



Hula Halau 'O Lilinoe brought ancient Hawaiian dance and music to the 64th National Folk Festival in Bangor, Maine. Photo courtesy of Bangor Daily News

Challenge America

Challenge America is a major National Endowment for the Arts initiative, begun in FY 2001, to strengthen America's communities through the unique power of the arts. In FY 2002, Congress appropriated \$17 million for the program, which focused on access to the arts, arts education, and community arts development initiatives.

Organizations and individuals from the public, private, and nonprofit sectors—arts organizations and artists, state arts agencies, local arts groups, social service and civic organizations, businesses, teachers, and schools—were encouraged to strengthen and build innovative partnerships through this initiative.

In the second year of the initiative, Challenge America funds were distributed in four ways:

- **Access to the Arts Grants**, in which the NEA awarded 60 grants to provide artists and art projects to underserved communities.
- **Fast Track Grants**, in which the NEA awarded more than 400 small grants of \$5,000 or \$10,000 under a streamlined application and review process to support arts education projects for at-risk youth and community arts development projects.
- **State and Regional Partnerships**, in which the NEA invested 40 percent of Challenge America in ongoing partnerships with state arts agencies to support the initiative's goals.
- **Leadership Initiatives**, in which the NEA collaborated with other national organizations and federal agencies in new community-based arts projects.

FISCAL YEAR 2002 FACTS AND FIGURES Challenge America

Dollar Amount of Access
to the Arts Grants:
\$2,272,000
Dollar Amount of
Fast Track Grants:
\$3,680,000
Dollar Amount of
Partnerships:
\$6,760,000
Dollar Amount of
Leadership Initiatives:
\$3,550,000

Access to the Arts Grants

The NEA offered, for the first time, Access grants under Challenge America to broaden efforts to provide opportunities for the American people to experience the excellence and diversity of the arts. These grants sought to provide a wide range of art forms and activities for people to experience and participate in, to enable arts organizations and artists to expand and diversify their audiences, and to emphasize the potential of the arts to help strengthen communities.

NEA Supports National Folk Festival Held in Bangor, Maine

Since 1934, the annual National Folk Festival has been held in 27 different communities across the country, providing a vast array of America's finest folk and traditional arts to the public. In FY 2002, the National Council for the Traditional Arts—with support from an NEA Challenge America Access to the Arts grant of \$80,000 given to the Eastern Maine Development Corporation—held the free-to-the-public event in Bangor, Maine, the first time the festival has been held in the state. Bangor—with a population of 30,000, the smallest city to sponsor the festival—will host the event for three years before it moves to a different community.



The National Folk Festival is the oldest multicultural, traditional arts celebration in the nation, featuring music and dance performances, workshops, storytelling, craft exhibitions, and foods highlighting the richness and variety of American culture. Programming embraces the heritage and traditions of all Americans—from those whose families have been here for centuries to those of the most recent immigrants. The festival has been on the cutting edge of American culture since it began, hosting the first performance by W.C. Handy on a desegregated stage. It is the first festival to begin involving arts of different cultures on equal footing, the first to use scholars as presenters, the first to include craft demonstrations: these are staples of folk festivals today.

Recognizing the contributions that the French and their descendants made to folk culture in Maine, a portion of the 2002 National Folk Festival focused on the French legacy in North America, including Quebecois, Cajun, and Creole acts, as well as French food and craft offerings. The festival also presented a diverse lineup of traditional artists representing many cultures, including Native-American, Hawaiian, Tibetan, Afghan, Finnish, and Mexican among others, as well as hybrids such as Brian Marshall and his Tex-Slavik Playboys, who played a bend of swing, country-western, and polka music.

As part of the opening ceremonies of the festival, Passamaquoddy basketmaker Clara Neptune Keezer received her NEA National Heritage Fellowship award from U.S. Senator Susan Collins. Additionally, the festival presented traditional Maine artists and craftspeople, helping residents and tourists discover the state's rich culture. The festival proved popular in Bangor, drawing one of the largest first-year crowds, estimated at more than 100,000 people.

Luke Morneau, 6, of Biddeford, Maine, joins Nathan Williams of Nathan and the Zydeco Cha Chas onstage during the 64th National Folk Festival in Bangor, Maine. *Photo by Kevin Bennett, courtesy of Bangor Daily News*

Fast Track Grants

Fast Track Grants in the second year of Challenge America fell into two categories: Positive Alternatives for Youth and Community Arts Development. These grants supported arts education and community-wide outreach projects that served rural and other underserved areas. Streamlined review and administrative processes brought projects to communities on an accelerated timetable. The small grants served the arts organizations in two ways: the NEA's involvement provided credibility to their projects with the local communities, and the grants worked as seed money for the projects to help organizations leverage additional funding from other public and private sources.

Washington State To Celebrate Lewis & Clark Bicentennial with Maya Lin-Designed Art Works

In January 1803, President Thomas Jefferson initiated funding for a small U.S. Army unit to explore the Missouri and Columbia Rivers. The expedition, led by Captains Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, traversed the continent from east to west, across the newly acquired land of the Louisiana Purchase, finally arriving at the Pacific Ocean in 1805. Covering 5,000 miles of territory, their discoveries helped define the continent's interior, along the way collecting plant and animal specimens for science and, most significantly, developing relationships with diverse tribes of Native Americans.

To celebrate this important event in America's history, in FY 2002 the NEA awarded three Challenge America Community Arts Development grants of \$10,000 to each of the arts organizations arranging the Confluence Project in Washington state. This project—organized by Pacific County Friends of Lewis and Clark of Long Beach, Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Commemorative Committee of Vancouver, and Lewis and Clark Asotin County Bicentennial Committee of Clarkston—will provide interpretative sites by internationally renowned artist Maya Lin at or near key confluences along the Columbia River where the Lewis and Clark expedition

encountered Native Americans. The confluences are located in the homelands of three Washington state tribes—the Nez Perce, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla, and the Chinook Nation—and represent not just confluences of rivers and ecosystems, but also of Euro-American and Native American cultures. The work is slated to be completed in conjunction with the 2005 bicentennial of the completion of the Lewis and Clark expedition.

Maya Lin, best known as the designer of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC, will include building and landscape designs as well as integrated artwork. The project will be a first for Lin—the first time she designs a unified work that will exist in multiple sites. Her ability to meld natural and artistic elements together—like the use of water and Martin L. King Jr.'s words at the Civil Rights Memorial in Montgomery, Alabama or the way the wall of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial cuts into the earth—makes her an especially apt choice for creating artwork that reflects both the natural and cultural confluences at the sites.



Sacjawa State Park, one of the sites for the Maya Lin-designed art works to celebrate the bicentennial of the Lewis and Clark expedition. *Photo by Duncan Haas*

NEA Provides Support for Artist Residencies at Elementary Schools in Rural Kentucky

Clay County is an economically distressed rural county in southeastern Kentucky, ranked 119th out of 120 Kentucky counties for child well-being, with a child poverty rate of 44 percent. It is not a place where the arts are readily available to children either in school or in the community. The Clay County Cooperative Extension Service—in partnership with the Clay County School District, Clay County Public Library, and Eastern Kentucky Storytelling Guild—has created a program to bring the arts to these underserved youth.

Using a Challenge America Positive Alternatives for Youth grant of \$10,000, the partnership assembled a series of short-term, before-school artist residencies and an after-school arts program that serves approximately 700 underserved elementary school students in Clay County.

The artist residency program was designed specifically for rural areas of the county where transportation problems do not allow many of the disadvantaged children to participate in after-school programs. However, most of the students arrive at school 45 minutes before classes begin. To take advantage of this free time, an “Arts Start” program was developed, presenting 36 short-term artist residencies in the family resource centers located in or adjacent to the nine elementary schools during the school year. The residencies involved various artistic disciplines, including visual arts, music, storytelling, creative writing, and folk arts. After the residencies were completed, the time was used as an “arts club” for the students to practice, share, and further develop the skills they learned during the residencies.

The after-school program was aimed at youth living in Manchester, the county seat. Many of the children’s parents work out of the county and do not arrive home until late, so an “Arts at the Library” program was developed to provide a series of programs in collaboration with local folk artists. The program, presented from 3:30 – 7:30 pm every Thursday for twenty weeks, culminated in presentations of artwork by both the artists and participating youth.

The artists and key professional personnel have vast collaborative experience in youth arts, having presented in-school programming to youth in folk arts and storytelling, implemented more than 50 highly successful in-school artist residencies, and led the development of two regional community arts networks with an emphasis on youth and heritage education. Four of the participating artists are current or former artists on the Kentucky Arts Council Arts-in-Education roster and have conducted residencies throughout the state.



Storyteller Nana Yaa Asantewa shares traditional African tales with students at Big Creek Elementary School as part of Clay County Cooperative Extension’s artist residency program. *Photo courtesy of Clay County Cooperative Extension*

State and Regional Partnerships

State arts agencies and regional arts organizations received Challenge America funds in FY 2002 through their Partnership Agreement awards (see page 36). Funds are designated for new or ongoing projects that advance the goals of community arts development, arts education, cultural heritage/preservation, or access to the arts.

Colorado Council on the Arts provides Online Arts in Education Project in Poetry for Colorado Schools

In 2001, the Colorado Council on the Arts began developing an Online Arts in Education Pilot Project, with support from NEA Challenge America funds. In FY 2002, the Council used \$30,000 of these funds to support second-year activities of the pilot project. Working in collaboration with the University of Colorado and the Academy of American Poets in New York City, the Council is providing the teacher training and artists-in-residence program in poetry to three underserved Colorado school districts.

Nine teachers and three poets worked together with curriculum and technology specialists to develop standards-based curriculum units that incorporate a wide range of contemporary poems with telecommunications technology. This online arts education training program will make teaching resources available on the Internet to teachers and artists, especially those in underserved areas of Colorado. One of the goals of the project is to create an active and ongoing community of Colorado teachers and poets dedicated to incorporating poetry into the classroom and to sharing innovative approaches for teaching poetry across the curriculum.

During the school year, high school English teachers from Alamosa, Antonito, Montrose, and Denver have been working with the three poets to implement the curriculum units they developed and conduct online and in-classroom poet residencies. Participating teachers across Colorado will also be able to collaborate on lesson plans and projects.

One of these units, for example, was created by Bruce Grigsby of Montrose High School on Shakespeare's *King Lear*. The unit, using Act IV of the play as its centerpiece, explores not only Shakespeare's poetic verse but also draws connections to contemporary poems that reflect the themes encountered in the play. The unit consists of self-contained lesson plans that need not be used sequentially or completely to be effective. The technology of the Internet and presentation softwares were used to explore background issues, present selected vocabulary, find links to audio and video performances, and access contemporary poetry.

The pilot project is an opportunity to boost the quality of arts education and accessibility to arts-in-education resources.



An example of the lesson plans available on the Online Poetry Classroom Web site (www.onlinepoetryclassroom.org) supported by the Colorado Council on the Arts.

Leadership Initiatives

One of the major Challenge America Leadership Initiatives in FY 2002 was a \$1.2 million grant to Arts Midwest to sponsor the Shakespeare in American Communities project. As mentioned in the Year in Review section of this report, the touring program begins in FY 2003. Other projects funded under this category include Phase II of Continental Harmony, a program started in FY 2000 to bring composers to American communities to create a work of art for them, and the New Public Works program, which sponsored design competitions throughout the country.

Composer Philip Aaberg Creates Musical Composition for Kansas

The Continental Harmony initiative began in 2000 through a collaboration between the NEA and the American Composers Forum in St. Paul, Minnesota to help small towns and large cities all across the United States celebrate community life with music. From an initial applicant pool of 175, 58 organizations were chosen—with at least one from each of the 50 states—to host a composer who would work with the community to create a new musical work celebrating each community's history and culture. The musical ensembles ranged from choirs to jazz bands to symphony orchestras, with the composers working with local musicians to perform the pieces. The symbiosis between composer and community led to a great pride in the community and a greater interest in music, as well as the creation of many great new compositions.

In FY 2002, the NEA funded Phase II of the initiative, with 35 communities across the country being selected to host composer residencies through 2005. One of the communities participating in the project is in southcentral Kansas, involving Arkansas City and Wichita. Philip Aaberg of Montana is the resident composer. Aaberg's work has been favorably compared to Dvorák and Sibelius, and he often uses the imagery of the American West as the basis for his compositions. Recent commissions include a work for cello and piano based on Gary Snyder's epic poem, "Mountains and Rivers Without End."



Philip Aaberg on piano and Eugene Friesen on cello performing Aaberg's composition *Headfirst into the Blue Fields of Grace*, written as part of the Continental Harmony initiative. Photo by Connie Bonfy

The piece he created was entitled *Headfirst into the Blue Fields of Grace*, taken from the last line of Kansas poet Harley Elliott's poem "Waking in Some Good Person's Yard." The piece consisted of a concerto for three soloists—Aaberg on piano, Darol Anger on violin, and Eugene Friesen on cello—playing with a string quartet and a woodwind quartet. The Cowley County Community College put together a coalition of community groups, including Chamber Music at the Barn, to carry out the residency and have the music performed. The new work premiered in June 2003 at the annual PrairieFest in Arkansas City with a second performance at the Barn in Wichita. The concerts reached an estimated 37,000 people living in rural Cowley County (which includes Arkansas City) and 300,000 people living in the city of Wichita.

Aaberg's residency in Arkansas City and Wichita involved getting to know the people of the communities, researching local history and culture, working with students, and making presentations to community groups. He also participated in activities in both urban and rural settings, such as preview house concerts, master classes, applied creativity workshops, and rural chuck-wagon dinners.

NEA's New Public Works Initiative Supports Design of Mixed Income Housing in California

The New Public Works initiative helped fund national design competitions that resulted in a range of public projects from schools to housing to parks. The NEA's support defrayed the costs of running these national competitions, including funding for honoraria to participating designers and jurors. Bringing institutions from across the country together with the best design talent, the initiative raised the expectations and aspirations for public work, and increased popular awareness of the importance of design in daily life. The winning projects will develop the highest quality of design for these community structures, involving landscape architecture, urban planning, architecture, and industrial design.

In FY 2002, the NEA awarded \$850,000 for 13 projects. An award of \$50,000 was given to the Local Initiatives Support Corporation and Livable Spaces of Los Angeles, California to support a national design competition for the urban design and planning of a former industrial site. The site will include approximately 50 units of affordable housing, mixed-use commercial/retail, and other amenities, and will be a prototype for new housing throughout the country.

The site of the competition is an 11.6-acre former industrial site in Carson, California, an ethnically diverse suburb of Los Angeles where the majority of residents are African-American, Asian, or Latino. A portion of the "for sale" and rental housing will be marketed to families earning less than 80 percent of the area median income of \$44,000. The design competition helped bring in a greater range of high-quality designers and architects, creating many innovative models for the housing.

Stage one of the competition was open to licensed architects and architectural firms in the United States. Nearly 100 applications were received. Five finalists were selected by a competition committee to compete in stage two of the competition: Behnisch, Behnisch & Partner of Los Angeles and Berlin, Germany in partnership with Blackbird of Santa Barbara, California; Central Office of Architecture of Los Angeles; Brian Healy Architects of Boston, Massachusetts; McCormick, Smith and Others Architects in partnership with Lloyd Russell, both of San Diego, California; and Touraine and Richmond of Los Angeles.

Each of the selected finalists received an honorarium of \$10,000 plus a travel stipend to prepare an urban design plan for the site, and schematic perspective, and elevation of the proposed 50 units. The winner, McCormick, Smith and Others with Lloyd Russell, was selected July 28, 2003. A show of the finalists' proposals will be held at the Los Angeles Museum of Architecture and Design.

McCormick, Smith and Others' winning design in the New Public Works competition to create new mixed-use units in a former industrial site. *Images courtesy of McCormick, Smith and Others*

