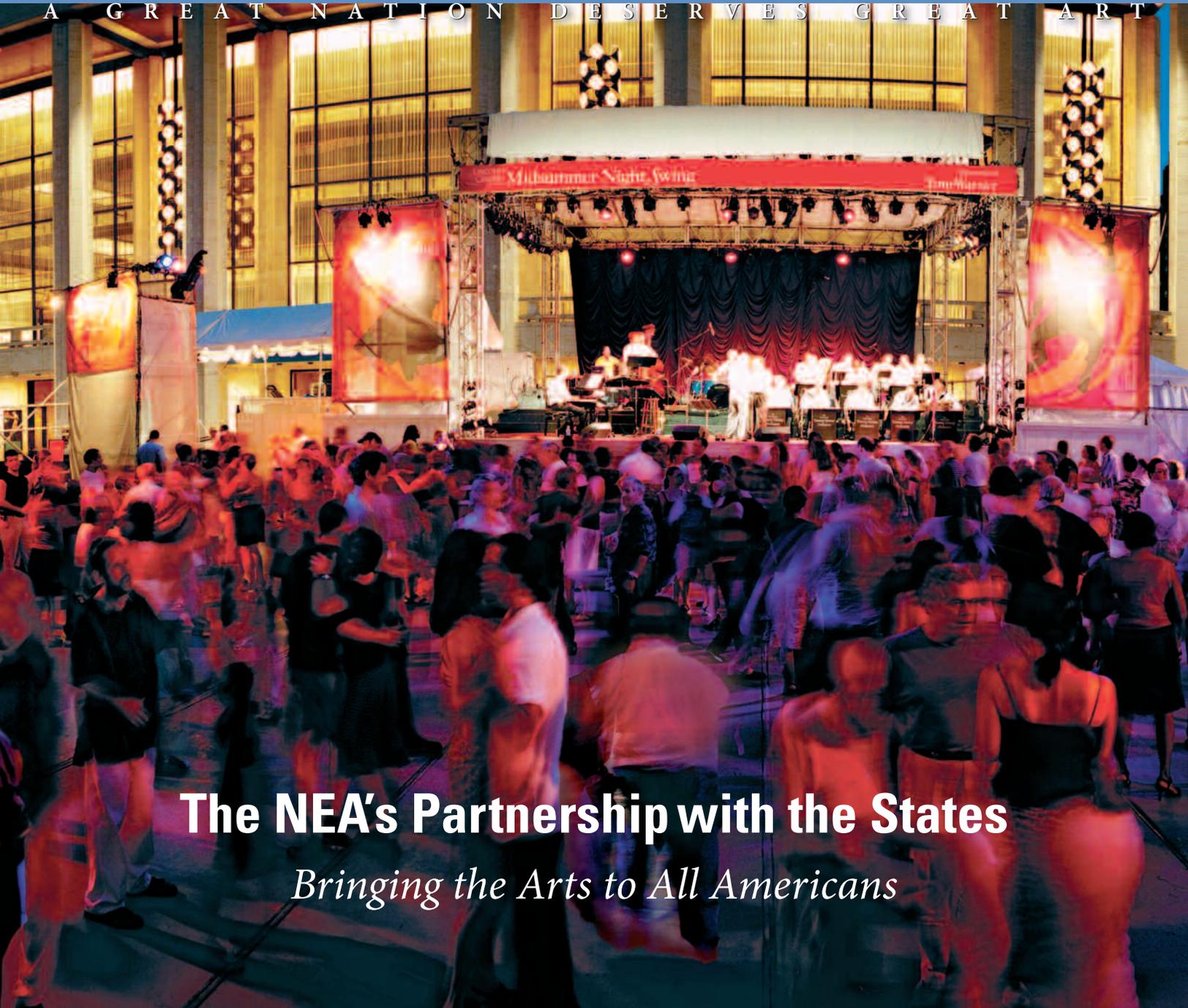




NATIONAL  
ENDOWMENT  
FOR THE ARTS

# NEARTS

A GREAT NATION DESERVES GREAT ART



## The NEA's Partnership with the States

*Bringing the Arts to All Americans*

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# Partnership with the States

## Bringing the Arts to All Americans

Since the **National Endowment for the Arts** (NEA) was established in 1965, it has worked in partnership with the 56 state, territorial, and jurisdictional arts agencies (SAAs) and six multi-state regional arts organizations (RAOs) to meet the Arts Endowment's goal of bringing the arts to all Americans. This dynamic relationship has resulted in an exemplary record of growth for the arts, stimulating an extraordinary economic impact in communities throughout the country. With the NEA's assistance and funding, SAAs and RAOs are recognized today as leaders in the arts.

SAAs and RAOs support local arts activities in several ways. One is by promoting arts education, often through support for artist residencies at schools, professional development for teachers, and curriculum development. Another is to develop the arts in under-

served communities by strengthening the work of artists and arts organizations and by expanding opportunities for residents to experience the arts. A third way that SAAs and RAOs support arts activities is through creative economy initiatives, which focus on using local arts and cultural development to generate economic growth.



**State and Regional Partnerships  
Director John E. Ostrout. Photo by  
Kevin Allen.**

These are just a few of the ways SAAs and RAOs bring the arts to Americans. These organizations also partner with the NEA to implement its National Initiatives program, which was created by the Arts Endowment in 2003 to reach more Americans who may not have ready access to the arts. The celebrated initiative Poetry Out Loud is a fine example of the SAAs working directly with the NEA to create a national education program highlighting the oral tradition of poetry.

The NEA's collaborations with the SAAs and RAOs also extend to work with the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies (NASAA), which is the national service organization for the states. The NEA works with NASAA on accessibility and national leadership services, among other issues. The model projects presented on the following pages demonstrate the vitality of the NEA's partnership with the states on local arts activities.

*John E. Ostrout*

*Director, State and Regional Partnerships*



NATIONAL  
ENDOWMENT  
FOR THE ARTS

A great nation  
deserves great art.

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#### ON THE COVER:

**NEA grants to state and regional arts agencies support community arts events throughout the country. The New York State Council on the Arts provides funding to Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, Inc. for many of its public arts events. Photo by Klaus Lucka.**

# Comrades in Arts

## Delivering Great Art to Local Communities

**The NEA early on realized** that the only way to reach its ambitious goal of bringing great art to all Americans was to work in partnership with the states. In fact, at one of its earliest meetings, the National Council on the Arts declared its “belief in state responsibility for the arts.” Today the NEA works hand-in-hand with the 56 state, territorial, and jurisdictional arts agencies (SAAs) and six regional arts organizations (RAOs) to ensure that the arts thrive—and are accessible to all citizens—nationwide.

Forty percent of the NEA’s budget is allocated to these critical alliances. For fiscal year (FY) 2008, that represented a federal investment of \$47.8 million dollars toward state and regional arts budgets. The SAAs also receive funding from their state governments; in 2008 states invested more than \$359.6 million in the arts. The NEA requires each SAA and RAO to present a detailed strategic plan, vetted through a panel process, that demonstrates how each organization will use its combined federal and state funds to meet the needs of its constituents. This process gives the organizations credibility as they seek additional program funds from state government.

The state arts agencies direct a number of programs, including creative economy, public policy, and arts education initiatives, and give grant support to local arts agencies, local arts organizations, and state folk arts infrastructure programs. The SAAs also support NEA’s goals for Challenge America—to provide arts access to underserved communities—and American

Masterpieces—to make the accomplishments of the nation’s artists better known to all citizens.

The regional arts organizations broaden the reach of the arts across state lines and into rural areas through high quality touring programs. Their activities include developing and managing touring visual arts exhibitions; convening performing arts and educational conferences; and funding regional literature, visual arts, and performing arts projects as part of the NEA’s Regional Arts Touring Program. The RAOs also facilitate international collaborations between the U.S. and countries such as Japan and Mexico.

In addition, the RAOs work with the Arts Endowment to administer NEA national initiatives. For example, Arts Midwest manages Shakespeare in American Communities, The Big Read, NEA Jazz Masters Live,

and also coordinated the Operation Homecoming film. Arts Midwest Executive Director David Fraher said, “In addition to assisting the NEA to achieve its goals, which is good for the entire arts community, the national initiatives allow Arts Midwest to develop new expertise and cultivate new arts partners within and beyond our nine states, which ultimately benefits our region as well.”

The following pages profile just a few of the transformative arts projects supported through these important partnerships. To find out more about your state and regional arts agencies go to [www.arts.gov/partner/state/SAA\\_RAO\\_list.html](http://www.arts.gov/partner/state/SAA_RAO_list.html).



**Jessica Daley is a member of Koresh Dance Company, a Philadelphia-based troupe that has seen its bookings triple since joining the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts’ PennPAT roster of touring artists. Photo by Gabriel Biencycki.**

# Lift Every Voice and Sing

## Tennessee Arts Commission Presents the Fisk Jubilee Singers

**Tennessee Arts Commission** (TAC) Executive Director Rich Boyd says the arts make life in Tennessee “richer and rewarding,” not surprising for a state that helped birth both the blues and country music. TAC was established in 1967 to stimulate the arts throughout the state and to encourage interest in Tennessee’s cultural heritage. In FY 08, the commission invested \$6.6 million in arts programs through direct grants in 23 different categories, with additional indirect support through its Arts Build Communities and Student Ticket Subsidy programs.

Fisk University, a historically Black university founded in 1866, received a 2007 grant from TAC to support a statewide tour of the historic Fisk Jubilee Singers. For more than 130 years this internationally renowned a cappella choir has sung and preserved the songs of the American Negro spiritual tradition, performing at such diverse venues as the United Nations, the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade, and Ghana’s 50th anniversary of independence celebration.

Despite their international acclaim and induction into the Gospel Music Hall of Fame, however, the ensemble was not very well known at home. This made it a perfect fit for TAC’s American Masterpieces program, which aims to acquaint Tennessee’s citizens with the best of its cultural heritage. The multidisciplinary project involved several TAC program areas, including folk arts, arts education, and arts access, which provides direct support for projects by arts organizations of color and to organizations whose programs primarily benefit persons of color.

The grant has enabled the Fisk Jubilee Singers to perform at several of Tennessee’s historic venues, including Memphis’s Orpheum Theater and Knoxville’s Tennessee Theatre, as well as at Nashville’s new Schermerhorn Symphony Center. The tour also included educational concerts for students, which featured post-performance

question-and-answer sessions and other opportunities for the students to personally interact with the singers.

Another project outcome was the creation of educational materials for grades 1–12, including a teacher’s guide that follows state education standards, a video documentary of the group’s history, and *In Bright Mansions*, one of the group’s most popular recordings. Boyd



**The Fisk Jubilee Singers’ performance at the Dixie Carter Performing Arts and Academic Enrichment Center in Huntingdon, Tennessee, supported by a Tennessee Arts Commission grant. Photo by Nicole Kaklis.**

said, “The education kits are in every public and private school in Tennessee, and they’re also in every school, university, and municipal library.” TAC also has helped the Fisk Jubilee Singers to build their organizational capacity by upgrading their equipment, buying uniforms, and developing quality promotional materials.

“I can simply say that the grant and working with TAC has helped to open a lot of doors culturally and educationally,” reported the group’s musical director Paul Kwami.

Boyd added that the relationship has been mutually beneficial for the arts commission’s staff. “It’s made us better arts managers and administrators and people, just being involved in this project. And that’s from the heart.”

# Fostering a Creative Economy

## Maine Arts Commission Quantifies Benefits of the Arts

**The smokestacks** of many New England mill towns may lie dormant, but in Maine, the arts are fueling a new kind of industrial revolution. Since Governor John Elias Baldacci took office in 2002, the Maine Arts Commission has been a national leader in demonstrating the value of arts-based economics to the success of Maine's towns and cities. Through a series of symposiums and surveys, the commission has determined that the creative economy generates an estimated \$3.7 billion in cultural tourism dollars for the New England region, qualifying it as a major regional export industry. This research, which quantified how the presence of artists and creative businesses benefit the state, has served as the cornerstone of new statewide policies that promote arts-based local community development.

Commission Director Donna McNeil indicated that the ball really got rolling in 2004 at the commission's Blaine House Conference, a two-day gathering of artists and public policy makers held at a renovated mill in Lewiston. Featured speaker Richard Florida, author of *The Rise of the Creative Class*, explained his theory of economy-based arts advocacy. But what really energized the crowd was the clear-voiced challenge of Gov. Baldacci.

"We will open the door even wider to everyone in this state who wants to invest in the creation of good-paying jobs and vibrant communities," the governor said in his opening address. "Today we will open the door even wider to the concept that every Maine person can reach his or her full potential if we embrace the arts, embrace creativity, embrace diversity, embrace entrepreneurship, embrace innovation."

Baldacci's enthusiastic support has inspired local officials to see opportunity in the arts galleries lining small-town streets. "That was really the beginning," McNeil said. "The creative economy philosophy has taken hold in Maine."

McNeil and her staff work with artist agencies and groups across the state, helping them convince local offi-



**Artist Holly Meade—one of Maine's visual artists who are fueling the state's creative economy—working on woodblock prints at her home studio, Reach Road Gallery, in Sedgewick, Maine. Photo by Jenny Smick.**

cial that a few art galleries and bookstores beget restaurants and coffee shops, and the next thing you know, a small town is drawing tourists. For example, a survey showed that 58 percent of visitors to the Farnsworth Art Museum came to Rockland, a midcoast city of 7,600, with the museum as their only planned destination. But for every dollar these visitors spent on museum admission, they spent another \$1.56 at other area businesses, proof the arts can be an economic generator.

Since the Blaine House Conference, the commission has released nine reports on topics ranging from commerce to quality of life. A little of this data goes a long way when McNeil interacts with state officials. Case in point: the Maine Turnpike Authority's new rest stop in Gardiner, scheduled to open this summer, will include a 2,000-square-foot fine craft shop.

McNeil added that the NEA's partnership support was critical to the state's creative economy efforts. "The invaluable support from the NEA fuels all of Maine's good work as it focuses on quality of life and rebrands itself through investment in our artists and the historic town centers they inhabit."

# Branching Out

## Pennsylvania Council on the Arts Tours State's Artists

**Thanks to Pennsylvania Performing Arts on Tour,** you don't have to live in Pennsylvania to know the commonwealth is home to performing artists of a national caliber. Since 1997, the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts has co-funded this unique grant program, known as PennPAT, that allows artists based in Pennsylvania to book dates in the mid-Atlantic region and beyond.

Philip Horn, the council's executive director, arrived in Harrisburg 15 years ago eager to set up an expansive touring program in Pennsylvania. Working with the Heinz Endowment's existing touring program, the Pew Charitable Trust, and the William Penn Foundation, the public-private partnership PennPAT was born. "It's simple," Horn said. "You send the money out and the artists get work."

The program is managed by regional arts organization Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation. The NEA's unique collaboration with RAOs and SAAs in supporting touring provided a model for the infrastructure to facilitate the program. Artists apply to PennPAT to be added to a roster, which is chosen by an out-of-state panel of experts. In a separate application process, performing arts presenters from eight mid-Atlantic states, plus North Carolina, Ohio, U.S. Virgin Islands, and Washington, DC, vie for grants ranging between \$1,000 and \$15,000 to book the participating PennPAT artists. Those applications are also reviewed by an independent panel.

The current roster includes 39 dance companies and choreographers, 79 musicians and musical ensembles, and 33 theater companies and performance artists. This year, PennPAT will invest \$650,000 to fund more than 200 of these artists' performances. PennPAT also awards \$150,000 in direct grants to artists for strategic projects such as hiring a marketing consultant, working with a lighting technician, or flying a potential presenter to Pennsylvania to see a performance.

The Philadelphia-based Koresh Dance Company



**Philadanco dancers Teneise Mitchell, Mora Amina Parker, Erin Barnett, Erin Moore, and Tracy Vogt perform *Enemy Behind the Gates* by Christopher Huggins. The company has been on the PennPAT roster since the program began 11 years ago. Photo by Lois Greenfield.**

took advantage of several of those grants, and now credits PennPAT with elevating its status from spunky local dance collective to a respected touring company.

"When we first joined PennPAT, we fluctuated between three and eight bookings per season, and we were stuck in a vicious circle," Alon Koresh, the company's executive director, said. Koresh made the PennPAT roster in 2001 and soon thereafter received strategic opportunity and technical assistance grants. "We knew we needed better quality marketing materials to get more bookings, but with the few bookings we had, we couldn't afford quality marketing materials. PennPAT technical assistance grants helped us break out of that cycle."

The program also has benefited well-established ensembles. Joan Myers Brown, artistic director of Philadanco, said her dance company has been involved with PennPAT so long, she can't imagine what the company's touring schedule would look like without it. "When people think 'Philadanco,' they run to PennPAT," she said.

# Overlooked No More

## Kansas Arts Commission Restores an Artist to His Rightful Place

**Although Kansas native** Aaron Douglas was one of the leading visual artists of the Harlem Renaissance, he was both under-recognized and underappreciated in his home state. To change that fact, the University of Kansas's Spencer Museum of Art, with Fisk University and the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, organized *Aaron Douglas: African American Modernist*, the first exhibition to celebrate Douglas's work. In conjunction with the exhibition, the Kansas Arts Commission (KAC) used the American Masterpieces portion of their NEA partnership funding to support extensive outreach and education events related to the Douglas exhibition.

Born and raised in Kansas, Aaron Douglas moved to Harlem in 1925, where he became a key contributor to the Harlem Renaissance, a movement of the 1920–1930s in which African Americans explored arts and culture as a way to express their identities and experiences. Focusing on this time period, the exhibition—held at Lawrence, Kansas's Spencer Museum—brought together more than 90 pieces by Douglas, including paintings, murals, and illustrations for books, showcasing his unique blend of African and African-American imagery with Cubism and Art Deco. More than 50,000 visited the 2007 exhibition. With the support of an Access to Artistic Excellence grant from the NEA, the exhibition is traveling to the Frist Center for the Visual Arts, the Smithsonian American Art Museum, and the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

As part of their NEA-supported outreach activities, KAC provided assistance for a free, public conference, “Aaron Douglas and the Arts of the Harlem Renaissance.” Held September 28–29 in conjunction with the exhibition, the conference explored Harlem Renaissance artists, writers, and political and creative thinkers, and Douglas's place within this group.



**Located in downtown Lawrence, the mural *The Pollinators* was designed by artist David Loewenstein and painted by the community as a tribute to Douglas and other African-American artists with Kansas roots. Photo by Robert Hickerson, courtesy of the Spencer Museum of Art.**

In addition, KAC supported a community outreach project featuring *The Pollinators*, a mural designed by artist David Loewenstein and painted by the Lawrence community as a tribute to Douglas and seven other African-American artists with Kansas roots, including Langston Hughes, Gordon Parks, and Gwendolyn Brooks. KAC also brought Loewenstein to the Kansas Book Festival in Wichita, where families created their own murals on pieces of muslin.

Lastly, KAC supported 15 concerts throughout Kansas by folksinger Lemuel Sheppard, whose performances were inspired by Harlem Renaissance artists. Sheppard performed at the mural unveiling ceremony and the Kansas Book Festival, as well as middle and high schools, where teachers received classroom study materials on Douglas and the Harlem Renaissance.

The NEA funding provided an invaluable opportunity for KAC to collaborate with arts organizations, and “encourage organizations to think about education and access in a broader way,” said KAC Executive Director Llewellyn Crain. With KAC's assistance, recognition of Douglas expanded throughout Kansas, and in turn, many more people were inspired to visit the exhibition and learn more about the incredible contributions of this Kansas artist.

# From Sheep to Shawl

## New Mexico's Fiber Arts Trail Promotes Artists and Local Economy

**Spanning approximately 1,400 miles** in three regions, New Mexico's Fiber Arts Trail highlights the work of the state's many fiber artists working in traditions such as weaving, basketry, and quilting. A project of New Mexico Arts (NMA), the state's arts council, the Fiber Arts Trail does double duty as an artist showcase and as a means for generating economic health and stability in

somewhere, eat something, gas up their cars, so it really leads to the health and sustainability of our rural areas."

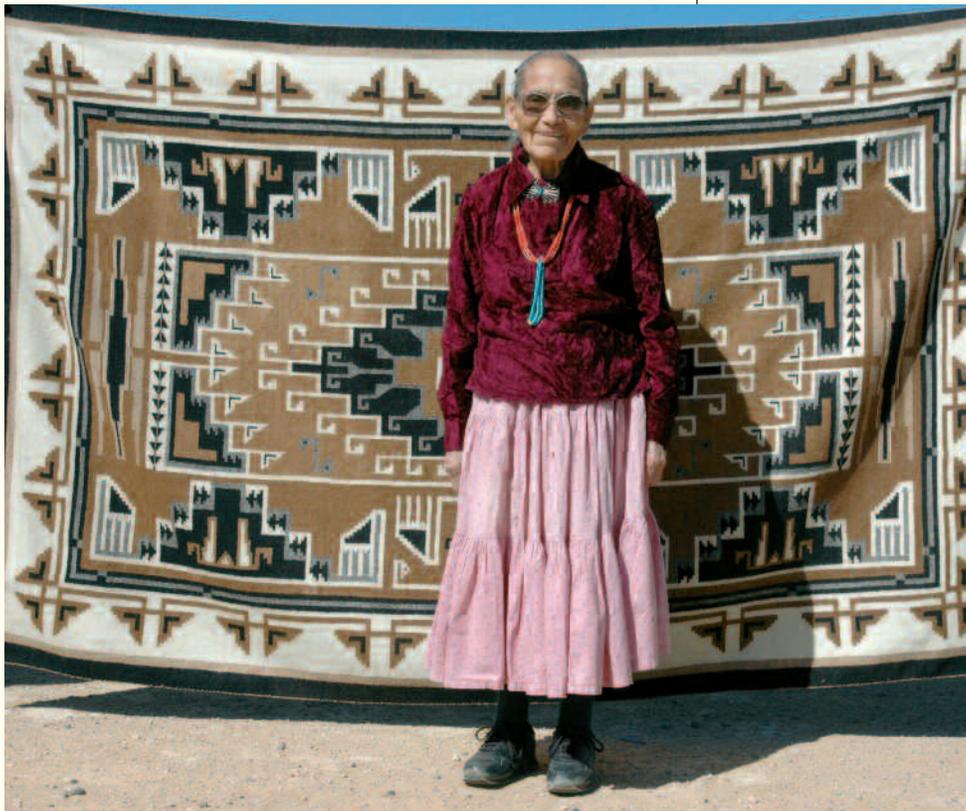
The Fiber Arts Trail boasts more than 250 artists at more than 60 sites. It was important to NMA that the trail be comprehensive, or from "sheep to shawl" as Fecteau puts it, so the trail includes both traditional and contemporary artists as well as providers of raw

materials, such as sheep ranchers. She adds that cultural tourists usually want to experience rather than just see things, so many sites offer workshops and other learning opportunities for visitors.

NMA promotes the Fiber Arts Trail through a full-color guide listing descriptions, addresses, hours, and directions for each site. The guide also notes which sites offer supplies or classes, which are wheelchair accessible, and even cautions visitors when to check road conditions before visiting. But the publication is also an arts primer, introducing the state's cultural traditions through fea-

tures on several of the artists and art forms, and offering a glossary of fiber arts terms. A smaller, brochure form of the guide is distributed at New Mexico hotels and other tourist information centers.

NMA offered professional development opportunities for participating artists before launching the trail, as many of them had no prior business training. Fecteau said, "We held a series of getting-ready-for-company workshops, getting our artists to think about everything from 'Do you have credit card capability' to 'Why is it important to be open when you say you will' to 'Are your windows clean?'"



**Clara Sherman, recipient of the 2006 Governor's Award for Excellence in the Arts, is one of the artists whose work is available at the historic Toadlena Trading Post on New Mexico Arts' Fiber Arts Trail. Photo by Claude Stephenson.**

the state's many rural areas. NMA Executive Director Loie Fecteau explained, "We're a very rural state and a poor state economically, but we're rich in cultural traditions from the Native-American and Hispanic cultures. What we're looking at is increasing income for the artists, and at the same time promoting the rural economy of New Mexico. Every time someone comes to a rural area because of our fiber artists they have to sleep

New Mexico's legislature initially authorized \$250,000 to pilot the Fiber Arts Trail, and that funding has been ongoing. Fecteau credits the NEA with helping NMA to garner this financial support. "We could not

have begun this project without the NEA funding. We were basically able to use our NEA money as our seed money, and that's the toughest to get. The NEA is absolutely vital to what we do."

## Hot on the Trail

The NEA Talks with Diane Bowman of Española Valley Fiber Arts

**Diane Bowman** is executive director of Española Valley Fiber Arts (EVFA), a site on the north central loop of New Mexico's Fiber Arts Trail. A nonprofit membership organization, EVFA functions as a school, business incubator, materials supplier, gallery, and studio, aiming to preserve the state's fiber arts traditions by helping fiber artists to make a living from their art. You can read the full interview with Bowman at [www.arts.gov/features/index.php?choosemonth+2008\\_06](http://www.arts.gov/features/index.php?choosemonth+2008_06).

### NEA: How has Española Valley Fiber Arts benefited from the Fiber Arts Trail?

**DIANE BOWMAN:** I think it's gotten us a lot of exposure. We were involved as it developed, so we got to meet artists all over the state . . . and out of that came [New Mexico Fiber Artisans], a statewide organization for people involved in fiber arts—organizations, businesses,



Española Valley Fiber Arts offers classes in many fiber arts techniques, such as this color theory class for weavers. Photo by Diane Bowman.

growers, producers, farms, yarn shops, etc.

I've been looking at the statistics, and we certainly have had more visitors, and I think the composition has changed a little bit. We've got more people from other parts of the country and more people from foreign countries. So it's been effective in bringing other people to our center that never would've gotten here. It's not like Santa Fe in which you get walk-in traffic. Someone has to know we're here to come. [The Fiber Arts Trail guide] was such a beautifully done book and so professional, I think it's given the fiber arts some respect as an art form.

### NEA: What's the value of the Fiber Arts Trail to New Mexico?

**BOWMAN:** I think that the arts, especially in New Mexico, are one of our greatest assets, and it's a way to let the rest of the world know that we have a treasure here in these artists. I think it made us all more aware—everybody from the legislature to just individuals that live here—of what we have and more appreciative of what we have. I think the arts are really important for quality of life. This idea of bringing the market to the artists really helps people in these small communities. Probably a quarter of our membership lives in little tiny towns, really isolated areas, where there aren't a lot of job opportunities. The arts give them a way to supplement their income.

I think New Mexico Fiber Artisans is the biggest thing that came out of it. And the idea of us all working together to market the industry as a whole rather than struggling along on our own is a really good thing. Another thing that I found significant was . . . that all the artists that I met and the organizations really felt that we were partnering with the state and that we were doing it together.

# Perfecting the Art

## Poetry Out Loud 2008 National Finals

**In just its first year** of participation, the U.S. Virgin Islands saw its Poetry Out Loud champion, Charlotte Amalie High School sophomore Shawn-tay A. Henry, crowned the program's third national champion. Henry competed against 51 of her peers at the two-day national finals event held in our nation's capital.

Poetry Out Loud: National Recitation Contest is a partnership of the NEA, the Chicago-based Poetry Foundation, and the state arts agencies. The SAAs administer the state-level programs, managing everything from recruiting local schools to pairing teaching artists with classrooms to conducting statewide competitions. This year the recitation contests were held in all 50 states, Washington, DC, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Since last year, the SAAs have increased the number of schools participating by 30 percent, bringing the total number of 2008 campuses to 1,570. All told, the NEA estimates that nearly 200,000 students participated in the 2007–2008 competition.

Also in 2008, more states involved local literary figures in the project. In Oklahoma, state poet laureate and 2007 National Medal of Arts recipient N. Scott Momaday was a featured speaker at the state finals, while in the Lone Star state, a trio of working poets traversed the state coaching students in how to recite poetry. In Washington, the state's first poet laureate, Samuel Green, helped judge the competition (see page 11).

To kick off each local program, teachers received free curriculum materials, including an audio guide with poetry recitations, a Poetry Out Loud anthology, and a teacher's guide with lesson plans and contest guidelines, which is updated annually to reflect the needs of participating educators. Students and teachers also have access to an online anthology at [www.poetryoutloud.org](http://www.poetryoutloud.org) that boasts more than 600 poems and bios of the selected poets.

Winners advanced to school, district, and regional competitions, with state winners going on to the



**2008 Poetry Out Loud National Champion Shawn-tay A. Henry of the United States Virgin Islands. Photo by James Kegley.**

national finals. While in the capital, many students had a chance to meet with their senator or state representative. On April 28, students competed in the semifinal round. Twelve students advanced to compete in the finals the following evening. Guest judges included radio personality Garrison Keillor; Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Natasha Trethewey; *Poetry Daily* editor Don Selby; California novelist Leslie Schwartz; 2007 Poetry Out Loud National Champion Amanda Fernandez; and memoirist, activist, and poet Luis Rodriguez. Scott Simon, host of National Public Radio's *Weekend Edition Saturday*, reprised his role as master of ceremonies. Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation coordinated the final event.

In a post-win interview with the *St. Thomas Source*, Henry commented on the transformative power of poetry that drives the program. "I thought poetry was boring, but when you really listen to the words and recite it on stage, it comes alive and you can feel that, and you have to make sure the audience feels that too. I hope this is an opportunity for me to open doors for younger children. . . to let them know that poetry is not what it seems."

# By Heart or By Rote?

## Washington State Poet Laureate Samuel Green on Poetry Out Loud

*In December 2007, Washington native Samuel Green became the state's first poet laureate. The author of 10 poetry collections, he is also the longtime editor of Brooding Heron Press, which focuses on Washington poets. In the excerpt below, from a longer article, Green discusses his experience as a judge at Washington's Poetry Out Loud finals on March 1, 2008.*

**Recently, I was** the accuracy judge for the Poetry Out Loud state finals here in Washington State. I was impressed right away with how at ease most of the students seemed to feel with the poems, and it seemed to me that it was an ease different than the mere confidence of knowing the material.



**Washington State Poet Laureate Samuel Green hands BreAnna Jones a participation certificate before the five contest finalists were announced. Jones went on to become the 2008 Washington State Poetry Out Loud champion. Photo by Serni Solidarios.**

After the competition was over, the students answered candid questions from the audience. Several things stood out for me. Most of the students confessed, for example, that, before their involvement, they were not particularly drawn to poetry, but that they became more and more drawn to it in the process of sorting through poems on the official Web site looking for ones to use in their repertoire. All of them agreed that reading poetry had become an important part of their lives, and that they would likely continue reading it. One student talked about the notebook he'd just purchased at the airport, saying that he was encouraged to try his own hand at making something like he'd been reading.

What does it mean to have a poem by heart, instead of by rote? I think I was maybe seven or eight when I stumbled onto Yeats's "Lake Isle of Innisfree." I lived near a lake in which there was a small island. I'd dreamed over and over about living on that island by myself, and here was a poem imagining that life for me. That poem, when I took it into myself, felt different than the poems I'd learned before. I felt I understood the writer, just as much as the writer, I felt, understood me.

When I asked the state finalists whether they had chosen particular pieces because they thought they might be more appealing to judges, there was a quick and universal headshaking all down the line. They couldn't see any sense in trying to work that hard on a poem they didn't like. The ones they chose, finally, were ones that spoke to them, though those reasons varied. And, while the initial attraction was a little mysterious, as they opened themselves up to understanding how to best embody the poems, the poems opened up to them. It had been a surprise, they all agreed, but a deeply welcome one. All of the students recommended the competition to others. Sometimes, as we know, *rote* leads to *heart*.

# NEA Spotlight

## Will Power to Youth Partners with NEA and DOJ

**Higher graduation rates**, improved self confidence, better school attendance records—these are just some of the proven successes of students who have participated in Shakespeare Festival/LA’s Will Power to Youth program. Created in 1993 by Shakespeare/LA, in partnership with Los Angeles city government, Will Power to Youth employs at-risk teenagers to put on the plays of William Shakespeare. The evidence that the program changes lives is not just anecdotal; statistics from three independent studies indicate that Will Power to Youth students will not only turn their high school careers around, but they are more likely to succeed after graduation. For example, in a five-year study at west LA’s Belmont High School, at which 90 percent of the student body receive subsidized meals, the Will Power to Youth students demonstrated a 75 percent graduation rate as compared to the 33 percent rate of their Belmont High peers.

When initially drawing up plans for Will Power to Youth, Shakespeare Festival/LA aligned the program

with standards for youth employment training programs already developed by the U.S. Department of Labor. Chris Anthony, the company’s youth education director, made sure the program was fully evaluated by outside experts, so she could statistically prove Will Power to Youth inspired young people to succeed in school and beyond.

Shakespeare Festival/LA Founder and National Council on the Arts member Ben Donenberg said, “We can come up with all the warm fuzzy stories ad infinitum, but what’s interesting about Will Power to Youth is that we’ve found ways to quantify results and report back.”

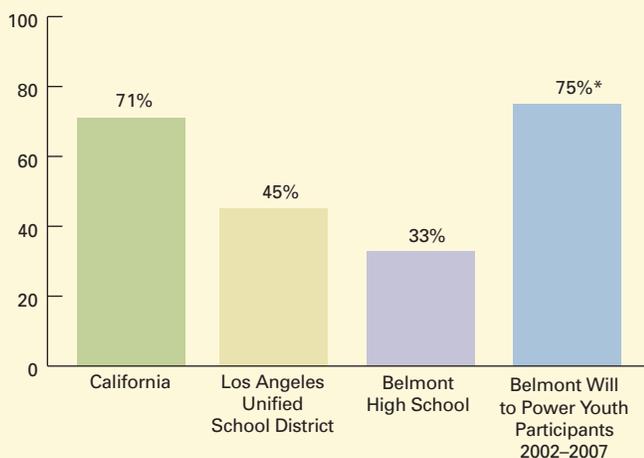
The theater was nominated for a Coming up Taller Award for the youth program in 2002. The award—offered jointly by the NEA, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, and the Institute of Museum and Library Services—honors outstanding youth education programs in the arts and humanities.

In January 2003, while in Washington, DC to receive the award, the Will Power to Youth students were hosted by Senator Dianne Feinstein (California) and other members of the state’s delegation for a performance in the Capitol building. NEA Chairman Dana Gioia, who attended the performance, was impressed and mentioned the program to Mrs. Laura Bush. Mrs. Bush was so intrigued that she stopped by the theater the next time she was in Los Angeles.

Mrs. Bush then invited Will Power to Youth to perform at her inaugural Helping America’s Youth conference held at Washington, DC’s Howard University. That performance of an excerpt from *Romeo and Juliet* was attended by officials from several federal agencies, including the Department of Justice (DOJ), which saw the potential of Will Power to Youth to positively affect at-risk youth.

Subsequently, Shakespeare/LA developed a proposal to replicate the Will Power to Youth model in other

**High School Graduation Rates: CPI**  
(Cumulative Promotion Index)



#### Notes

1. CPI data for California, LAUSD, and Belmont High drawn from Harvard Civil Rights Projects (2002).
2. Will Power to Youth graduation rate calculated adjusting for student mobility, dropouts, and those who left the district.

\*Adjusted for mobility rate



**Andrew Arnold as Florizel and Carla Lopez as Perdita in Will Power to Youth's performance of *The Winter's Tale*. Photo by Michael Lamont.**

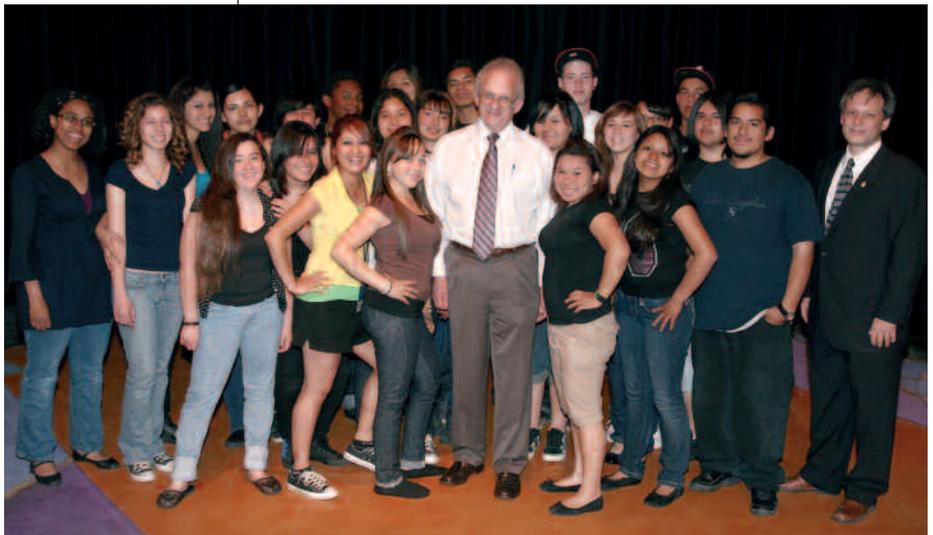
cities. The NEA partnered with DOJ's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) to support the development of a program manual and replications of the program at a second site in Los Angeles and a new site in Richmond, Virginia, a city the department has targeted for reducing gang activity.

"You don't normally think of [the Department of] Justice as a theater-producing organization," Anthony said. "However, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention is interested in programs that challenge young people's energies in a positive direction."

OJJDP Administrator J. Robert Flores commented, "While promoting the importance of completing high school, [Will Power to Youth] helps keep kids in school and teaches them life skills for the responsibilities they will bear as adults and as parents. The program provides them with job skills to help improve their success in the labor market and offers a safe place to participate in extracurricular activities."

In Los Angeles, social service workers and guidance counselors recommended students to Shakespeare Festival/LA. In April 2008, students from Belmont High staged a '50s and '60s version of *The Winter's Tale*. In Richmond, students were handpicked by the local district attorney's office. During the summer of 2007, the Richmond teens staged *Romeo and Juliet*, set in 1930s segregated Richmond. In both cities, students were interviewed as they would be for a summer job, and then went to work for seven weeks at a miniature theater company. After some intensive icebreakers, the teens set about adapting the Shakespearean play for contemporary audiences aided by professional playwrights, actors, and designers. The goal is to find plays that allow students to talk through issues like conflict resolution and family strife. And granted, with Shakespeare, no one has to look far to find those issues. The casts became peer support groups for the students, the adult leaders extended relatives.

Shows are always well received by the local communities, and some students don't want to part after the cast party. According to Anthony, the impact of Will Power to Youth on the students is not merely short-term. "The skills that you learn in theater are going to go with you no matter what you do in life. . . Things like working in team, expressing your opinion, speaking clearly," Anthony said. "We want to help kids make a smooth transition from being a teenager to being an adult."



**U.S. Representative Howard Berman (California-28th District) with the Will Power to Youth cast of *The Winter's Tale* in April 2008, with NCA member Ben Donenberg on the right. Photo by Michael Lamont.**

# In the News

## NEA Brings Operation Homecoming to VA Medical Centers

**Launched in 2004**, Operation Homecoming: Writing the Wartime Experience was the NEA's groundbreaking writing program for U.S. military personnel and their families. The program brought 59 writing workshops led by distinguished American writers to troops at 27 domestic and overseas military installations. This summer the NEA will partner with the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense to sponsor a new series of Operation Homecoming writing workshops that will be open to veterans of both current and past conflicts as well as U.S. Armed Forces active duty troops. The Boeing Company again will provide support for the Operation Homecoming workshops.



**U.S. Representative Todd Tiahrt (Kansas-4th District) attended a special screening of *Muse of Fire*, a documentary about the NEA's Operation Homecoming initiative, in Wichita, Kansas, on Veterans Day 2007. Photo courtesy of The Boeing Company.**

Led by nationally recognized writers such as Tobias Wolff and Jeff Shaara, the progressive four- to six-week writing workshops will be offered at 25 sites around the country, including VA medical centers, military hospitals, and affiliated centers. To build closer partnerships between local and military communities, local literary organizations and writers also will partner with many of the workshop sites. Andrew Carroll, one of the nation's foremost experts on wartime correspondence, will manage the workshop series. Carroll previously worked with the NEA to edit the 2006 Random House *Operation Homecoming* anthology, which featured nearly 100 of the submissions collected by the NEA as part of the writing project.

## NEA's Shakespeare Tour Celebrates Fifth-Anniversary Season

When the NEA began its Shakespeare in American Communities national tour in 2003, it became the largest tour of Shakespeare in American history. The Shakespeare program is celebrating the fifth anniversary of Shakespeare for a New Generation, the component of the program aimed at students, by growing even larger. From June 2008 through May 2009, 40 companies, more than a quarter of which are new to the program, will bring 1,400 live professional productions of Shakespeare to nearly 300,000 students nationwide.

As the program turns five, the NEA can boast of

having brought the Bard to all 50 states and the District of Columbia. More than 4,000 performances have been enjoyed by more than 1.3 million students and their families, many of whom have received their first exposure to professional theater through this NEA initiative. Not only has Shakespeare for a New Generation benefited audiences, but the initiative also has provided employment to more than 1,300 of the nation's theater artists, including actors, directors, scenic artists, and stage managers.

## NEA Administers Historic Design Competition

At the request of Congress, the NEA has partnered with the Architect of the Capitol and the Joint Committee on the Library for a competition to design a sculpture of civil rights pioneer Rosa Parks. This commission is the first full-sized statue authorized and funded by the U.S. Congress since the 1870s. The Chrysler Foundation has provided \$100,000 to support the administration of the competition. The deadline for initial applications was May 30.

The NEA is administering the expert peer panel that will review all the proposals. Up to ten project semi-finalists are expected to be chosen in late summer. After another round of panel review of the semifinalists, the winning artist will be selected by the Joint Committee on the Library. The selected artist will receive a Congressional commission of up to \$250,000 to create the bronze statue and pedestal, which will be permanently installed in National Statuary Hall in the Capitol Building.

## The Arts and The Hill

**U.S. Representative Silvestre Reyes (Texas-16th District) helped to kick off El Paso's Big Read celebration of Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* as a featured reader during the opening event in March 2008. Photo by Becky Gutierrez.**



**U.S. Representative Norman Dicks (Washington-6th District) with 2007 Washington State Poetry Out Loud champion Olivia Seward (center) and Washington State Arts Commission Executive Director Kris Tucker (right) at the NEA Congressional budget hearing on April 1, 2008. Photo by Kathy Plowitz-Worden.**

# Bringing Art to the Heartland

## Mid-America Arts Alliance's Rural Initiatives

Not surprisingly, the nation's highest concentration of arts organizations is in metropolitan areas, which means that many Americans, particularly those in rural areas, have limited access to high-quality arts experiences. That is the reason the regional arts organizations (RAOs) were born, to reach those overlooked places that often get left behind. The NEA has worked with the RAOs on projects such as the NEA Regional Arts Touring Program, which brings live arts performances to rural areas throughout the country. Each year the program helps to present approximately 1,800 projects in more than 800 communities nationwide. In 2008, the program is expanding to include literature and visual arts projects as well as performing arts.

Regional arts organization Mid-America Arts Alliance (M-AAA) serves the six-state region of Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma, and Texas. Executive Director Mary Kennedy McCabe explained that the agency was founded to attract more arts performances to the middle of the country. "Community leaders could see our communities and regions were missing out on opportunities that were being enjoyed on either coast."

In 2007, M-AAA presented 329 diverse programs and projects, with 601 accompanying educational activities, to nearly 100 communities through the Regional Arts



**Children from the Ponca City, Oklahoma, area perform the leading roles in a Missoula Children's Theatre production of *The Frog Prince*, presented through a grant from Mid-America Arts Alliance. Photo courtesy of Ponca City Arts and Humanities Council.**

Touring Program. More than one-half million individuals, including artists, benefited from these programs. In 2008, M-AAA will support performances by renowned artists such as the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre, the Soweto Gospel Choir, and the Acting Company.

McCabe noted, "The Regional Arts Touring Program is a partnership not only with the NEA, but also with all of the presenters in our region and the artists and the audiences. So the funding that comes from the NEA is a catalyst to a much greater partnership between all of those entities."

M-AAA also works with the NEA to present Exhibits USA, which supports traveling exhibitions for small and mid-sized museums. According to McCabe, "Most [exhibitions] go to large institutions in major metro areas. This brings those kinds of arts experiences to places that would not have them otherwise."

The Arts Endowment also helps to support M-AAA's Latino Culture Project, which brings Latino artists to communities in response to the region's changing demographics. Another program, the Ozarks Plateau Initiative, focuses on the southern portion of Missouri, which McCabe said has "some of the smallest, most rural communities where we bring Exhibits USA and the Regional Arts Touring Program. For some of these communities,

this is the first time they've had a professional art exhibit and professional performing artist in their community."

McCabe added that the educational activities that accompany each project are especially meaningful. "Within our region, we've seen a tremendous decline in arts education activities within our schools. In some of these communities, the educational activities that go along with the performances may be the rare arts education experience that some of these students are going to have." And it's that experience with the arts that M-AAA is striving for with their projects.



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