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# ARTS/99

The publication of Arts and Culture El Dorado



## RICH HISTORY AT POOR RED'S



# THIS ISSUE

Dear Reader,

Winter's advance is evident all around. The weather grows colder; the days grow shorter; russet leaves grow frail, teetering on their branches before falling; animals grow weary and seek shelters, dens, and burrows in which to hibernate or warm themselves. Fittingly, then, the articles in this Winter issue of Arts 99 highlight places and projects that warm the body and the heart.

In this issue, we feature two of our Incubator Partners. Arts and Culture El Dorado's Arts Incubator program provides fiscal sponsorship, training, and support to local grassroots arts organizations. There is a coziness even in the name, which evokes heated, nurturing environments, but the programs prove more heartwarming still. One Thread's Theresa Ainsworth teaches the therapeutic art of knitting to those who need it most, knitting a sweater for the spirit in the process; See the Elephant, helmed by Jamie and Tiffany Van Camp, brings audiences shoulder to shoulder to warm their minds before the creative fire of theater and dance, igniting a passion for performance in future generations. Joining these Incubator Partners is "Green Room Confidential", an original play authored by dozens of local artists, which shines a spotlight on the experiences of women in theater.

Bookending these articles are features of two local businesses that greet patrons with neighborly warmth: The Market on Main, a new eatery with a bar and retail offerings, and Poor Red's, a legendary watering hole whose walls can talk—through its murals, that is, which tell the history of the place. We invite you to come in from out of the cold, pour yourself a hot drink, and cozy up with the Winter issue of Arts 99.

Thank you for your support.

## ARTS/99

EDITOR Jordan Hyatt-Miller

DESIGNER Caitlin Thompson

PRINTER Array

COVER IMAGE Mural in Poor Red's





# Handcrafted and Delicious



*Photo courtesy of The Market On Main*

A new business has joined the Placerville Downtown community: The Market on Main. Nestled between Sweetie Pie's and Main Street Melters, The Market on Main offers fresh food, beer and wine, and a selection of retail goods, with an emphasis on local farms and vineyards.

Charissa De León, who co-founded the business with her fiancé, Anthony, says that the original idea came from her mother-in-law, Evelyn, who was inspired by the mixed concept markets she saw during her travels in Europe. Evelyn wanted to bring a similar establishment to Placerville's Main Street community, Charissa tells me. "She brought it to me and my fiancé; I have the bar background, and he loves to cook, and the decoration and design is all her." As they began to tackle the challenges common to any new business, they faced a new, impossible-to-predict challenge: a global pandemic. "We signed our lease days before the initial shutdown... That was one of our first challenges, but we found a way to make it work." The Market on Main officially opened its doors on July 1, 2022.

The Market on Main is unique among Main Street businesses, occupying a previously vacant niche. "We're kind of in our own lane," Charissa says. "It's such a mixed concept. There's something for everybody, with the grab-and-go stuff, the prepared food, the bar, and the retail offerings. I wanted people on their lunch break to be able to pop in and grab something quick and fresh. That was the goal." The Market on Main places a particular emphasis on local products, especially wines. "You have to go to the vineyards to get the local wines here. You can't pop into the corner store to get them. I wanted to highlight these local wines, for tourists and for locals."

The unique offerings at Market on Main are rounded out by a variety of handcrafted goods, complementing the food and drink selection with arts and crafts.



Charissa, who is originally from Humboldt County, moved to Placerville in 2020 to start the business. She is already starting to feel at home in the community that she serves. "My favorite thing so far is getting to know everybody in the community. I just love this place," Charissa says. "One of the biggest priorities for me when we first started talking about this is that we want to be here first and foremost for the people who live and work on Main Street... Being able to offer things that are high quality but also affordable to the families in the community is great."

Looking to the future, The Market on Main hopes to continue expanding its eclectic offerings; they hope to move picnic tables into the grassy front yard and host events, including live music. The versatility of the concept means that they can grow in multiple directions. "Whatever people want, that's what we want to do," Charissa explains. "That's kind of what I loved about the name, The Market. Some people are confused about it, like what is it? But it's sort of just ambiguous enough that it can grow into whatever it is the community wants or needs. Whatever is missing we can start to provide that, and the name will still make sense."





# Tales Well Told



*From left: Casey Ellis, Jamie Van Camp, and Tiffany Van Camp*

**S**ee the Elephant, a theater and dance company in the Sierra Nevada foothills, serves a twofold purpose: creating quality art and providing service to the community. These two aims operate in parallel; as See the Elephant creates professional, accessible artistic performances with local, professional artists, their mission “to make performance more accessible to our region” is furthered. Founded in 2017 by Jamie and Tiffany Van Camp, See the Elephant has already made significant strides both as an artistic collective and as a vehicle for community service. With *Traveling Tales*, their latest project, See the Elephant is set to execute one of their most ambitious, artistically demanding, and culturally vitalizing projects yet.

Jamie and Tiffany are homegrown artists. Born and raised in El Dorado County, they trace their passion and talent to their upbringing, which provided early exposure to and training in the arts. Jamie went on to study theater at Dell’Arte International, and Tiffany earned a BA in Dramatic Arts at UC Davis. In forming See the Elephant, Jamie and Tiffany are adding branches to Placerville’s artistic family tree, extending a cultural genealogy to include new generations of young artists—young artists who are trained, influenced, or perhaps even minted

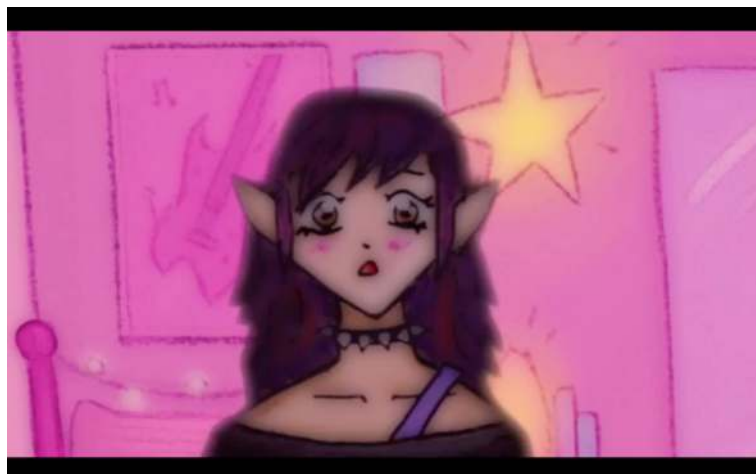
by the opportunities that See the Elephant provides. As Tiffany explains, See the Elephant is, in part, a way of giving back: “I believe that arts are central to community wellbeing and that all people deserve opportunities to express and connect through the arts. Without the opportunities I had at a young age, I truly do not know where I would be today... Having grown up in a rural area, I had a deep desire to help foster opportunities for performing arts and arts education back home in El Dorado County.”

In the five years since its creation, See the Elephant has already undertaken a diverse array of projects, from live theater performances to playwriting workshops with El Dorado High School students. Perhaps the most representative example from their body of work is *Gold Hill Samurai*, an original play based on the experiences of the Wakamatsu Settlers, which emerged from a collaboration with Arts and Culture El Dorado and the American River Conservancy. The play was performed at the Wakamatsu Farm in Gold Hill for Wakamatsu’s 150th anniversary celebration. As a collaborative performance that enriched and empowered the community, the project encapsulated the mission and core values of See the Elephant. “It was an incredible, collaborative, community-driven experience,” Tiffany says. “My favorite part of this project was the way so many people came together to make it happen. We had a wonderful cast from El Dorado County and Sacramento with diverse backgrounds, and a shared passion to tell the history.”



*Gold Hill Samurai. Photo courtesy of See The Elephant*

Traveling Tales, their current project, took a circuitous route to reach its current incarnation. Funded by a prestigious Impact Grant from the California Arts Council, Traveling Tales was originally envisioned as a live performance that would “reimagine folklore and fairytales in a way that resonated with youth today”, but this original vision became one of the many false starts of the pandemic era. Yet, with decidedly non-elephantine nimbleness, See the Elephant quickly adapted to their new reality, reformulating Traveling Tales as a program with virtual elements. Beginning with *The Bluebird*, *The Fox Witch*, & *The Story of Stumptown*, See the Elephant began to produce short films using puppetry and animation techniques; these compact narratives were, in a sense, by and for children, as they drew material from workshops with children in settings such as The Boys and Girls Club, and were made available to children in a digital format. “We are now working towards expanding

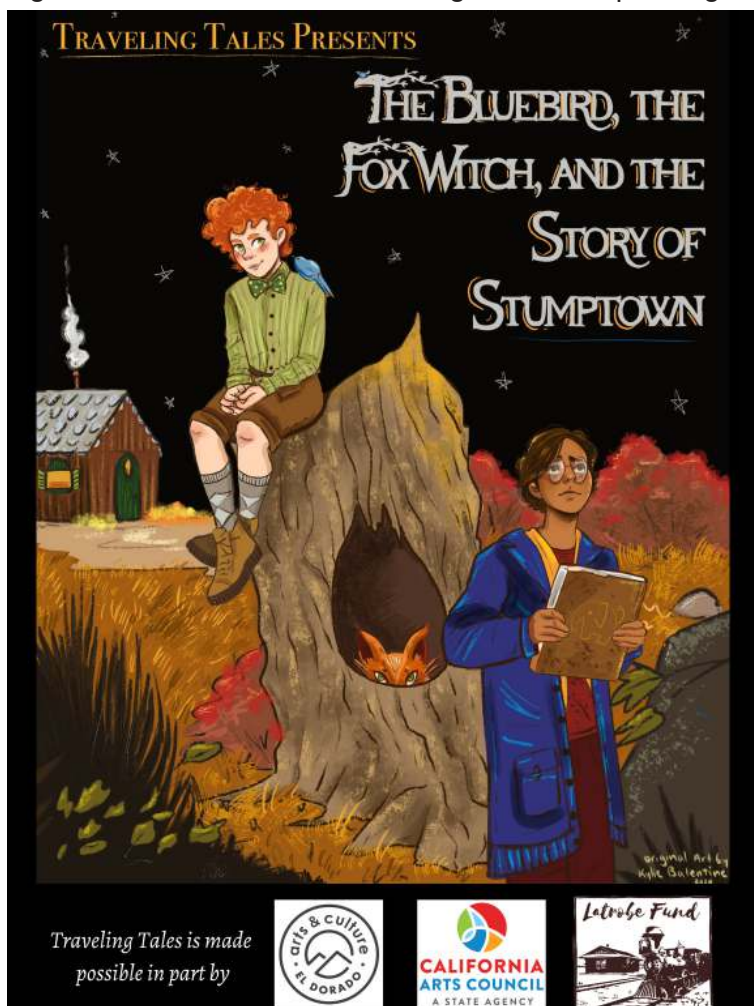


*From “Liana’s Concert”, a story conceived by RJ, one of the kids who participated in the Traveling Tales workshop. Photo courtesy of See The Elephant*

this program,” Jamie says. “We are continuing to offer workshops to youth, creating short films based on folklore, fairytale, and original stories, and providing more educational videos and materials that can be used in the classroom.”

Traveling Tales—with its emphasis on rich, accessible narratives that not only appeal to children but actively involve children in the creative process—brings one of the organization’s core motivations into focus: the expansion of opportunities for future generations, not just to experience art, but to create it. “It was becoming clear that young people in our area just weren’t getting enough opportunities to be exposed to theater and dance,” Jamie explains. “We wanted to find ways to reach out and make theatre important and relevant for our county in a way that may inspire kids to see they can absolutely pursue it as a career.” Jamie and Tiffany, for their part, will continue on with their own careers, creating art in service of their community.

***For more information about See The Elephant visit [www.SeeTheElephant.net](http://www.SeeTheElephant.net)***



*Poster for “The Bluebird, The Fox Witch, & The Story of Stumptown.” Photo courtesy of See The Elephant*

**See The Elephant is a project of Arts and Culture El Dorado’s Arts Incubator program.**

**The mission of See the Elephant is to make performance accessible to the region by providing professional artistic opportunities and building partnerships that foster deeper engagement, in the belief that theatre and dance are relevant when they respond to the immediate needs and desires of the local community.**



# Following the Thread

One Thread's founder, Theresa Ainsworth, recieved a Bachelor of Science in Women's Studies from California State University Sacramento. She has been knitting or crocheting for over 38 years and has been a professional instructor teaching fiber arts to students from California to West Africa for over a decade.



Photos courtesy of Theresa Ainsworth

When Theresa Ainsworth, founder of One Thread, was in Accra City, working on a research paper about knitting for the Department of Social Work at the University of Ghana, she interviewed a woman named Alami Haruna, whose sage words have stuck with her: "There are different kinds of yarns in different colors; there are different people in different colors. Yarn comes in different sizes; people come in different sizes. But we are all connected by one thread." Theresa asked Alami if she could use "one thread" as the name for her new project, which was in turn inspired by her research on knitting and non-profit organizations like Project KnitWell. Alami agreed, and when Theresa eventually returned home to El Dorado County, she commenced the "meaningful work" that she had dreamed of while studying in Ghana.

***"The rhythmic, mathematical nature of knitting and crocheting keep the mind absorbed in a healthy way, providing an escape from stressful thoughts but allowing for internal reflection."***

-Caiola S., *Doctors Promote Benefits of Knitting*

lived experience and the testimonies of the women she works with even more persuasive. "Personally, I know it calms me. I've talked to many women who say the same thing. It's kind of rhythmic, so it's soothing. There is something about taking just one little piece of string and turning it into something beautiful that's just magic. That's why I find it beneficial."

One Thread uses knitting instruction as a therapeutic tool for cancer patients and their caregivers, stitching up emotional wounds. With a focus on group sessions, One Thread also provides opportunities for connection and social experience to people who may otherwise be isolated. The benefits of the ancient art of knitting on mental health are borne out by a large body of recent research. Theresa cites some of this research on her website, but she finds her own





*Photo courtesy of Theresa Ainsworth*

Theresa, who has been teaching knitting for 16 years, currently works with two different Cancer Resource Centers: Wellness Within in Roseville, and Images of Hope at Marshall Medical in Placerville. At both centers, Theresa administers regularly scheduled group knitting workshops. “I like everyone to be able to work on what brings them joy, so that often means that everyone is working on something different—and that means that I’m usually on my toes,” she laughs. The pandemic disrupted, but did not stop, the work of One Thread—when meeting in-person was impossible, Theresa began doing virtual “knit-alongs” on Zoom with her students, although she has since returned to the in-person format for the sake of the social benefits that it provides for her students.

In her years of teaching knitting as a therapeutic practice, Theresa has many favorite memories, but there is one moment that never fails to move her: “Every time a



*Photo courtesy of Theresa Ainsworth*

student finishes their first project, and they hold it up and say, ‘Oh my god, look what I just did.’ It happens all the time because

I’m constantly getting new students. There’s something about it—I just gave them a skill that they didn’t have before, and there is something so gratifying about that. It’s deeply meaningful when a student gets it.” One such experience stands out in particular. Theresa was teaching a student to knit, and the student was having trouble with



*Photo courtesy of Theresa Ainsworth*

a particular pattern. Theresa sat down with her one-on-one so that they could work through it together. “Finally, she got it,” Theresa recalls. “She started crying. She died the next week, and that was my last memory of her. I got the pattern that she was working on and knitted a sweater, and I call it Margaret’s sweater, because that was her name.”

Going forward, Theresa wants to expand One Thread. “I think there are many applications,” she says. “I would like this to be in women’s shelters. Sacramento has one of the largest immigrant communities in the country—I think that would be a wonderful way to connect cross-culturally.” As she looks to the future, Theresa is guided by her personal touchstone, a quote of unknown origin, the unofficial tagline of One Thread: “The act of knitting is a meditation, for the work of the hands compels the mind to rest and gives free rein to movements of the soul.”

***For more information about One Thread  
visit [One-Thread.com](http://One-Thread.com)***

One Thread is a project of Arts and Culture El Dorado’s Arts Incubator program.

The mission of One Thread is to empower individuals, groups, and communities through knitting lessons with expert instructors and the use of quality materials.



# A CONFIDENTIAL COLLABORATION

**G**reen Room Confidential: Unvarnished Reflections from Women on Stage, an upcoming play that combines comedic and dramatic elements with original songs, was the result of a years-long collaborative process that collected and curated the stories of women in the El Dorado County theater community. The writing process for the play was essentially crowdsourced, with local actors submitting their own vignettes and original songs, which were then reviewed and edited by committee. *Green Room Confidential*, then, was not “authored” in a traditional sense; instead, the raw material from the submissions was shaped and kneaded into a final, cohesive product by the team of editors. The final script represents a kind of anthology of original stories from local artists, organized around a central theme: being a woman in theater.



Chrissie performing in *Hair*. Photo courtesy of Chrissie Addison

Chrissie Addison, who is codirecting *Green Room Confidential* alongside Lisa Erwin, was instrumental in the development of the play. In keeping with the unorthodox, collaborative process by which the play was formed, Chrissie eschews traditional labels when describing her role in the project, instead calling herself a “focalizer”. Chrissie has lived in Placerville and worked in the local performing arts scene for 40 years. The connections that she has made over the decades proved invaluable for the development of *Green Room Confidential*, acting as

a network from which to pull submissions and key collaborators. Chrissie, who personally contributed several pieces to the play, is something of a Renaissance woman—a singer, writer, director, actor, teacher, and even candlemaker. She is retired from teaching, but she still works as a private acting and vocal coach, a role that provided the original spark of inspiration for the play: “I was coaching a woman who really wanted the part of Morticia in *The Addams Family*,” Chrissie explains. “Everyone at the auditions felt that she did a very strong job, but she was not selected. She went home and wrote a song, and just said, ‘I’m done



Chrissie Addison, co-director



Lisa Erwin, co-director

crying. I put it all into the song.” The song—which humorously skewers sexism and gender inequities in the performing arts community—would become the first of seven original songs in *Green Room Confidential*.

The play, which is patterned on familiar favorites



like *The Vagina Monologues* and *Spoon River Anthology* (as well as one of Chrissie's own original plays, *South Fork Confidential*, which provided the blueprint for *Green Room Confidential*), consists primarily of a series of vignettes. "So many voices are in this script," Chrissie says. "Over 40 women shared their stories—unbelievable stories that are true." Some of these vignettes are comic, others tragic, but they are all true—sometimes painfully so. "You have to be very careful working with people's real stories. Three of them are anonymous... Some women had to revisit some things that were not comfortable. So I was half therapist and half English teacher during this process."

As a deeply collaborative project that began during the pandemic, *Green Room Confidential* represents a remarkable triumph of community-building during a

time of profound isolation. In Chrissie's view, the play is inextricable from the time and the place in which it was made: "I've always thought that this town was really an enclave of artists. There's a lot of creativity in these hills... I think the pandemic was one of the reasons that people were so willing to share. They had been isolated, and everything had been turned upside down. People needed to share, I think, more than usual." While the creative process behind *Green Room Confidential* may have functioned as an antidote to pandemic malaise, the play itself will serve a different purpose for the El Dorado County community: "It's an opportunity for women in what is still a very male-dominated profession. I think we need to support women as much as possible, because they have so many stories to tell." That opportunity begins on January 21, when Chrissie and codirector Lisa Erwin hold the first day of auditions for the play.



Chrissie performing in *Hair*. Photo courtesy of Chrissie Addison

***Green Room Confidential*, co-directed by Chrissie Addison and Lisa Erwin with musical direction from Kevin Branson, will be performed at Theater One in Sacramento, opening April 21 and running through May 7.**

**Tickets will be on sale on TicketLeap.com by January 1.**

## AUDITION INFORMATION

**Saturday, January 21, from 2-5 pm at Crocker Creative House  
6205 Pleasant Valley Road, El Dorado**

**Sunday, January 22, from 2-5 pm at Unitarian Universalist Society of Sacramento  
2425 Sierra Blvd, Sacramento**

**\*Alternative audition times available upon request**

**For more information, visit the *Green Room Confidential* Facebook page or contact production manager Jean Koneishi-Kopania at [JeanKopania@att.net](mailto:JeanKopania@att.net)**





# RICH HISTORY AT POOR RED'S

**P**oor Red's, located in El Dorado, is renowned for being the birthplace of the legendary Golden Cadillac cocktail, but its historical importance runs deeper than the drink. Built in the 1850s, the building that now houses Poor Red's has also housed, at various points in its history, an apothecary, a Pony Express stop, a Wells Fargo, and a bar called Kelly's. Because its walls are made of placerite, a mineral found primarily in El Dorado County, Poor Red's was one of the few buildings in Diamond Springs to survive a devastating fire in 1923. But the historical importance of Poor Red's isn't just in the walls—it's also on the walls. As patrons sit at the bar and sip their classic cocktails, their eyes alight on murals, painted originally in the 1970s, that have become iconic in their own right, serving as vivid, neon-lit testaments to the spirit and history of Gold Country.

In one of life's ironies, these historic murals require periodic restorations due to the placerite walls on which they are painted. Anton Nemeth, who serves as the Gallery Manager for Arts and Culture El Dorado and was recently hired to restore one of the murals, explains that placerite, a kind of limestone, is porous enough to allow moisture to penetrate all the way to the interior, which over decades can cause a "chalky efflorescence" to build up on the mural, destroying or displacing the paint in the

process. For Jeff Genovese, one of the owners of Poor Red's, along with his brother Mike and their partner Mike Hountalas, the restoration and maintenance of these murals is essential. "The murals are very important," he affirms. "It just makes the place fun, and people love them. That's why we've got Anton in there; we're not going to let it go." When Jeff and his fellow owners bought Poor Red's in 2014, their first order of business was to preserve Poor Red's rich history for future generations to enjoy. "I've been going there since the 70s, when I was in college. You feel like you're going back in time... I'm passionate about history, and about this place. It's a unique, one-of-a-kind place, and we hope to keep it going for at least 50 more years."

The sweet Golden Cadillac draws barflies from around the world; yet the murals, which depict life in Gold Rush-era El Dorado, prove every bit as alluring—if not as intoxicating—to locals and visitors alike. For Anton Nemeth, a professional local artist, the murals are a pleasure to behold and an honor to restore. "If you sit at the bar, it depicts the kind of scene that is very evocative of what Poor Red's originally was. It's kind of a reminder, a mnemonic for where we came from and how we lived," he says. "Poor Red's is kind of a California tradition. I'm honored to have been chosen to work on those murals."





# ARTS INCUBATOR

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Arts and Culture El Dorado's Arts Incubator provides fiduciary oversight, financial management, and other administrative services to help build the capacity of cultural projects and emerging arts groups which are not 501(c)(3) organizations. Donations made to the project through the Incubator are considered charitable in nature and may be tax-deductible. Arts and Culture El Dorado accepts Incubator Partners which have an arts and culture focus and serve the public good.



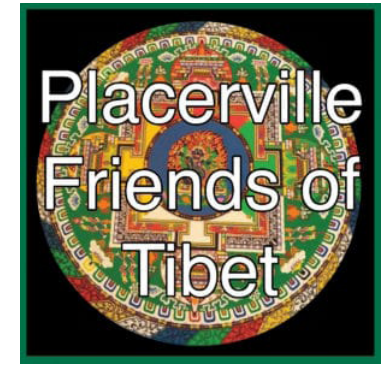
Green Room Artists Fund provides funding for entertainment and performing artists in El Dorado County



The Legion of Live Artists (LOLA) provides support and a living wage to local artists performing the act of visual art live at events



One Thread's mission is to empower individuals, groups and communities, through knitting lessons with expert instructors and quality materials



Placerville Friends of Tibet shares the culture of Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism within our region's communities



The mission of See the Elephant! is to make performance more accessible by providing opportunities and building partnerships in theatre and dance



Studio 81 is the drama club at El Dorado High School's theatre department under the direction of Program Director Paul Tomei

**Your tax-deductible contributions to these projects support cultural innovation in El Dorado County.**

**To donate or find out more, please visit our website: [ArtsAndCultureElDorado.org/arts-incubator](https://ArtsAndCultureElDorado.org/arts-incubator)**





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Arts and Culture El Dorado's mission to promote, connect, and empower arts and culture throughout the county is achieved by targeted programs and services, a vibrant gallery exhibition series, and a focus on initiatives which support and sustain the cultural life of the region.