

OAKLAND DIGITAL ARTS & LITERACY CENTER: NEW SOURCE OF INSPIRATION AND PRACTICAL TRAINING

OAKLAND, Calif. (Nov. 16, 2009) -- Oakland has long been recognized as the birthplace, growing-up place or residence of artists and social visionaries. Just a few are actors Tom Hanks and Clint Eastwood, architects Julia Morgan and Bernard Maybeck; authors Amy Tan, Jack London and Ishmael Reed; dancer Isadora Duncan, politicians Jerry Brown and Barbara Lee; musicians John Lee Hooker and the Pointer Sisters; and entrepreneurs who founded Mrs. Fields Cookies, Ghirardelli Chocolate Company, and Kaiser Permanente.

The founders of the Oakland Digital Arts & Literacy Center (ODALC) stand on this legacy with their new vision to help turn Oakland into a thriving center of digital arts and entrepreneurial innovation. They envision great economic and creative success by partnering currently jobless or underemployed people in Oakland with some of the brightest minds in Oakland, Silicon Valley and beyond.

ODALC, which will formally launch first quarter 2010, is already putting together its first offerings: an online community and collection of resources for small business owners and non-profit organizations. Prominent guest speakers and instructors with a passion for helping others succeed are already being booked for presentations early next year.

The vision for ODALC began while Bay Area architect/designer/videographer and marketing expert Shaun Tai was filming a guest lecturer in social data guru Andreas Weigend's class at Stanford. As he enjoyed the enthusiasm of the *Data Mining and Electronic Business* students, Tai wondered, "What if anyone in Oakland could also have world-class teachers in the field of digital arts and technology? What if they, like Stanford students, could also discover the benefit of sites such as LinkedIn or cutting-edge Google applications from passionate experts who give their time to help others learn?"

Tai's vision and enthusiasm soon caught the attention of prominent San Francisco attorney Donald K. Tamaki, a partner at Minami Tamaki LLP, who specializes in business and nonprofit law. He helped Tai formally establish the Oakland Digital Arts & Literacy Center as a non-profit organization.

In Tai, Tamaki recognized a fellow social visionary with his feet on the ground and his brain fully engaged. Tai's youth (age 29) didn't faze Tamaki. As a UC Berkeley student 20 years ago, Tamaki and three fellow students had created the

Asian Health Services, which now experiences approximately 80,000 patient visits per year.

Tamaki also understands the power of drive that's connected to a passion for social justice. A nationally recognized "Super Lawyer," he served as a member of the pro bono legal team that successfully reopened the landmark Supreme Court cases of Fred Korematsu, Gordon Hirabayashi and Minoru Yasui and overturned their convictions for refusing to be interned during World War II. He lectures at UC Berkeley in connection with these historic legal events.

Andreas Weigend soon came on board as an advisor to ODALC, bringing his worldwide connections in the field of technology, and his enthusiasm for the possibilities of social data to impact the world. "Without meaning," he says, "the world can be pretty empty. People create meaning not alone but jointly with others. Look at how many people so passionately volunteered for Obama. Now that he's in the White House, it's time to direct some of that passion into meaningful projects that help people share and belong."

Weigend is excited about how technological innovation can be a great gift to people who now are under- or un-employed. "The costs of technology used to be a bottleneck to learning," says Weigend. "Now, people are more limited by their imagination or mindset because technology has become so cheap."

Ben Hazard, the former curator at the Oakland Museum and former director of the Craft & Cultural Arts for the Office of the Mayor, City of Oakland, is another enthusiastic advisor to ODALC. Hazard, who has taught art at Stanford, is now a full-time artist.

Founder Tai and his advisors are adamant that there are three keys to success: vision, a positive mindset and practical action. "We see ODALC helping people get up and move, to feel more important and better about themselves. We dream of being a source of inspiration and information for people of all cultures, ethnicities, backgrounds and ages. We see them helping each other to dream, to create positive mindsets, and then employ effective practical strategy to turn their creative, job or business dreams into reality."

ODALC will serve people of all ages. Its target service base, however, are 18-35 year-olds. This group went through school (if indeed they finished school) before the computer revolution, and many of them cannot commit to a community college. Many lack a support system that could help them stay out of trouble and

move towards a satisfying life. Tai and many other youthful presenters for ODALC have a special bond and ability to communicate with this group.

The organization also targets entrepreneurs. "Digital arts are enormously versatile," says Tai. "Digital art means everything in society today. A website, for example, combines a number of skills: graphic design, digital photography, illustration and coding. We want to go beyond just computer training. We want people to become fascinated with new opportunities to develop saleable skills – everything from creating impactful presentations for business meetings to using the internet as a source of networking."

Board member Doris Newsome is excited about the range of ages that will benefit from ODALC programs. Having served in the healthcare industry for over 20 years, she knows firsthand both the benefits of technology and the resistance that many people have to learning new procedures. "Everybody benefits when they are sparked with new possibilities. Kids may know Facebook and how to search for games, but how many of them know how to find the best information on the Net and elsewhere to guide their lives?"

"Kids need to learn to grasp things in their own ways and they need to be inspired," she adds. "Mama's telling them to go to college isn't enough. If they also hear people from Silicon Valley tell them how college can help them do something bigger and better, they're more likely to go to college and build a career they love."

Newsome is passionate about helping seniors enjoy the digital arts. She knows many doctors and grandparents who still don't know how to compose an e-mail or attach a photo or document. Others may be ready to delve into the digital arts for their own pleasure or part of a new volunteer or service opportunity.

The advisors and board members of ODALC are as practical as they are visionary. That's just how founder Shaun Tai envisioned it. Like his advisors, Tai has a solid track record of following a vision through to completion by applying sound thinking and a lot of solid work.

Tai can't remember when he wasn't learning the basics of business and design. He has been a lead designer in an established firm serving Uptown Oakland for over forty years.

Since 1995 Tai has been hooked on graphics and digital arts.

After obtaining his bachelors of arts in Digital Graphics at Cal State East Bay, Tai received a second degree in advertising (magna cum laude) and masters in Architectural & Urban Design from San Jose State University. While in graduate

school, he partnered with McCall Design Group of San Francisco and won a grand award for an affordable, sustainable second-unit green building. That architectural design now helps citizens of Humboldt County easily gain approval to build on their lots without going through a costly permitting process.

Tai is also an accomplished videographer whose clients include global social media power-house Facebook. His documentation of the history of Bay Area hip-hop culture exceeded 14-million video views in 2008. A car club he co-founded became the inspiration for a popular movie, "The Fast and The Furious" (2001).

Much as he loves exercising his many skills, Tai is most excited when he can connect and help bring people together through the digital arts. He believes that ODALC will be the vehicle to do so. "Our goal is to inspire," he often says. "We want people to create something new for themselves in a way that is innovative, practical and dignified. As technology expands its power, so will the ODALC and so will the community."

ODALC officially launches in the first quarter of 2010. For further information and to get involved, visit www.odalc.org or email info@odalc.org. Their blog www.inspireoakland.com includes a network of organizations, current events and stories of exciting visionaries.

About the Author

Pat McHenry Sullivan is the author of several books and many articles on how all work can be filled with increased integrity, purpose and joy. She loves helping entrepreneurs, artists and social visionaries create bankable business plans that are anchored in their deepest values and guided by their most compelling and creative visions.

Sullivan is the co-founder of the [Spirit and Work Resource Center](#) and the owner of [Visionary Resources](#) in Oakland. Pat's [blog](#) offers insights from all faiths about how all the ways we earn, spend, invest or share money can be more satisfying. Contact Pat at 510-530-0284 or pat@workwithmeaningandjoy.com.