulholland and Ruby Desimone

Together

a pencil and a whole 'lotta hope

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Just off Orange County's 57 Freeway is the college campus of Cal State Fullerton, where professors are volunteering their time to instruct a special class of students. Down the echoed hallways of the Fine Arts building corridor, and past the vintage lockers is a classroom filled with talented students enrolled in the Ryman Arts Program. »

The Ryman Arts program is unique. There is literally nothing like it in Southern California. Their motto is “Teaching young artists. Transforming lives.” The program specifically works with teens as a pre-professional program, driving high school students of all ages into furthering their goals in the arts industries. Classes via Ryman primarily focus on teaching foundational skills of drawing and painting—an opportunity most high schoolers never get unless they are privately taught. It comes at a needy time in our school districts, too, as arts and creative programs are being cut due to budgetary reasons. But a dying art no more, skills of drawing, painting and fine arts are bolstered through the rigorous curriculum at Ryman Arts. The Orange County chapter of Ryman meets regularly at Cal State Fullerton, while the Los Angeles-based program meets at the renowned Otis College of Art & Design. Admission to Ryman is free and based on merit—students can apply and enter the program at any time in their high school career. They go through a comprehensive application process, most of them the best artists in their high school class. Funneling in from nearly 130 communities from Orange County, these students come from all walks of life. From the biggest, most prestigious high school in the county, to the little-known, poorly funded school, this program is a true melting pot of future artists. Once admitted, costs are covered completely for instruction, professional art supplies and frequent field trips to places like the Bowers Museum, thanks to donors and supporters of Ryman Arts. This, too, encourages students from all household incomes and all walks of life to be able to meet in a common place around a common passion of theirs: art.

Approximately 60 of these high school-aged students packed the Cal State Fullerton classroom on this particular Saturday. Between the four, triangle-decorated walls, sat curious teens, itching to learn from the instructor up front. Today’s topic: what do you want to be when you grow up? As the career packet of materials was passed around, the instructor asked the students to take a minute and pick five occupations on the list that peaked their curiosity. After a few minutes of golden silence, students began to raise their hands, announcing their choices: “Taxidermist” “Art Therapist” “Lithographer” and “Glass Blower” were all named. Amongst the raised hands, you could almost hear the chatter of the students’ brains as they scanned the pages of careers in the arts, which they hoped might be their future, too. The instructor said, “Start to imagine the possibilities and explore the combination of interests that you might already have.” After all, the arts industry is the fourth largest sector in our regional area for jobs—and the curious questions and intellectual minds that dwell inside of a classroom are where it can all begin.

Diane Brigham, Executive Director of Ryman Arts, and instructor on this day at the Cal State Fullerton campus, is no stranger to the arts industry. After an extensive career background in education and experience as head of education at The Getty Museum, Brigham has landed as the brains behind the operation at Ryman Arts. In her role (and she has a few!) Brigham ensures that students in the Ryman Arts program receive the foundation skills of art, college and career planning. She is also instituting the direction of the arts programs here and determines a long-range strategy for what Ryman will continue to do for students. Alongside Diane Brigham and other instructors in the Ryman Arts program is a board of 16 members. The board is active, very active—and it shows. Chuck Fry, vice president of the board of directors for Ryman, explains that the board’s active role is primarily in the guidance and oversight of the program, as well as casting the vision for the long-term. And this board of directors is legit, a diverse group made up of pros within the arts, business leaders and even alums of the Ryman Arts program—all volunteers. If you haven’t heard of Ryman Arts

until now, you’ll be shocked to hear that they’ve been around for 20 years. They’ve been hiding out in the busy streets of LA and are finally making their way down the 405 to Orange County. The Ryman Arts program has a goal to grow from 300 students to 600 students in the coming months.

Parents get involved here in the community as well—many of them entering their young artist teen as an understandably skeptical mom or dad, they come alongside their student during the course of the program with several ways to engage—orientation, volunteering in the office, attending classes and more. As they get acclimated to the curriculum which their son or daughter is being immersed in, they are learning, too. Several students expressed that when they told their mom or dad, “I want to be an artist someday,” the reaction was often “you have to be really good at that to be successful” or “why don’t you pick a career that would make you more money.” But Ryman opens up that state of mind too—just by exposing each parent to the amount of opportunity out there in arts industry careers, as well as showing them the raw talent of their child when they have the opportunity to be mentored and encouraged; it’s a formula for success and education for both parent and child. A lot of these students are first generation for college, adding to the need for education and guidance for these parents. Parents who eventually see the process that Ryman takes their child through—the solid career coaching, college application reminders, transfer expectations when a community college is the first step for the student—and the outcomes have always blown parents away.

The faculty at Ryman expresses an understanding of how difficult it can be for a student at this stage, this time of their lives, to feel like they are lost in a group—especially if that student is labeled as an “artsy” type or don’t fit in at their mainstream, public high school. These types of students might even be different types of learners, pick up curriculum at a varied pace or in a way that is unlike the rest of their classmates. One faculty member said with clarity that at Ryman “they are not just the weird kid in the back of the classroom,” but they have a place to belong amongst the Ryman Arts students. Each student finds their place, fits in with others and their interests, and finds a common ground because of their artistic passions. It’s easy to see that this vital connection is the lifeline in making these students into confident, encouraged and poised teens that are ready to learn at their full potential. One Ryman alum even described his experience as “life saving” – as he was about to go down a bad road, a generous administrator at his school referred him to Ryman Arts, and it literally turned his life around. A positive impact is exactly what many of these students need in their lives, and it’s clear that they get it from the first time they walk into a classroom.

When you walk you walk in that classroom on a weekend, and any weekend during a Ryman program, you’ll quickly see the holistic approach and impact that resides inside. From the foundations in drawing to the career coaching to the field trips, art shows and networking opportunities, “students learn self-confidence, self-discipline. There is homework each week,” says Executive Director, Diane Brigham. These teens learn and truly earn confidence in working toward a goal. They each end up with a college plan by the time they graduate from the program. Last year, 100 percent of Ryman’s graduates went onto college – an amazing feat, considering over half of them did not even consider college as a possibility upon entering the program. To graduate from Ryman Arts, students complete three semesters and process at a celebratory graduation ceremony with their work on exhibit at The California African American Museum (CAAM). From start to finish, it’s a grand occasion with grand results.

Alums of the program have not only gone onto universities and art programs that they never would

Now that you have the full scoop on this amazing, colorful, inspiring, often life-changing program that’s happening right here in our county, you might be asking: how can I get connected? Here’s how...

GET THE WORD OUT AND Apply

If you are a talented student, or have one who keeps surfacing in your mind as you read the details of this great program, the answer is easy: apply. Applications are accepted twice a year, every year—the fall deadline is June 7th; the spring deadline is December. Students grades nine through 12 can apply, and the final selection is made by a committee which reviews the candidate’s drawings, essay and application; studying all of these elements in search of both talent and motivation.

APPLY AT ryman.org/futurestudents

Support

THE ARTS & THESE STUDENTS

Over the past 20 years of its existence, Ryman Arts has educated more than 4,500 teens and provided outreach activities to thousands more students from inner-city schools. With the expansion from meeting only in Los Angeles, to their newest location in our very own Orange County, Ryman is now meeting that growing demand for classes at two campuses, so that number will only grow. Based on the number of quality students they have to turn away each and every year, as well as the decreasing arts programs in public schools all over, the fundamental need for growth within this great arts program is as clear as a realist painting. If you think about it, expansion of an outstanding network of students like this only expands “the pipeline of young talent to fuel Southern California’s essential economy.”

The goal for Ryman Arts’ expansion over the next three years is to raise \$1.5 million in order to do a few things:

- Grow the new Orange County site that meets at California State University, Fullerton while continuing to serve students at Otis College of Art & Design in LA.
- Double the number of students served each year, expanding from 300 students to 600 students.
- Expand Ryman’s outreach program to minority students in impoverished neighborhoods throughout the region.
- Ensure the sustainability of Ryman arts for generations to come.
- Serve more talented, aspiring artists from six counties across Southern California, transforming lives and equipping future creative industry leaders.

Contribute

CONTRIBUTE ONLINE NOW AT ryman.org/HowToHelp

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Directors



Chuck Fry,
Vice President of the Board
of Directors for Ryman



Diane Brigham,
Executive Director of
Ryman Arts

have dreamed of before, but they also end up in professions in a wide variety of fields—graphic design, architecture, entertainment, fine art, fashion and the list goes on. The program’s big “college day” event every year is a coveted day in every college-bound kid’s mind, where around 23 art schools from all over the United States come to Ryman Arts to recruit the talent they find in these teens. A highly recruited group of students, their futures are being unfolded day by day.

One of Ryman’s alums, a young lady who had a great passion for two things: art and science, loved to study the natural sciences, which had intrigued her for as long as she could remember. But another subject that this particular student absorbed easily and quickly was art. She entered the Ryman program in high school—her future a complete mystery to her. But after three semesters of training and

TEACHING young artists. Transforming lives.

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guidance, she got the great opportunity to be mentored, then intern and eventually work as a natural sciences artist, creating renderings of animals and artifacts, going on digs with archaeologists and advising scientists on structure and shape of the specimens they’re studying. This Ryman alum’s work can now be seen in one of Los Angeles’ most popular science museums.

Another student, a young man, entered the Ryman program with an already rough teenage life and rocky, emotional past. His upbringing was immersed in gangs, violence and tension, but after making connections and meeting encouragement, purpose and meaning at this very program, this once trouble-bound boy is now a grown design firm owner, a man who now gives back, now serving on the board of directors for the Ryman Arts program. It all started at Ryman, a blank canvas, a pencil and a whole ‘lotta hope.