



November 28, 2015

Dear Members of the Review Committee:

There are many points I could share in support of REsolve Studios' partnership with Building Bridges to Careers. I could share how often the members our artist collective hear educators lament their students' decreasing ability to make imaginative leaps. I could speak of our regions' high rates of unemployment, poverty and the importance, in those conditions, of modeling to young people, attractive alternatives. I could speak of a strong sense of isolation and hopelessness as evidenced in our community's struggles with addiction to pain killers and heroin. Any of these topics could make for a compelling argument, but I focus not on what isn't working at optimal levels and instead I choose to speak of reasons for hope.

REsolve works like a heartbeat. We push out and then we draw back in.

As a Partner in Education with local schools like Harmar Elementary and by working closely with Building Bridges to Careers, to mentor middle school students in our district, we put our process into action, with activities like touring our collection of original contemporary art and by returning home to care for our neighborhood art gardens. From initial proposal to final execution of artistic designs, we share with students, a rich experience in how to make ideas happen by involving young people every step of the way.

In the last year alone we've traveled to Pittsburgh, Columbus and NY State, sharing our vision of a stronger Appalachia. When *taking our show on the road*, we are consistently reminded that people are hungry for the depth of connection we share. Time and time again, people say to us that they want what we have. And this begs the question, what do they see in us? I'd answer that question by saying REsolve is not driven by policies.

There's no operations manual to turn to when hard decisions come our way.

For those moments we must look to our own hearts for guidance, and as a group working like a healthy family, we are made vulnerable by sharing what we see inside. A life in the arts is deeply nourishing, but its risky business – not for the faint of heart. False bravado, posturing, these don't last long here with us.

Our deeply held principles feel very Appalachian to me.

- A balanced reciprocity
- An egalitarian inclusivity
- A self-reliant independence that does not serve to isolate us but rather empowers us to work together both inside this family and out in a spirit of openness and generosity

In recent year, REsolve has been working with students in something akin to a “classroom without walls” approach. We take great pride in seeing the sense of accomplishment shared with young people hungry for opportunity. The Epicenter would empower students and teachers alike with a whole new level of real world opportunity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Geoffrey Schenkel". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with some loops and flourishes.

Geoffrey Schenkel

Artist and Founder

REsolve Studios