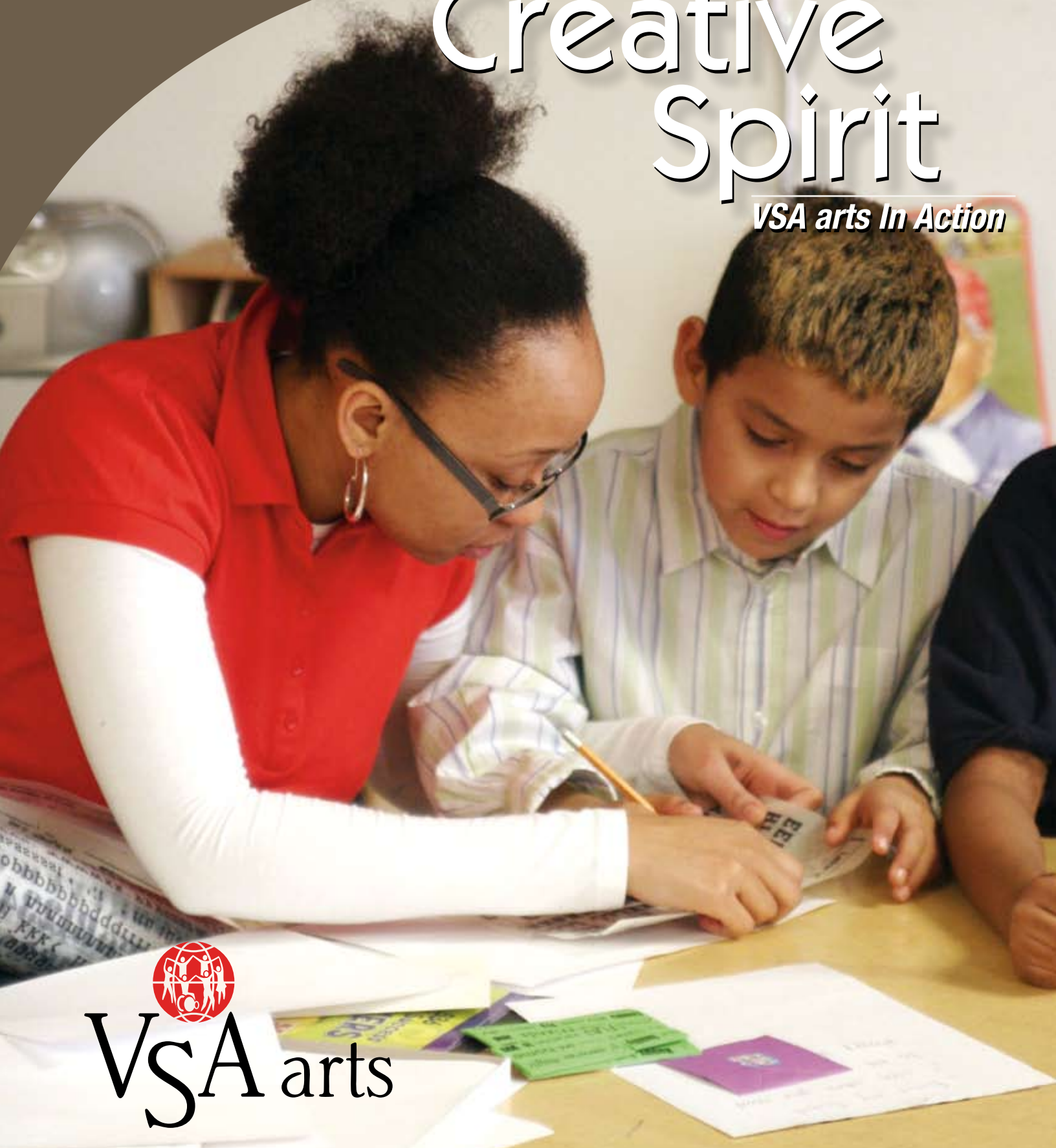


VOL. 11 ISSUE 1
2006

the Creative Spirit

VSA arts In Action



VSA arts

creating a society where people with disabilities can learn through, participate in and enjoy the arts

the Creative Spirit

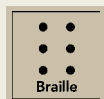
SOULA ANTONIOU PRESIDENT
VEDA HERMAN VICE PRESIDENT
SUE KENNEDY VICE PRESIDENT OF PUBLIC AWARENESS
JAMES MODRICK VICE PRESIDENT OF AFFILIATE SERVICES AND EDUCATION
RICHARD LYNCH ART DIRECTOR
JEAN WUSSOW DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC AWARENESS
MATTHEW COFFMAN EDITOR

VSA arts is an international nonprofit organization founded in 1974 by Ambassador Jean Kennedy Smith to create a society where all people with disabilities learn through, participate in and enjoy the arts. VSA arts provides educators, parents, and artists with resources and the tools to support arts programming in schools and communities. VSA arts showcases the accomplishments of artists with disabilities and promotes increased access to the arts for people with disabilities. Each year millions of people participate in VSA arts programs through a nationwide network of affiliates and in more than 60 countries around the world. VSA arts is an affiliate of The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

VSA arts
818 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Suite 600
Washington, D.C. 20006
202-628-2800
800-933-8721 (Voice)
202-429-0868 (Fax)
www.vsarts.org

Content suggestions, affiliate news and letters to the editor should be addressed to:
creativespirit@vsarts.org

Alternative formats of
The Creative Spirit are
available upon request.



The content of this brochure, developed under a grant from the Department of Education, does not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education. You should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.

Highlights

pg.4

Providing Quality Education

An online conversation with Margaret Spellings,
U.S. Secretary of Education.



pg. 9

VSA arts 2006 Young Soloists

Jacquelyn Weitz
Nichola Kouzes
Brian Sanders
Giovanna Maira



pg. 14

Artist Spotlight

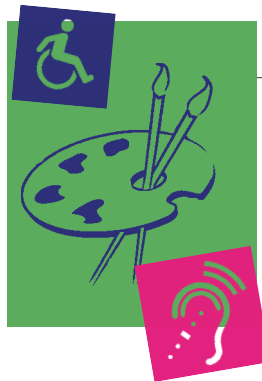
Gordon Sasaki



pg.15

In The Spotlight

MetLife Foundation



Cover photo: Pictured on the cover is a teacher and student from The School for Arts in Learning (SAIL). SAIL is a public charter school located in the heart of downtown Washington, D.C., managed by WVSA arts connection, the D.C. affiliate of VSA arts. SAIL is a K-6 school that focuses on students with unique learning styles including those with learning disabilities.

Photo by T. Francis, SAIL Parent



Dear Friends,

One of the most rewarding things about working at VSA arts is knowing how much our work benefits children. This issue of The Creative Spirit captures real life examples of how our programs and affiliates across the globe are making a difference in the lives of children and families everyday. The teacher and student that grace our cover are from our affiliate in Washington, D.C. This image illustrates the important relationship between a teacher and student and how the arts connect to learning.

Recently, I had the pleasure of interviewing Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings. I asked her why she believes arts in education is important for students with disabilities. Take a moment and read what the first parent of school age children to serve as Secretary of Education has to say about education and the role of the arts in her life.

For the fourth year I am amazed by the writing submitted by middle and high school students for our Online Literary Journal. Asked to take on "Another Point of View," these young writers and poets captured the complexity and creativity of their lives and the importance of trying to consider something outside of their perspective. Our featured writer Ekiwah Adler Belendez, a student from Mexico, articulated the essence of the creative writing process and said, "I think what poets do is decipher silence." I couldn't agree more.

Four brilliant young musicians will be honored during the VSA arts Young Soloists Concert on May 23. I hope you can join us as we recognize the achievements of these emerging artists in the new Family Theater at The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

All the best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Soula A.".

Soula Antoniou
President, VSA arts

Margaret Spellings

U.S. Secretary of Education

In 2005, the United States Senate confirmed Margaret Spellings as the 8th U.S. Secretary of Education. As Secretary of Education, Spellings is responsible for the overall direction, supervision, and coordination of all activities of the Department and is the principal advisor to the President on Federal policies, programs and activities related to education in the United States.

During President George W. Bush's first term, Spellings served as Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy where she helped craft education policies, including the *No Child Left Behind* Act. She was also responsible for the development and implementation of White House Policy on immigration, health, labor, transportation, justice and other elements of the domestic agenda.



Prior to her White House appointment, Spellings worked for six years as Senior Advisor for Texas Governor George W. Bush. She was responsible for developing and implementing the Governor's education policy, including the Texas Reading Initiative, the Student Success Initiative to eliminate social promotion, and the nation's strongest school assessment and accountability system. Previously, Spellings served as associate executive director of the Texas Association of School Boards.

Born in Michigan, Spellings moved with her family at a young age to Houston, Texas, where she attended public schools. She is a graduate of the University of Houston with a bachelor's degree in political science. Spellings has two daughters and is the first mother of school-age children to serve as U.S. Secretary of Education.

Providing Quality Education A conversation with Margaret Spellings

Soula Antoniou: How has being a parent of school-age children helped you define your role as U.S. Secretary of Education?

Margaret Spellings: I'm the first Secretary of Education with school-age kids. I have two daughters—one is in her first year of college, and another is in the eighth grade. So I am one of millions of parents struggling with how to help my children learn and also stay engaged with their schools and teachers. As a parent, I know first hand what it's like to be a consumer of the education system and that insight really helps

me as we debate policy issues and make decisions about what is best for education in this country. Not to mention, I'm invested in making sure that every child in America is getting a quality education because at the end of the day that's what I want and what every parent wants for their kids.

Soula Antoniou: You have said that no child is "unteachable" and that all children with and without disabilities can have high achievement goals. What role do you feel the Arts play in helping children attain their goals?

"For all students,
the arts greatly
enrich learning."

— Margaret Spellings

Margaret Spellings: Before *No Child Left Behind*, we often underestimated what students with disabilities could learn. Many were victims of what President Bush calls the "soft bigotry of low expectations." We held them to lower standards, and we didn't hold ourselves accountable for their success.

Today, we know the vast majority of students with disabilities can

achieve grade-level standards. And thanks to *No Child Left Behind*, we are holding ourselves accountable for making sure they do. For the first time ever, we as a nation have made a commitment to close the achievement gap by 2014 and ensure all students can read and do math on grade level. We're seeing the hard work pay off across the country. The latest nation's education report card showed students with disabilities are making gains at every level in both reading and math. And they're catching up to their peers, particularly in reading.

For all students, the arts greatly enrich learning. By engaging the imagination as well as the intellect, kids not only learn better but also have a chance to exercise their creativity and self-expression.

Soula Antoniou: One of the areas you have focused on is breaking down barriers between general and special education towards achieving inclusive classrooms. Why is it important that *No Child Left Behind* helps support teachers and gives them the resources they need to effectively teach all children?

Margaret Spellings: The key is setting high expectations for all students and ensuring that our teachers have what they need to help every child in their classroom learn and succeed. We know not all students learn the same way, but we're committed to using the best research to make sure students with disabilities are

learning and taking tests that are meaningful to them.

Soula Antoniou: Studies show that the arts are an effective tool in teaching math. *VSA arts* partnered with *Weekly Reader* and developed "Let Your Style Take Shape" -- the successful arts in education program designed to help middle school students with math concepts. What benefits do you see of programs such as this? Do you see a future for similar programs?

Margaret Spellings: This very idea of arts integration is at the heart of Arts in Education Model Development grants that we are supporting. Many of the more than 60 programs we have funded since 2002 are implementing and evaluating ways to successfully combine the arts with other academic subjects in elementary and middle school.

Providing every child with a quality education is a tall order, so we should use all the tools and resources available to get the job done. In many instances, we've seen combining music, art, and dance with teaching subjects such as math, reading, and language can be highly effective. Since every child learns differently, it's important that we continue to integrate these more creative learning methods because they obviously have a positive impact for many children.

Soula Antoniou: You have a long history of community involvement in

Since every child learns differently, it's important that we continue to integrate these more creative learning methods because they obviously have a positive impact for many children.

— Margaret Spellings

the school system. What advice can you give non-profit organizations like *VSA arts* to strengthen education in their communities?

Margaret Spellings: I don't know what kind of advice I may have, but all I can say is that the work you do has significant impact on the positive growth and development of our kids. While so much is now at the fingertips of our children via the Internet, including great works of art and performances, it's still not the same as having the opportunity to experience the arts up close and in person. That's why we need not only strong arts and cultural institutions such as

see Margaret Spellings pg 10

www.vsarts.org

Affiliates In Action

VSA arts affiliate education programs

VSA arts affiliates implement education programs across the country to improve the quality of life for students with disabilities by integrating the arts into the curriculum. A growing number of VSA arts affiliates' education programs have demonstrated the capacity to increase students' artistic, cognitive and social skills. Here are highlights of four affiliate programs that have made a positive difference in the lives of students with disabilities.

VSA arts of Wisconsin: Healthy Foundations Initiative

One of VSA arts of Wisconsin's signature programs is an early childhood education initiative called Healthy Foundations. Through the initiative, VSA arts of Wisconsin engages pre-school children, who have a disability or are at-risk of developing one, in arts activities that support the development of social and emotional competence, language and communication, general knowledge, physical well-being, and appropriate approaches to learning. Using 10-week artist residencies, where professional artists teach in schools and communities, Healthy Foundations reaches young children with process-oriented creative arts programming that is aligned with the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards. Prior to the start of the residencies, each artist participates in disability awareness, accessibility and adaptive arts training. For more information about this program visit www.vsawis.org.

“Having the students work together was awkward at first. But, the more we worked with clay and shared ideas, the second graders began choosing to sit next to the special education students and mentor them. They shared, talked and helped one another create. I love watching the process of ‘silent apprehension’ change to rich verbal exchanges and laughter.”

— A special education teacher who participated in I Can Do That!

VSA arts of California: I Can Do That!

In 2005, VSA arts of California conducted I Can Do That! artist residencies in 50 K-12 schools throughout Sacramento County. Professional artists were hired to work with groups of students with and without disabilities. The artists guided the students through the creation of a high-quality performance or visual art show, using various art forms including theatre, hip-hop dance, mural-making and video production.

A critical component of the program is the collaboration between the artists and classroom teachers to integrate arts into the curriculum in a way that aligns with students' educational and developmental goals. I Can Do That! maximizes the potential of the arts to develop student knowledge, cultivate positive interaction between students with and without disabilities, and build community awareness about the capabilities of children with disabilities. Evaluations from teachers and teaching artists showed that 94 percent of participating K-12 students achieved key academic goals at an 80 percent level or above. Ninety-one percent of those students attained the same level of success in reaching age-appropriate artistic goals. For more information about this program visit vsasacramento.org.

VSA arts of Montana: Mime Program

VSA arts of Montana's Mime Program was developed for Missoula County middle school students who are deaf, have a hearing impairment or have autism.

In this 16-week course with a mime artist the students created, rehearsed, and performed solo, duo and larger group performances. Body language and nonverbal communication are critical skills developed through the Mime Program, although students also boost written language skills by applying a writing exercise to their mime skits in regular coursework.

Feedback from the collaborating schools and participating students has significantly shown a positive impact on the lives of the participating students. After the 2005 workshop series, the classroom teachers administered a pre- and post-test to assess the students' growth in expressive language and sequencing skills. The results showed that the students exhibited growth in social and intellectual areas, increased their ability to work together, learned to provide positive and insightful feedback to

each other, and developed stage presence and poise. For more information about this program visit www.vsamontana.org.

VSA arts of Vermont: High School Self-Advocacy Theater Project

VSA arts of Vermont assists high school students across the state who have developmental disabilities to make the transition to independent living through the High School Self-Advocacy Theater Project. This 21-week project employs dynamic learning methods to create performances derived from the students' own experiences. The Theater project concludes with a performance for the school community.

The project's weekly sessions are specifically designed to help students meet the "transition to independent living" portion of their Individual Education Plans and fulfill the arts component of state education goals. In 2005, all of the students increased their artistic and self-advocacy skills to a level that met state proficiency requirements. For more information about this program visit www.vsavt.org.

destination anywhere

a National Juried Exhibit for
Young Artists with Disabilities,
Ages 16-25

15 Finalists
\$60,000 in awards

**Postmarked deadline:
July 14, 2006**



VSA arts and Volkswagen of America are seeking artwork from young artists with disabilities, ages 16-25, living within the U.S. "Destination Anywhere" challenges artists to consider the picture plan as a destination, a place where the viewer might take a trip they never expected. Fifteen finalists will be awarded a total of \$60,000 during an awards ceremony on Capitol Hill and artwork will be displayed in a nation-wide touring exhibit.

Abstract work that relates to feelings or emotions, or an experience of living with a disability and its role in shaping or transforming the destination is encouraged. Art must be an original work that has been completed in the last 3 years. Eligible media include: paintings, drawings, fine art prints, photography, computer generated prints, and mixed media. Artwork must be presented in two dimensions and should not exceed 60 inches in either direction. There is no fee to apply.

Grand Prize	\$20,000
First Award	\$10,000
Second Award	\$6,000
12 Awards of Excellence	\$2,000

Visit www.vsarts.org/VWcall for additional information and entry instructions or contact Jennifer Colaguori, visual arts coordinator, at jenniferc@vsarts.org or 800-933-8721 ext. 3885. Alternative formats of the call for entries are available upon request.

www.vsarts.org

VSA arts of Rhode Island: A Network for Change

In 1999, Rhode Island Governor Lincoln Almond formed the Literacy in the Arts Task Force (LATF) to examine the relationship between education reform and the arts. The LATF recommended students be provided with ongoing high-quality arts learning experiences, access to professional artists and the knowledge to demonstrate proficiency in one or more art forms.

The Task Force also recommended the creation of The Rhode Island Arts Learning Network (RIALN) to coordinate learning arts disciplines across home, school and community to create a seamless and mutually supportive relationship between them.

The Network advocated for a graduation requirement that students exhibit proficiency in a common academic core, including arts and technology. The requirement was passed in 2003.

Partners in the Network combined forces to achieve the goals outlined by the Literacy in the Arts Task Force. *VSA arts of Rhode Island's* objectives for

increasing inclusion of art in the education of students with disabilities is tied to the implementation of the arts graduation requirement. Under the leadership of Jeannine Chartier, executive director of *VSA arts of Rhode Island* who was an original member of the Task Force, *VSA arts of Rhode Island* partnered with Rosemary Burns, of the Rhode Island Art Education Association (RIAEA) to organize Visual Arts Professional Learning Communities.

"The RIALN has made it possible for *VSA arts of Rhode Island* to work with other organizations to expand arts learning experiences for students with and without disabilities," said Chartier. "We are proud of the work we have done here in Rhode Island, but recognize we have much more to accomplish still ahead of us."

For more information about RIALN please visit <http://www.riartslearning.net>. To learn more about *VSA arts of Rhode Island's* please contact Jeannine Chartier at (401)725-0247 or email ri@vsarts.org.

"Plenty of Fruit" by *VSA arts* artist Janice Peroni was selected as the cover image for the November issue of *Conscious Choice* magazine. For more information on the benefits of joining the *VSA arts* Artists Registry, please visit www.vsarts.org.

© 2002 Janice Peroni, "Plenty of Fruit,"
watercolor (8" x 6")



VSA arts 2006 Young Soloists

In Concert at the Kennedy Center on May 23, 2006

Jacquelyn Weitz, a 22-year-old classical pianist from Billings, Montana; Brian Sanders, a 22-year-old cellist from Madison Wisconsin; and Nichola Kouzes, a 14-year-old vocalist from Colleyville, Texas have been named the recipients of the 2006 VSA arts Young Soloists Award.

The award annually recognizes outstanding young musicians with disabilities, aged 25 and under. All types of musical genres are accepted – country, classical, jazz, rap, rock, bluegrass, etc. A committee of prominent music professionals selects the recipients who are each given an award and an opportunity to perform at The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. on May 23, 2006.

Jacquelyn Weitz is studying at Montana State University-Billings and has won several national concerto competitions. She received the Outstanding Musician Award at the 2002 Bartok-Kabalevsky-Prokofiev International Piano competition and was one of five finalists in the Professional Category of the 2003 Pinault International Piano Competition. Ms. Weitz lives with asthma, severe allergies and a rare immune deficiency syndrome.



Nichola Kouzes has developed a seasoned stage presence while singing Country, Pop, R&B, and 50's music. She has performed at numerous venues including the Grapevine Opry, Six Flags over Texas, Billy Bob's, and Radio Disney. She was born with ulnar hemimelia, marked by missing bones in her right hand and lower arm, and at 8-years-old was diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity



Brian Sanders is graduating from the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York with a major in cello performance. He currently performs as one of the principal cellists for the Eastman Philharmonia and contributes his success as a musician to developing and understanding his own bow technique, having been born with two fingers on his right hand.



The Rosemary Kennedy International Young Soloists Award is presented to a young musician from another country and is supported by the Kennedy Center's Education Department through the Rosemary Kennedy Education Fund. This year's recipient is **Giovanna Maira**, a 19-year-old vocalist pursuing a Bachelor's degree in music at the Universidade de São Paulo, Brazil. Ms. Maira, who is blind, has made several appearances on Brazilian television and radio.

Margaret Spellings from pg 5

museums and symphonies, but strong education programs offered by organizations such as VSA arts.

Arts organizations can and should be strong partners of their local schools, helping teachers to bring arts standards to life and putting students in direct touch with the sights and sounds of art work and performances and the artists who create them. In addition, local arts organizations in many communities are also providing safe and fun learning environments for before- and after-school programs.

Soula Antoniou: What role has the love of music played in your education and your life?

Margaret Spellings: Music has always been important to me. I took piano lessons for 13 years and I love to sing. I used to sing in the high school choir, and nowadays I have a hard time saying no to karaoke. Music is not only a source of enjoyment, but also a great stress relief!

Soula Antoniou: The children of Washington, D.C. enjoy a world-class arts environment, how important do you feel it is for all children to have access to a vibrant arts community?

Margaret Spellings: I'm a native Texan, but I've now lived in the D.C. area for the past several years, and one of the things I love

most are the many unique arts experiences available here. From the Kennedy Center to the Smithsonian Museums to the Phillips Collection, there is an abundance of opportunities to participate in the arts. I've always enjoyed going to plays and museums with my own kids, because I believe that exposing children to the arts helps with their intellectual and emotional development. D.C. kids are lucky to have such a thriving arts community.

Soula Antoniou: VSA arts has participated in the Department of Education's International Education Week to promote cross-cultural understanding among students around the world. Why do you think international exchanges are important to students?

Margaret Spellings: Computers, the Internet, and the whole spectrum of modern technology has brought us closer together as a global community than ever before. To live, work, and be successful in the 21st century will require an ability to interact well with individuals from around the world. International exchanges early on are critical to helping kids develop a basic understanding and appreciation for other cultures, so I think we should do everything we can to make those opportunities available to students of all ages.



Join us for this exciting month-long celebration of the arts featuring artists with disabilities of all ages.

- Live Performances
- Art Exhibits
- Celebrity Story Hour
- Disability Book Fair
- Open Studios
- ...and so much more

Absolutely Free!
June 5-29, 2006

START with
the **ARTS**
Family Festival

activities and performances
Union Station
June 9-10

*A View from
My Window*

children's art exhibit
Union Station
June 5-25



international juried art exhibit
The Kennedy Center
June 5-29



UNIONSTATION
WASHINGTON D.C.

Brought to you from the 130 Union Station shops and eateries!

Online Literary Journal

Engages Students, Promotes Literacy

VSA arts has expanded *Infinite Difference*, its interactive online showcase of creative writing by middle and high school students with a connection to disability. Eight short stories and poems have been added from this year's call for flash fiction and poetry, which asked students to take on "another point of view," writing from the perspective and sensations of someone or something they had never before considered. This year's collection of writing offers diverse interpretations of the theme and best exemplifies the creative voices that emerge from experiences with disability.

Student authors from across the United States were asked to look at the world of disability through complex and refracted lenses,

resulting in stories and poems that reveal a multitude of creative perspectives.

Infinite Difference invites readers to post their comments, thoughts, and questions for the authors. By reading and responding to the work of their peers, students make personal connections to writing. As teaching aids, the stories and poems give educators a tangible tool to tackle national writing standards, engage students in the writing process, and promote literacy in the classroom.

Visit *Infinite Difference* at www.vsarts.org.

THIS YEAR'S SELECTED AUTHORS ARE:

- **Jessica Bolden** of Waverly, Va.
- **Adrienne DeVita** of Wallingford, Pa.
- **Christopher Fairbourn** of Austin, Texas
- **Jax Fliss** of Conway, Ark.
- **Gabby Green-Nickerson** of Weaverville, Calif.
- **Maria Petty** of Austin, Texas
- **Kara Reese** of Delafield, Wis.
- **Ji Eun Son** of Torrance, Calif.



FEELING IMPERFECT

By Jax Fliss, Age 16

I'm Feeling a little
Asymmetrical

I'm Feeling like Somebody else
Who knows Me more than I know Myself

Do we change to Fit the Mold
That which we Scold for changing Itself

Were you Born Perfect?
Do you have the same number of Hairs
Covering your left ear as your right?
Can you write, Fight, try, Cry
Equally on both sides?

Were you born Imperfect?
Perfectly, Yes

Featured *VSA arts* Columnist

The Outcomes of Inclusive Arts Education

Kathlyn M. Steedly, Ph.D.
Director of Evaluation & Outcomes

Central to *VSA arts*' mission is understanding the impact of quality, inclusive, arts-based instruction for students with disabilities. Through extensive interviews, focus groups, and classroom observations involving teachers, teaching artists, and others from education and the arts, we are documenting the benefits of involvement with the arts for students with disabilities. Several key themes are emerging around voice, choice, and access. Essential knowledge and skills associated with social, artistic, and academic growth are woven into these key themes. These themes also provide a comprehensive way to understand student achievement across ages, abilities, and subjects.

Voice

The arts provide the opportunity for students with disabilities to find and

explore their voice. Voice refers to the unique and individual way students with disabilities utilize an art form, and the process of creating art, to communicate about themselves and their understanding of the world. The teachers, who participate in *VSA arts*' work, talk about the opportunity that engaging in art-making provides for them to learn about their students in ways that would not have otherwise been possible.

Voice also closely ties to notion of self-esteem. Time and again, teachers see that the arts are a way for their students, who often fall outside of standard notions of success, to contribute. The arts become a conduit for positive attention, and create confidence. The crucial act of finding your voice, your way to communicate with the world, is central to participating in culture and society.

Choice

Like voice, choice is also central to the art-making experience. An artist chooses both medium and message. The artistic process allows for the artist to dictate the twists, turns, and ultimate destination. This is particularly important for students with disabilities for whom so much of life is scripted. When well-crafted, the educational experience of making art puts the script in the hands of the individual. Through the arts, all students are given the opportunity to explore and share their thoughts.

Choice cultivates autonomy. The arts engage students with disabilities in the acts of observation, rehearsing, weighing, judging, all of which are essential tools for learning in general. As they decide how paint goes on canvas, what to say on stage, or how to format a poem, they are honing

New Study Finds That the Arts Make a Difference in Schools

The Arts Education Partnership recently released a study called *Third Space: When Learning Matters*. Third Space is based on three years of research in ten high poverty rural and urban schools across the country. The schools have made the arts central to their curriculum, with powerful impacts on students, teachers and the entire school community.

The book explores why the arts have such positive effects and suggests that educational reform can emerge from the bottom up, when the student becomes the epicenter of school transformation. It urges policy makers and educators to look to the arts as a



powerful way to create vibrant learning communities that improve student achievement in all schools, particularly those struggling to improve academic performance.

For more information visit the Arts Education Partnership Web site at <http://aep-arts.org>.

the highly critical capacity of decision-making that will enable them to be active and independent members of society. Teachers repeatedly mention that offering students choice and opportunity, within creating art, prepares students to make better choices in the future.

Access

Access provides a bridge that connects the ideas of voice and choice to education. Access refers to the opportunity to fully engage in the curriculum, participate in the school and community, and contribute in ways that allow all students to reach their full potential. Student, school, and community are strengthened when true access is achieved.

Teachers talk about the inherent ability of the arts to “level the playing field” and “meet students where they are.” “Leveling” and “meeting” are the essence of access. As students experience poetry, they individually and artistically enter the language arts curriculum. Students who learn mime skills create and physically explore characters and stories in ways not defined by language or physical ability. In truly inclusive educational settings, access pertains to multiple points of entry into lessons, opportunities for all students to engage in learning equally, and definitions of success that address the ways all

students can achieve.

Inclusive arts education creates on increased access to meaningful educational experiences in which voices are strengthened and choices are explored. Moving forward, the way in which we articulate the benefits of inclusive arts education

We are not integrating art into education, we’re educating through art. That is the mode through which the children are learning.

— 2004 Focus Group Participant

must embrace the idea that the arts can fundamentally create educational environments built on principals of both artistry and inclusion.



Let Your Style Take Shape,

introduces middle school students to the connections between art, science, and math, and provides educators with suggestions for creating an inclusive educational environment. This teacher’s resource, developed with Lifetime Learning Systems, Inc. a division of Weekly Reader, was sent to thousands of public school teachers across the country and is available for download online at www.vsarts.org.

In The Spotlight

Gordon Sasaki

Exposing the diversity and complexity of an artist's practice can promote dialogue and insight to understanding any work of art. But what happens when that dialogue itself becomes the art? Artist Gordon Sasaki draws inspiration from his environment and uses various materials in his art - everything from dried grass to playing cards - sparking dialogue from the subject matter and the interaction of people when they encounter his art.

Sasaki started working with *VSA Arts Hawaii - Pacific* about twenty years ago, exhibiting his artwork and conducting artist workshops, soon expanding to work with



Gordon Sasaki "One-eyed Jack" mixed media, 2005

national *VSA arts* programs. In addition to having his art printed in publications, he has been a *VSA arts* Fellow, a participant of the International Conferences, a teaching artist at the *VSA arts* Institutes and has served on numerous adjudication panels. Sasaki comments, "I have always strongly supported the goals of *VSA arts*. Our society has the misconception that disability implies inability. The important thing is to create visibility and awareness for artists with disabilities and through the arts we

can reshape preconceptions about what people with disabilities can accomplish."

Sasaki, a wheelchair user since a 1982 automobile accident, is a teaching artist at The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York City. There he leads tours, workshops and access programs specifically targeted towards under-served and disabled populations. He says, "MoMA is a rich place to work. It's never the same, every program is different and it forces me to be creative in my teaching practice. And to be around the artwork in the Museum is inspiring." Sasaki explains that he teaches art the same way he makes his art. "When I'm teaching, I concentrate on the dialogue between myself and my students. I look for unexpected surprises, so the teach-

ing and the art-making process becomes something of discovery.

I believe the art process has the ability to adapt to

the individual, to where everybody has something to gain and contribute, regardless of your ability or your way of thinking."

Sasaki also thinks humor is important in artwork and often surprises people with his ideas. On display at a recent exhibit, Sasaki presented a work called "One-eyed Jack." Recalling fond childhood memories of riding a bike and sticking playing cards in the spokes, Sasaki took the wheel off his wheelchair and mounted it to a wall. He then stuck a one-eyed jack playing card in the wheel and placed a spiral in the center of the wheel. Viewers were invited to spin the wheel creating a hypnotic feel while the cards clack through the spokes in the background. Sasaki comments, "One-eyed Jack illustrates how my changing physical perspective has influenced my work and is an invitation for viewers to playfully interact with this world."

Two years into production, Gordon Sasaki is currently working on a series of portrait photographs of New York City artists with disabilities. Sasaki says, "The work is about documenting these individual artists, their faces, and their value as contributors to the artistic climate within the diversity of the city." He is planning to print these images for a large black and white installation and a supporting catalog, "I want to put the catalog into public schools so kids everywhere can see that disability does not always have a negative slant to it. The most valuable thing for a young individual with or without a disability is to feel like their voice is heard."

If you are interested in participating or learning more about Gordon Sasaki's portrait project e-mail him at: g_sasaki@hotmail.com



Gordon Sasaki (center) leads a workshop at the *VSA arts* Institute.

MetLife Foundation

For the past eight years, MetLife Foundation and VSA arts have worked together to increase full access to the arts for people with disabilities. Recognizing the vital role the arts play in building communities and educating young people, MetLife Foundation is committed to making arts accessible to all people. The foundation has a long-standing tradition of supporting arts and cultural programs that promote diversity and inclusion. Long known for its programs in the arts for youth and artists with disabilities, VSA arts was looking for opportunities to develop relationships with museums and performing arts centers. Partnering with MetLife Foundation to reach these goals was a perfect fit.

Originally, VSA arts and MetLife Foundation offered the Award for Excellence in Arts Access for cultural institutions demonstrating exemplary commitment to providing accessible facilities and inclusive programs. The Award program raised awareness within the cultural field, but it also exposed the lack of a comprehensive approach to including people with disabilities in the mainstream educational efforts among cultural institutions.

A new approach was taken and the award program grew into the VSA arts MetLife Foundation Arts Connect All initiative, a grant program that encourages arts organizations to strengthen partnerships with local public schools through inclusive educational programs.

Today, Arts Connect All awards grants of up to \$15,000 each to arts organizations for education programs that enable more students with disabilities to experience social, cognitive, and cultural skills

development through the arts. The goal is to create an environment where all students have equal opportunity to learn through, participate in and enjoy the arts. “Students with and without disabilities interacting in activities together in the classroom creates awareness, understanding and respect,” said Soula Antoniou, VSA arts President. “That’s the beauty and wisdom of an inclusive education. Arts Connect All wouldn’t be possible without the support and leadership of the MetLife Foundation.”

The graphic features a green background with various art-related icons: two red masks, a blue palette with two brushes, red musical notes, a blue wheelchair icon, a pink ear icon, a blue hand icon, and a yellow Braille icon. At the bottom right, the VSA arts logo (a globe) is positioned above the text 'VSA arts' and 'MetLife Foundation'.

Arts Connect All

Inclusive Educational Programs of Arts Organizations

VSA arts
MetLife Foundation

VSA arts MetLife Foundation Arts Connect All Initiative

Eleven Arts Organizations Receive Grants up to \$15,000 to Continue Their Inclusive Education Programs

VSA arts and MetLife Foundation recently announced the recipients for Arts Connect All. This initiative is designed to encourage arts organizations to create or enhance inclusive, accessible education programming with public schools. The goal is to develop teaching practices that enable more people with disabilities to experience the social development and artistic opportunities provided through arts learning.

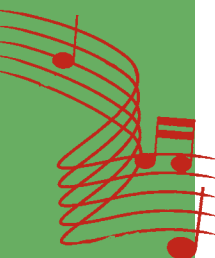
The 2006 Arts Connect All recipients are:

- **Allegro Foundation** (Charlotte, N.C.) for “Dance/Movement Education,” a weekly workshop in which elementary school students develop dance skills and create original choreography.
- **CENTERSTAGE** (Baltimore, Md.) for “Encounter,” a residency program for high school students that uses theater as a medium for learning, community building and creative self-expression.
- **Deaf West Theatre** (North Hollywood, Calif.) for “in-School Workshops” and “ASL Story Time,” programs that promote theatrical experiences that are culturally relevant, linguistically appropriate, and fully accessible for deaf and hearing children.
- **Foundation for Pierce College** (Los Angeles, Calif.) for “Media Access Project,” a mentoring program that allows high school students to create original documentary and dramatic programming under the direction of college theatre and film faculty.
- **Powerful Puppetry** (Portland, Ore.) for “Friends to the End,” in-school puppet performances that teach respect for and understanding of what it is like to live with a disability as a result of traumatic injury.
- **Luna Kids Dance** (Berkeley, Calif.) for “Tilden Elementary Integrated Creative Dance,” a program that builds respect for diversity in the classroom, supports cultural literacy, and enhances learning through dance.
- **Pacific Northwest Ballet** (Seattle, Wash.) for “Dance to Learn,” a residency program with Rose Hill Elementary School in which students create and choreograph an original work after exploring dance composition and translating ideas for movement into drawing, writing and music.
- **The Providence Black Repertory Theatre** (Providence, R.I.) for “Common Ground,” a program where students from diverse backgrounds explore common experiences by creating original pieces that fuse theater, drumming and dance.
- **Seattle Children’s Theatre** (Seattle, Wash.) for “Deaf Youth Drama Program,” a combination of in-class workshops, residencies, and public performances that develop the fundamentals of theatre and build literacy and interpersonal skills.
- **Tampa Museum of Art** (Tampa, Fla.) for “Partners in Art,” an outreach program for six Hillsborough County schools that uses the creative processes of painting and photography to raise awareness and appreciation of community diversity.
- **That Uppity Theatre Company** (St. Louis, Mo.) for “Playwright Discovery Program,” a residency program that challenges high school students to take a closer look at the world around them, examine how disability affects their lives and the lives of others, and express their views through the art of writing a play.



Photo by Barry Thompson

Photos courtesy of Pacific Northwest Ballet.



In Remembrance

Wendy Wasserstein (1950-2006)

I first met Wendy Wasserstein in 1994. I had just joined VSA arts and Wendy was a member of the Playwright Discovery selection committee and later the host of The Playwright Discovery Evening. This Tony and Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright had a passion for supporting young talent and her words to the audience at the Kennedy Center that night explained why. "The thing about writing plays is it's an enormous freedom, so that Amber (Pollina) knows from now on that she did something on her own, then collaborated with people who took her very seriously and created something. So that she'll know the next time she writes, be it a play, a newspaper article, anything, that her mind, her point of view, her imagination has legitimacy. And that's a gift."

Wendy believed "Arts for children is not simply icing on the cake. It is a way of including everyone in a joint and joyous venture...it's a way to build confidence in their uniqueness." She continued to build confidence in young writers as a mentor and friend throughout her life and her generous spirit lives on in all of them, especially our young playwrights.



Wendy Wasserstein and Amber Pollina.

By Elena Widder, Director of Performing Arts

John Belluso (1969-2006)

Seven years ago John Belluso's play *Gretty Good Time* was selected for the Playwright Discovery Award. John became a strong supporter of VSA arts mission and a good friend to the organization. He will be long remembered as a champion of actors and playwrights with a disability. His passion for their recognition and inclusion was one of the driving forces behind his extraordinary talent. At VSA arts John was instrumental in selecting the highly acclaimed plays *Diamond in the Rough*, *The Changing*, and *3/4 of a Mass for St. Vivian* as a member of our distinguished play selection committee and the committee will never be the same without his enthusiasm and spirit.

John had Engelman-Camurdrie Syndrome, a bone disorder that limits muscle strength and he became a wheelchair user at the age of 13.

Throughout his professional career, he advocated for disability rights and social justice through the plays he wrote and the characters he created. Along with *Gretty Good Time*, John's



work included *A Nervous Smile*, *The Body of Bourne*, *Henry Flamethrowa*, and *The Rules of Charity* -- a remarkable body of work for such a young playwright. John was working on *The Poor Itch*, a play commissioned by New York's prestigious Public Theater, at the time of his death in February of this year, at the age of 36.

Always the advocate for artists with disabilities, at the VSA arts Playwright Discovery Evening in 2004 from the stage at the Kennedy Center, John said "People with disabilities have always existed on theatrical stages, ever since there were theatrical stages. But I think it's only recently that we've come to understand disability in a new way. There are new models emerging, there are new paradigms created, and we are at a very adventurous time in terms of understanding the disability experience."

John Belluso's powerful, yet gentle spirit will live on in the plays he leaves us. Through his words, he will continue to touch, provoke, amuse and empower audiences for years to come. He will be deeply missed.

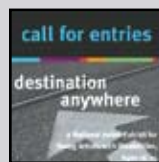
VSA arts In Action



VSA arts International Conference

June 9-10, 2006
Hilton Washington
Washington, D.C.

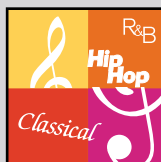
Registration Deadline: May 3, 2006



Call for Entries Destination Anywhere

A National Juried Exhibit for Young Artists with Disabilities, Ages 16 – 25

Deadline: July 14, 2006



VSA arts Young Soloists Concert

Tuesday, May 23 2006
the Kennedy Center
For tickets call 1-800-933-8721



Start with the Arts Family Festival

June 5-29, 2006
Washington, D.C.

VSA arts of Alabama www.vsartsalabama.org

ArtPartners

A mentoring program featuring works by adult artists and people with disabilities.

- July 20, 2006- Mobile
- August 20, 2006- Birmingham
- September 28, 2006- Sylacauga

CreativeFest May 5, 2006

A celebration of artwork created by children with disabilities.

VSA arts of Massachusetts www.vsamass.org

Children's Festival, Boston Children's Museum May 4th, 2006

Worcester Children's Festival May 17th, 2006

Worcester Teen Festival May 18, 2006

Upcoming Art Shows at the VSAM Gallery, Boston:

VSA in Bloom
April 3 - May 26, 2006

PCTW Group Show
June 5 - 30, 2006

Francine
July 1 - 28, 2006

Kansas - Accessible Arts, Inc. www.accessiblearts.org

99 Drums! Music & Cultural Camp April 22-23, 2006.

Presented by Accessible Arts, the Kansas VSA arts affiliate, 99 Drums will bring together a group of children with and without disabilities to experience music and dance in a celebration of diverse cultures in an inclusive environment.

VSA arts of New York City bbvsanyc@msn.com

Stories Through the Arts – Queens Very Special Arts Festival, May 16, 2006

The event will offer wide array of arts activities that are accessible to budding and experienced artists with and without disabilities. Explore the arts through music, dance, visual arts, drama, theater, photography and literature.

WVSA arts connection www.wvsarts.org

ARTiculate Gallery Presents Creative Community Connection

ARTiculate is an arts-based program that develops vocational, social, and life-management skills for Washington D.C. youth with special needs, special skills, and special talents between the ages of 14-24. Show runs through May 18th 2006.

VSA arts of Texas www.vsatx.org

Summer Camp June 12-30, 2006

Arts for pre-teens and teens of all abilities, The VSA arts of Texas Summer Camp is a collaboration between VSA arts of Texas, Accessible Arts, Austin Visual Arts Association, and Public Access Community Television (FACT). A staff of professionals specializing in disability and the arts will create an exciting, flexible, and productive experience for participants of varying ability.

VSA arts of New Jersey www.vsanj.org

Partners in the Arts Festival

June 1, 2006

This festival fosters the integration of individuals with and without disabilities in the celebration of the arts. Children and adults, individuals and groups, are invited to participate in this enriching, fun-filled day of performances, exhibits, workshops, and more. This event is offered free of charge. **Registration deadline is April 20, 2006.**

Resources

for Artists and Teachers

For all opportunities, please check the organization's Web site or contact them directly for application details and deadlines. For additional resources, please visit the VSA arts Web site at www.vsarts.org.

The following resources are extracted from VSA arts email distribution lists tailored to artistic disciplines, *The Palette-Online* (visual), *Literary Art Opportunities and Performing Art Opportunities*. These resources feature updates on current events at VSA arts, funding opportunities, calls for art, teacher resources and related information. To subscribe to each list, please follow these instructions:

Palette-Online: send a message to info@vsarts.org with the following text: **SUBSCRIBE visual arts**
Literary Arts Opportunities and Performing Arts Opportunities: send a message to info@vsarts.org with the following text: **SUBSCRIBE literary arts and SUBSCRIBE performing arts**.

Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts www.vlany.org/res_dir.html

Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts offers pro bono and low cost legal representation and information to artists across the country. Visit the Web site to find a local chapter near you.

Artists Fellowship, Inc. www.artistsfellowship.com

The Artists' Fellowship, Inc. is a private, charitable foundation that assists professional fine artists (painters, graphic artists, sculptors) and their families in times of emergency, disability, or bereavement.

American Society of Journalists and Authors Charitable Trust Writers Emergency Assistance Fund www.asja.org

The Writers Emergency Assistance Fund exists to help established freelance non-fiction writers across the country that, because of advancing age, illness, disability, or extraordinary professional crisis, are unable to work. Visit the Web site for complete information on eligibility requirements.

MentorMatch at American Foundation for the Blind's CareerConnect www.afb.org

MentorMatch, an extensive database on AFB CareerConnect, now includes mentors in the arts. CareerConnect presents information about the range and diversity of jobs performed by adults who are blind or visually impaired and provides free resources for both employers and jobseekers with visual impairments.

If you are a museum or an arts professional and would like to participate in an e-mentoring program for someone who is blind or has a visual impairment, please email your contact information to coordinator@artbeyondsight.org; subject line: Mentor program

The Artist Pension Trust – NY www.artistpensiontrust.org

The Artist Pension Trust is a pension program, designed especially for artists, in order to help with long-term financial security. Artists contribute 20 works of art into the trust throughout a 20 year-time period, and receive income 20 years after the trust begins. Artists benefit by receiving funds generated by sale of works in the artist's pool, and through the funds generated in the individual artist's pension account. Visit the Web site for complete information.

Theatre Communications Group/ International Theatre Institute Travel Grants www.tcg.org

The Theatre Communications Group/International Theatre Institute Travel Grants program is designed to support cultural exchange and artistic partnerships between theater professionals in the United States and their counterparts in Russia and Eastern and Central Europe. **The deadline is April 28, 2006; the fall 2006 deadline is October 27, 2006.** Visit the Web site for ap-

plication guidelines and materials.

Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University www.annenberginstitute.org

The Annenberg Institute develops, shares and acts on knowledge that improves programs and policies on teaching and learning in urban communities and in schools serving disadvantaged children.

The Center for Arts Education www.cae-nyc.org

The Center for Arts Education is an independent, not-for-profit organization committed to restoring and sustaining arts education as an essential part of every child's education in the New York City public schools.

Different Ways of Knowing www.differentways.org

Different Ways of Knowing is an approach to systemic reform for grades K-8th and an initiative that helps teachers facilitate standards-driven student-centered learning in their classrooms. It offers a three-year course study for teachers blended with powerful curriculum tools.

The Lincoln Center Institute www.lincolncenter.org

The Institute's approach to aesthetic education involves teachers and their students in a process of carefully planned observation and analysis of works of art linked to participation in activities designed to illuminate the relationship between artistic choice and aesthetic response. Toward this end, a working partnership has been formed between schools, the Institute, and between artists and teachers working in classrooms.

REGISTER NOW!
WWW.VSARTS.ORG



VSA arts
**International
Conference**

*Exploring Accessibility,
Inclusion, and Arts Education*

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Elliot Eisner, Ph.D., author and leading theorist on arts education and curriculum studies.

Temple Grandin, Ph.D., best-selling author and noted speaker on autism.

June 9-10, 2006

Hilton Washington
Washington, D.C.

REGISTRATION DEADLINE:
Wednesday, May 3, 2006

www.vsarts.org



818 CONNECTICUT AVENUE, NW, SUITE 600
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20006

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Southern, MD
Permit No.69