

VIEWPOINTS

An update on Ogden's creative class

By MICHAEL VAUGHAN

Guest commentary

A decade ago, I wrote an article about Richard Florida's book *The Rise of the Creative Class*. The book makes the case that communities with an active arts and culture scene attract innovative entrepreneurs who span economic growth.

In light of Florida's theory, some recent articles in the national press bode well for Ogden.

After the Labor Day holiday, I sat down with a couple of fat editions of the New York Times to catch up on reading that I had missed over the weekend. In the art section, I read about a novel performance that pairs a radio host with a modern dance company to create a unique performance. On the business page there was a story of a young entrepreneur that wasn't afraid to go toe-to-toe with online retailer Amazon.

In between these two stories ads and calendar announcements promoted the movies that were opening in New York for the fall season.

Remarkably, all the things that I was reading were related to Ogden, Utah.

The dance performance described by the New York Times teams Ira Glass, the host of the long-running National Public Radio program *This American Life*, with the dancers Monica Bill Barnes and Anna Bass.

The program includes radio interviews restaged as dance performances. The performance is playing on the Upper West Side of Manhattan and receiving accolades from the critics.

In March, Weber State University will bring the same performance, titled *Three Acts, Two Dancers, One Radio Show Host*, to Ogden as part of WSU's Cultural Affairs series.

Ogden residents will have a chance to see the performance before folks in Seattle, Cleveland, Dallas and other major cities. Each year, Cultural Affairs brings world-class performers to Ogden, and *Three Acts, Two Dancers, One Radio Show Host* is one of six performances that Cultural Affairs will bring to Ogden this season. The complete season can be found at [\[turalaffairs.org\]\(http://turalaffairs.org\).](http://wsucul-</p></div><div data-bbox=)

The movie section of the Times mentioned a collection of independent films that had opened in New York in August and September. These included: *Calvary*, *The Last Days of Vietnam*, *The Trip to Italy*, and *Frank*. Some of these are likely to receive Academy Award nominations. These films will eventually find their way to Utah theaters.

However, all of these films have already played in Ogden as part of the 2014 Sundance Film Festival. The Sundance Festival gives Ogden residents the opportunity to see great films before the rest of the world. I look forward to next year's festival. Utah residents can register online to buy tickets for the 2015 Sundance Festival starting November 5.

The entrepreneur described in the Times article is Alan Martin, a former Weber State student who started the company *CampusBookRentals*. Martin's company began by allowing students to rent textbooks online. Currently, the company rents textbooks through kiosks located in campus bookstores.

Last year Alan's company had grown to \$21 million in sales, and has been ranked as the 17th fastest growing company by *Inc. magazine*. *CampusBookRentals* is a Utah success story that has been highlighted in numerous business publications. Martin is one of a growing number of entrepreneurs who are locating their businesses in Northern Utah.

In "The Rise of the Creative Class," Florida maintained that regions have shifted to knowledge-based economies, and creativity has become the key ingredient for economic growth and prosperity.

In Florida's view, arts and culture and entrepreneurship are inexorably linked. In the decade since I wrote that article, I am encouraged to see that the national press is providing evidence that arts and culture as well as entrepreneurship are flourishing in Northern Utah.

I hope this trend continues.

Michael Vaughan is Weber State University's provost. He accepts e-mail from Standard-Examiner readers at mvaughan@Weber.edu.