

Enriching Lives



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Arts Commission Announces Inaugural Grants Addressing Homelessness through Arts Programs

Five arts organizations will partner with agencies serving the homeless
Program will examine how arts can impact homelessness

The Los Angeles County Arts Commission has awarded five pilot grants of \$18,000 each to arts programs designed for and serving the homeless community. The new program - **Artful Solutions: Pathways from Homelessness** - is the nation's first arts and culture initiative that addresses the critical needs of the homeless population.

Artful Solutions responds to regional homelessness through arts-based strategies. Each of the five grantees is partnering with a housing, shelter or social service agency in order to provide homeless individuals or families with quality arts programming. The collaboration is central to the civic objective of the initiative, which aims to stabilize the lives of participants and improve their access to permanent housing. Grantees and partners are:

Armory Center for the Arts in partnership with **Union Station**
California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) in partnership with **My Friend's Place**
Imagination Workshop in partnership with **New Directions**
Los Angeles Poverty Department (LAPD) in partnership with **Lamp Community**
Venice Arts: In Neighborhoods in partnership with **Ocean Park Community Center (OPCC)**

Artful Solutions projects will take place over the next twelve months. (Detailed descriptions of the grantee projects can be found at the end of this release.)

Artful Solutions reflects a wider effort by Los Angeles County to alleviate homelessness in the region. In April 2006, the County Board of Supervisors' made an unprecedented and compassionate investment toward ending and preventing homelessness by approving the \$100 million Homelessness Prevention Initiative, which funds a diverse range of projects aimed at increasing capacity Countywide to better serve our homeless neighbors and to develop much needed supportive housing.

"Incorporating the arts into social service can help reach clients who have endured such hardship that traditional approaches, such as talk therapy, are overwhelming," said Garrison Smith, Homeless Coordinator for L.A. County. "The projects funded through Artful Solutions will provide a safe, creative way to open to a door to healing. The innovative nature of the program is very much in line with the County's ethos of doing things differently when it comes to

homelessness. We're very excited to further the work of these arts organizations and their social agency partners. They have been tireless leaders and providers in serving the homeless."

A critical evaluation component is built into the grants. There is anecdotal evidence that creative expression help the homeless achieve greater personal meaning and focus in their lives. Yet, the concrete effect that the arts have has never been formally documented. Each grantee and partner will work with consultant Mollie Lowery - founder of Lamp Community, a social service agency on skid row, and Lamp Art Project for the mentally ill - to develop methods to measure the quantitative and qualitative impact of these arts-based services. Artful Solutions projects will take place over the next twelve months. This data will result in a national study, scheduled to be released in the fall of 2009, informing future strategies for resolving homelessness.

The program is supported on both the county and national levels: the Los Angeles County's Productivity Investment Fund matched a \$60,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts for a total of \$120,000.

Projects were selected to service the geographic diversity of the county as well as the diversity of homeless subpopulations, including transitional aged youth, veterans and the mentally ill.

Artful Solutions grant projects:

Armory Center for the Arts in partnership with **Union Station**

The Armory will provide a series of sequential art workshops, including courses on painting, drawing, ceramics and video stories, for families in transition at Union Station. The project will culminate in an exhibition of participant artwork in November 2009, National Homelessness Awareness Month.

California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) in partnership with **My Friend's Place**

At My Friend's Place in Hollywood, CalArts will implement a twice-weekly creative writing program for homeless and runaway youth between 16 and 25 years old. CalArts graduate student instructors, who serve as role models and mentors, will foster a supportive peer environment and help participants create literary works. As the capstone of the program, an anthology of their written material, drawings and photographs will be published.

Imagination Workshop in partnership with **New Directions**

Professional theatre artists will collaborate with homeless veterans at New Directions to create characters, scenes and plays in a program with a weekly format. Through metaphor and performance, Imagination Workshop seeks to cultivate hope, healing and empowerment in participants.

Los Angeles Poverty Department (LAPD) in partnership with **Lamp Community**

LAPD will conduct a series of theatre workshops at Lamp Community, which provides services to those with mental illness living on skid row, leading up to a final performance. LAPD hopes to provide a foundation for these individuals, and to serve as springboard from which they can move toward recovery, housing and stability.

Venice Arts: In Neighborhoods in partnership with **Ocean Park Community Center (OPCC)**

Venice Arts will pilot a photography project for homeless, mentally ill women. Emphasizing the documentary method and visual storytelling, the workshops will offer an outlet for creativity and self-expression. A culminating exhibit featuring their work may also help challenge misconceptions about people living with the dual stigma of mental illness and homelessness.

The **Los Angeles County Arts Commission**, Laura Zucker, Executive Director, provides leadership in cultural services of all disciplines for the largest county in the United States, encompassing 88

municipalities. In addition to the Artful Solutions grant program, the Arts Commission administers the Organizational Grant Program program that funds more than 300 nonprofit arts organizations annually. The Commission also provides leadership and staffing to support the regional blueprint for arts education, *Arts for All*; oversees the County's Civic Art Program for capital projects, funds the largest arts internship program in the country in conjunction with the Getty Foundation, programs the John Anson Ford Theatres; produces free community programs, including the L.A. Holiday Celebration broadcast nationally; a year-round music program that funds more than 50 free concerts each year in public sites; and supports the Los Angeles County Cultural Calendar on ExperienceLA.com. The 2008-09 President of the Arts Commission is Betty Haagen.