



2018 Candidates Questionnaire Responses

St. Lucie Cultural Alliance asked local candidates to share their views on arts and culture and the quality of life value they bring to our community. SLCA reached out to all local St. Lucie County Commissioner and State of Florida house and senate candidates based on information available on the [Florida Department of State Candidate Tracking System](#).

We have compiled the responses we have received and will add additional responses as we receive them. SLCA applauds all of the 2018 candidates who responded and completed the questionnaire. Thank you for taking the time to educate and inform voters of your views.

Read on to get informed on the issues and be [sure to vote](#)! Note: SLCA does not endorse candidates for political office.

KEY POINTS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Arts and Cultural Contributions to Economic Vitality:

The arts and cultural sector leverages both private and public funding to contribute to economic development for St Lucie County.

We asked: How do you view public investment in the Arts & Cultural sector as it contributes to the economic vitality of St. Lucie?

Attracting the Best and Brightest for St. Lucie:

St. Lucie County's diverse arts and cultural activities complement Treasure Coast initiatives to attract and retain new talent and businesses, making our county an interesting and desirable location that supports both professional development and personal/family enjoyment and entertainment.

We asked: As an elected official, how would you work to make Arts & Culture a part of your economic development policies?

Educational Impacts and Arts Integrations:

There is a broad scope of education programs (including STEM/STEAM focuses) initiated and managed by the arts and cultural community in support of St. Lucie County students and teachers.

We asked: How would you describe the significance of art education programs and how would you support the continuation and growth of similar educational contributions within St. Lucie?

Enhancing Tourism and Cultural Destination:

Arts and cultural programs promote the County's reputation as a destination attracting tourists as well as providing affordable creative and entertainment opportunities for our residents.

We asked: Do you support public investment for Arts & Cultural initiatives to further develop St. Lucie County as a cultural destination?

Personal/Public Engagement:

Candidates were asked to describe their personal engagement with Arts & Cultural programs as a private citizen and to describe their prior work to support Arts & Culture through the public leadership roles (elected or other) which they have held.

We asked: How have you supported Arts & Culture in St. Lucie County through your work in public office and/or as a private citizen?

Anthony Bonna, Candidate County Commissioner, District 2

Q 1: How do you view public investment in the Arts & Cultural sector as it contributes to the economic vitality of St. Lucie?

RESPONSE: I believe public investment in the arts is essential to attracting top talent for our local companies.

Q 2: As an elected official, how would you work to make Arts & Culture a part of your economic development policies?

RESPONSE: Understanding the return on investment in the arts, I am committed to funding arts and cultural programs throughout St. Lucie County. These programs not only benefit our economy, but they enhance our community.

Q 3: How would you describe the significance of art education programs and how would you support the continuation and growth of similar educational contributions within St. Lucie?

RESPONSE: As a graduate of Georgetown University and having studied abroad in Florence, I share the Jesuit's philosophy of developing the "whole person." As Commissioner, I will continue to facilitate open dialogue to all, encourage partnerships, and be a public advocate.

Q 4: Do you support public investment for Arts & Cultural initiatives to further develop St. Lucie County as a cultural destination?

RESPONSE: Yes.

Q 5: How have you supported Arts & Culture in St. Lucie County through your work in public office and/or as a private citizen?

RESPONSE: I voted to support our arts program in St. Lucie County. I have taken an active role to support these efforts, including attending the website roll out this past March and many meetings with staff and the public. I'm proud to play a small part in our progress toward a self-sustaining entity in St. Lucie County.

Sean Mitchell, Candidate County Commissioner, District 2

Q 1: How do you view public investment in the Arts & Cultural sector as it contributes to the economic vitality of St. Lucie?

RESPONSE: The arts and culture are one of the most financially beneficial assets that a county can invest in. Communities deserve to have diverse opportunities to take in the arts. Some leaders don't consider the arts as essential to economic vitality. But I believe the opposite to be true. The arts attract both visitors and business to St. Lucie to invest their time and dollars.

Q 2: As an elected official, how would you work to make Arts & Culture a part of your economic development policies?

RESPONSE: As your Commissioner, I will advocate for arts and culture to ensure that they are always part of the vision for the future of our county. By tracking the economic impact of arts and culture in St. Lucie, we will be able to show our citizens how important these are to sustaining growth in St. Lucie. I will support policies that grow arts and culture, and aim to provide resources to give them as much support as possible.

Q 3: How would you describe the significance of art education programs and how would you support the continuation and growth of similar educational contributions within St. Lucie?

RESPONSE: Arts education is an area that is extremely important to me and my family. My son Patrick was the recipient of a full scholarship at Indian River State College to study Theatre and Music. I have seen firsthand the power of arts education in creating helping students understand more about the world around them and how to communicate and innovate in any subject. I pledge my support of our wonderful schools in St. Lucie County and any organization that is part of that important work.

Q 4: Do you support public investment for Arts & Cultural initiatives to further develop St. Lucie County as a cultural destination?

RESPONSE: I absolutely support a solid and sustainable investment for arts and culture in St. Lucie County. As I have mentioned before, investment in arts and culture goes beyond the gallery or stage. These endeavors raise the value and appeal of the entire community. Our county is in a unique position to offer the very best of what Florida has to offer. Our natural resources, our businesses, our education systems, and the arts only serve to create new possibilities in making St. Lucie a major cultural destination while maintaining our rich history. We have the ability to make St. Lucie a premiere location to explore arts and culture. We should all be behind that effort.

Q 5: How have you supported Arts & Culture in St. Lucie County through your work in public office and/or as a private citizen?

RESPONSE: I have always been an advocate for the arts. So many of the promising students and skilled craftsmen I have mentored, embody the spirit of innovation. I've stated throughout my campaign that one of the key factors that businesses and more companies are looking for these rare creative minds that can help solve the problem of the future. The arts are a pathway to those unique skills. My motto is 'people over politics', and nothing speaks to the heart and soul of people like the arts.

Nicole Haagenson, State Representative Candidate, District 54

Q 1: How do you view public investment in the Arts & Cultural sector as it contributes to the economic vitality of St. Lucie?

RESPONSE: I support public investment in the Arts and Cultural sectors. Public funding, especially through the public school system and in public displays, increases the attractiveness of the County to those considering moving to or visiting.

Q 2: As an elected official, how would you work to make Arts & Culture a part of your economic development policies?

RESPONSE: I would focus my attention on the public educational system in the County, including Indian River State College. Business growth and re-location depends on a stable, viable, and talented workforce. I am a proponent of the inclusion of the "Arts" as part of the normal school curriculum (Science, Technology, Engineering, ARTS, and Math). I will support policies and budgets that work toward that end.

Q 3: How would you describe the significance of art education programs and how would you support the continuation and growth of similar educational contributions within St. Lucie?

RESPONSE: Students that participate in arts education outperform those that do not in virtually all subject fields. The arts open up a student's creative potential and that is what encourages experimentation and exploration. This yearning to know, to learn, is the engine of responding to the future's unknown.

Q 4: Do you support public investment for Arts & Cultural initiatives to further develop St. Lucie County as a cultural destination?

RESPONSE: Yes. As a representative of this District in Tallahassee, I will support increased funding of Arts and Cultural initiatives that benefit this District.

Q 5: How have you supported Arts & Culture in St. Lucie County through your work in public office and/or as a private citizen?

RESPONSE: As a private citizen, I have supported art and cultural programs by my attendance at concerts, plays, and programs offered by Indian River State College and Sunrise Theater. I also purchase art from local artists and frequent the downtown Art Walk in Indian River County and the Vero Beach Museum of Art, where I live. I also host a company marketplace each quarter at my office. Employees bring in homemade goods, and fruits and vegetables from their gardens to trade and share with each other. This is also a fundraiser for local charities. Our last one raised money for an Iraq and Afghanistan monument (an art installation), that will be built in 2019 and will be located at Veteran's Memorial Island in Vero Beach, Florida.

SLCA has not yet received a response from Candidate Erin Grall.

Toby Overdorf, State Representative Candidate, District 83

Q 1: How do you view public investment in the Arts & Cultural sector as it contributes to the economic vitality of St. Lucie?

RESPONSE: It is needed compliment to local society & demographics

Q 2: As an elected official, how would you work to make Arts & Culture a part of your economic development policies?

RESPONSE: Encourage public/private partnerships.

Q 3: How would you describe the significance of art education programs and how would you support the continuation and growth of similar educational contributions within St. Lucie?

RESPONSE: Yes I would support this essential part of our educational programs.

Q 4: Do you support public investment for Arts & Cultural initiatives to further develop St. Lucie County as a cultural destination?

RESPONSE: Yes

Q 5: How have you supported Arts & Culture in St. Lucie County through your work in public office and/or as a private citizen?

RESPONSE: Our company supports Arts&Culture and my partner serves on the public arts board.

Matt Theobald, State Representative Candidate, District 83

Q 1: How do you view public investment in the Arts & Cultural sector as it contributes to the economic vitality of St. Lucie?

RESPONSE: I view a public investment in the arts as an investment in the health, well-being, and economic growth of our community and its citizens. The arts not only provide an outlet for individual expression, but they also provide economic opportunities in expanding markets. Additionally, the investment into local arts and the cultural scene could boost tourism in St. Lucie County.

Q 2: As an elected official, how would you work to make Arts & Culture a part of your economic development policies?

RESPONSE: As an elected representative, I would work with local arts councils, including the St. Lucie Cultural Alliance, to determine the various needs of the art community. As a legislator, I would help secure state and local funding for projects that promote economic development and an advancement of the arts here on the Treasure Coast.

Q 3: How would you describe the significance of art education programs and how would you support the continuation and growth of similar educational contributions within St. Lucie?

RESPONSE: As a teacher, I know the value of a quality education, and I believe art education is essential for the development of young people and for society as a whole. Supporting education programs, limiting barriers to participation, and expanding professional opportunities in the arts field are all vital to the advancement of society and culture in St Lucie County.

Q 4: Do you support public investment for Arts & Cultural initiatives to further develop St. Lucie County as a cultural destination?

RESPONSE: Absolutely.

Q 5: How have you supported Arts & Culture in St. Lucie County through your work in public office and/or as a private citizen?

RESPONSE: For as long as I can remember, I have valued the many forms of artistic expression. . I also enjoy attending arts and music festivals in the area, as well as patronizing and learning about local artists whenever possible.

SLCA has not yet received a response from candidates in the following races:

Candidates – County Commissioner, District 4:

- Helen Viviane Henderson
- Frannie Hutchinson

Candidates – Florida House of Representatives, District 55:

- Audrey Ascitutto
- Cary Pigman

Candidates – Florida House of Representatives, District 84:

- Mark Gotz
- Delores Hogan Johnson

Candidates – Florida Senate, District 25:

- Gayle Harrell
- Robert Levy