

## **Paper Mache for 11-21-25 by David Read**

As many of you likely know, Yuba Sutter Arts & Culture is in the midst of a major project, the reincarnation of the undeveloped back half of the Sutter Theater. Called the Main Stage, it will bring a 299-seat live performing arts space to the center of town. Architectural plans are 80% complete, mechanical and structural engineers are plying their trade, and a theater consultant has been retained to provide guidance on seating, lighting and sound design.

There is nothing original about what we are trying to accomplish. The work began 20 years ago when John Tuscano and Russ Clark bought the building, formed a nonprofit and began fundraising for the redevelopment of the front half of the building. Why does any of this matter? There's something almost poetic about old movie theaters like ours, these big, slightly faded gems that once held, in our case over 900 patrons, inside their glowing walls. Turning them into live performance spaces isn't just a renovation project; it's a renewal of identity, memory, and possibility. It's like breathing new life into an old building.

There's a special magic that happens when you walk into the Sutter Theater. It holds decades of stories; families lined up beneath a neon marquee, the laughter that once filled the air, the shared gasps at a Saturday matinee. The building is more than blocks and plaster. It's an emotional landmark. Guests tell us all the time about the movies they saw there, how their first job was selling tickets in our still intact ticket booth, and how relationships blossomed in the glow of the big screen. And when a community decides to transform a once-darkened movie house into a live performance venue, something transformative happens not only to the building, but to the people who surround it.

In small towns, cultural infrastructure is often the first thing to disappear and the last thing to be rebuilt. Affordable entertainment options shrink but reimagining an old theater as a live performance space pushes back against that narrative of lost creativity. For communities without ready access to the arts, a renovated theater becomes a rare and vital cultural anchor. Live performances, whether theater, music, dance, or community storytelling, bring people together in a special way and create a shared heartbeat. It invites neighbors to sit in the same room, breathe the same air, and experience the same moment. That may sound simple, but in rural regions that kind of togetherness is powerful medicine.

Economically, the fully renovated Sutter Theater Center for the Arts will continue to draw people downtown, and not just locals but visitors, artists, and performers who might never otherwise set foot on Plumas Street. Suddenly there's enhanced foot traffic, a reason for new investment, and a reason for community pride. What begins as a cultural restoration will blossom into broader economic revitalization. Socially, our theater will give residents a sense of ownership in the arts. When our students can audition for plays, learn stagecraft, or see their own artwork on display, it shifts their sense of what's possible. Arts participation is strongly linked to improved mental health, community belonging, and academic achievement. For many youths, especially those navigating various challenges, our many arts programs hosted at the Sutter Theater can be the first place they feel seen.

If any of this is resonating with you, then be sure to buy tickets to see our current production of "The Charitable Sisterhood Christmas Spectacular." All the proceeds from ticket sales go towards the renovation of the main stage. It's a pretty fair deal...we'll provide you with two hours of entertainment filled with laughs and love and you'll be helping the community's artistic and cultural landscape. Talk about a great quid pro quo!