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## Arts fans praise Brevard Cultural Alliance

*BY PAM HARBAUGH  
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Continued advocacy of local arts and culture was at the heart of a town hall-style meeting hosted Tuesday by the Brevard Cultural Alliance.

More than 40 artists and leaders in the arts and business gathered in the King Center rotunda for the Brevard Cultural Alliance meeting.

It was the first such town hall meeting since a series was hosted in 2006 in response to widespread complaints about the Brevard Cultural Alliance, Brevard County's umbrella arts organization. At the time, arts leaders said the Brevard Cultural Alliance was serving its own agenda, rather than that of the arts groups.

Tuesday's meeting was facilitated by Margot Knight, chief executive officer of United Arts, the Orlando-based local arts agency.

Knight, who also facilitated the earlier meetings, jokingly referred to those meetings as "riotous."

But instead of rancor, Tuesday's meeting turned into a Brevard Cultural Alliance love fest.

"All of us have noticed the improvements," said Fran DeLisle, executive director for the Brevard Symphony Orchestra.

"The BCA has made great strides into becoming a more useful organization," said John Wolcott, vice president for the Melbourne Chamber Music Society.

Brevard Cultural Alliance Board Chairman Lloyd Behrendt said much work has been done in the past three years to reshape the organization into one that more fully serves the arts community.

However, he also said the group needs to step up its marketing efforts on behalf of all the arts.

Already, the Brevard Cultural Alliance's Web site has a database of more than 700 artists, BCA Executive Director Shellie Williams said. It also is a platform for Web-based advertising and political action via e-mail lists, she said.

Richard Sabino, director of the Central Florida Winds, urged those in attendance to share their patron list with the Brevard Cultural Alliance's Web site.

Knight said smart cultural organizations around the country are doing exactly that, rather than being proprietary about patron lists. Sharing lists help grow audiences, she said.

Steve Janicki, executive director for the King Center, urged the Brevard Cultural Alliance members to get more involved with social networking like Facebook.

"If you all don't have a Facebook account, you've got to get with it," he said. "Viral marketing -- that's what it's all about."

Other suggestions from the meeting included:

- More rehearsal and performance space.
- Growing the collaboration among groups.
- Continuing the Fall for the Arts showcase, which was held at the beginning of the cultural season.

The meeting was preceded by a 16-page survey sent to Brevard Cultural Alliance members in February.

Williams said the number one issue raised in the survey was a need for more space.

She said she was "humbled" by the positive response, both at the meeting and on the survey.

"I thought there was going to be leftover angst," she said. "I think we understand we are all in this together."

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