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**MARCH FOR THE ARTS IN EDUCATION MONTH:
DIVISION OF THE ARTS ANNOUNCES A SPECIAL FUNDING INITIATIVE IN SUPPORT OF ARTS
EDUCATION**

The Delaware Division of the Arts is proud to announce a special arts education funding initiative this month, designated as *March for Arts in Education* month. Five Delaware arts organizations have received a total of \$90,000 from the Division of the Arts to support arts education initiatives currently underway with Delaware youth. RACE with the Arts, or Replicating Arts Curriculum Experiences, is a one-time funding opportunity to help these organizations evaluate and document their programs for the purpose of future replication and expansion.

Organizations selected through a competitive application process include: the Rehoboth Art League; VSA Delaware, Delaware Theatre Company; Delaware Center for the Contemporary Arts; and a consortium of arts organizations serving Warner Elementary School, represented by the Grand Opera House, Opera Delaware, the Delaware Art Museum, and Delaware Symphony.

“This initiative represents a commitment to arts education for Delaware’s young people,” said Governor Jack Markell. “Arts education provides an important creative experience for students allowing them to discover their talents. The arts are part of a world class education. There’s an economic incentive to supporting arts education. Businesses want to grow in places with a high quality of life, and the arts add so much to that standard of living. Ultimately, by promoting the arts with young people, we are perpetuating our state’s cultural, economic and educational best interests.”

The Division of the Arts supports arts education programs that connect Delaware’s school-aged youth with the arts resources of the community. Partnering with the Delaware Association of Nonprofit Agencies (DANA) as the administrator of this program, these five projects highlight the importance of the arts in providing a well-rounded education, as well as the cross-curricular impact of the arts in learning. All of the recipients demonstrated excellence in educational programming, a history of working with schools and school-aged youth, and commitment to the arts as an integral part of every child’s learning.

About the funded programs:

The **Rehoboth Art League** (RAL) Outreach Program enables RAL to serve areas of Sussex County with at-risk youth that have less exposure to the arts. These children get individualized attention from various art instructors who introduce them to many different mediums, art history, and techniques/skills they may not receive extensively in the school system. RAL instructors have noted that many of the children enter the class distracted and/or uninterested until they become engrossed in their art projects. The instructors see remarkable behavioral changes as the children create their art and gain a sense of pride and self-confidence as they create something beautiful with their own hands.

VSA Delaware manages an Inclusive Residency Program for Intensive Learning Classrooms: a focused pilot program using an established artist-in-residency model to facilitate an integrated arts education program for students in intensive learning special education programs.

Executive Director Jennifer Gunther stated, “VSA Delaware is very excited to have the opportunity to promote the value of inclusive arts experiences as essential learning tools for students. We know that the arts have the capacity to provide innovative cross-curriculum learning opportunities. This initiative will allow us to take an in-depth look at our artist-in-residency program model and evaluate the success of integrated arts education programming for at-risk students.”

Delaware Center for the Contemporary Arts (DCCA) has been offering Contemporary Connections, an award-winning arts education program for underserved schools, for 17 years. This program pairs artists and classroom teachers to work together to develop standards-based art projects that complement and reinforce core curriculum subjects. Executive Director Maxine Gaiber notes, “While there is extensive anecdotal evidence of the effectiveness of this program, there has never been a structured set of instruments to measure the real value of this program. This initiative will enable DCCA to partner with the University of Delaware’s Delaware Education Research and Development Center to develop, for the first time, templates for evaluation that will enable us to truly understand the impact of this program, and that we can use in the future and share with other arts program providers.”

Warner Elementary School is the beneficiary of a first-of-a-kind collaborative effort to provide multi-disciplinary arts experiences for multiple grades in a single school setting. It is anticipated that this project will serve as a template for future collaborations replicated in other school settings.

This funding initiative ensures that the consortium can continue to offer school-age children an arts experience that is both exciting and enriching at a time in their lives when their perceptions of the world around them is in the formative stages.

Speaking on behalf of the participating arts organizations, Steve Bailey from the Grand Opera House observed, “We are very excited that, with the collaboration of so many arts organizations and Warner Elementary School, the initiative will offer a more diverse arts experience in a coordinated and cost-effective manner.”

The **Delaware Theatre Company** will develop a replicable arts in education teaching model to help classroom teachers use the arts to illuminate core standards and other lessons.

“We’re excited by the opportunity to draw upon on our history of bringing the arts into the classroom and improving student performance, particularly with at-risk youth,” says Managing Director Mary Ann Ehlshlager. “Director of Education & Community Engagement Charles Conway and his colleagues have found over and over that our work in the classroom has a far more meaningful impact when teachers take techniques from our arts residencies and apply them across subject areas. We look forward to expanding that reach even further by giving teachers a standards-based and cost-effective tool, using the theatrical arts to improve learning in all subject areas.”

About *March for the Arts in Education*

In 2003, Senator Dorinda A. Connor authored an Act under Senate Bill No. 116 of the 142nd General Assembly, designating the month of March as *March for the Arts in Education* month. Senator Connor envisioned a month devoted to combined and concentrated efforts to celebrate arts education throughout the state—recognizing the critical role that the arts play in providing a well-rounded education for Delaware’s youth.

In previous years, to celebrate *March for the Arts in Education* month, the Department of Education and Division of the Arts have featured school performance groups, poetry readings, and artwork hung in the halls of the State Legislature.

This year, in addition to this special funding initiative, RACE with the Arts, the Delaware Division of the Arts will be releasing later this month a series of videos that present some of Delaware’s finest student artists and performances from recent statewide arts events.