The arts take center stage in Cripple Creek

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With the award-winning Ace Hardware in Cripple Creek, the Woods family has thrust the county into the spotlight of October as Arts Month. Sponsored by the Cultural Office of the Pikes Peak Region, Arts Month is an initiative that pays tribute to the creative wellsprings, art, music and dance, for instance.

Terri and Maurice Woods accepted the award at COPPeR's 10th annual Business and Art Lunch this month at the Antlers Hotel in Colorado Springs.

"The whole idea of the initiative is to increase awareness, engagement, and participation in artistic culture across the region," said Andy Vick, speaking at the commissioners' meeting Oct. 12. "Our initiative plays off of a national arts and humanities month that started back in the mid-80s."

Cripple Creek's Ace Hardware won COPPeR's Philanthropy award for the Woods' family support of the Butter Theatre and Thin Air Theatre Company. "A panel of judges looked at all the applications and realized that the family has been supporting the theatre for years in many different ways," Vick said. "And that's exactly the kind of business leader we want to celebrate. So congratulations on having a Cripple Creek/Teller County winner."

Subsequently, commissioners Marc Dettenrieder, Dave Paul and Norm Steen passed a resolution that includes this paragraph: "Whereas, the arts and humanities embody much of the accumulated wisdom, intellect and imagination of humankind and whereas the arts and humanities enhance and enrich the lives of every American..."

The auxiliary benefit of the artistic enterprises is the boost to the economy, which, in the Pikes Peak Region, amounts to $153.3 million a year. "Every time you go out and see a play, have dinner before the play, whatever it might be, it's creating economic impact, locally, as well as encouraging local tourism," Vick said.

At this, Cripple Creek's city administrator, Ray DuBois added a rah-rah note to October as Arts Month. A project initiated by Michelle Rozell, director of the city's Heritage Tourism, Ellen Moore, Rozell's assistant, and Renee Mueller, with the city's historic preservation department, feature art work displayed in empty storefronts on Bennett Avenue. "Also, we're displaying students' art at the Heritage Center and the Butter Theatre," DuBois said.

In the effort to boost the economy, the works by artists in Cripple Creek and Victor, are available for purchase at Cripple Creek businesses.

The theme behind arts month is to encourage people to experience at least one new cultural offering this month. "And what better way than from an invitation by a friend or family member to go out and see music, go to a play, a gallery - whatever it might be that's of interest to you,"