

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: July 1, 2010
CONTACT: Jon Skaalen or Craig Dunn,
612-332-3888 or access@vsaartsmn.org



Nine Metro Groups Receive Access Grants

Nine arts organizations in the Twin Cities have been awarded a total of \$100,794 for projects to make the arts more accessible to people with disabilities. Funding for these ADA Access Improvement Grants for Metro Arts Organizations is from the Minnesota Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund, which voters approved in 2008. VSA Minnesota administers this program for the Metropolitan Regional Arts Council.

The purpose of this grant is to enable nonprofit arts organizations in the seven-county Twin Cities area to make improvements to their programs, projects, equipment, or facilities that will enhance access to the arts for people with disabilities. Such activities must advance the mission of the arts group, have the potential for significant or long-term impact in involving more people with disabilities as participants or patrons in arts programs, and report measurable outcomes.

Earlier this year eight organizations were awarded a total of \$89,437. Two more rounds of grants (up to \$15,000 each), along with updated guidelines and application forms, will be announced later this year and will be available at www.vsamn.org.

GRANT RECIPIENTS:

Mixed Blood Theatre Co., Minneapolis, \$11,718 -- To carry out a number of targeted facility improvements to improve accessibility for artists, audiences, and future employees with mobility impairments. The project lays a foundation for aligning programming, audience development, and facility resources that provide access for people with disabilities.

Northern Clay Center, Minneapolis, \$4,544 -- To help fund the purchase of a rehabilitation pottery wheel, as well as the purchase and installation of a secondary automatic door opener to be used with an interior entrance to Northern Clay Center's classrooms.

Illusion Theater & School, Minneapolis, \$15,000 -- To improve its accessibility services for deaf and hard of hearing individuals and to add additional services for the sight impaired. Funds would support: 1) Purchase of a new Assisted Listening System; 2) Increased AD/ASL interpretation at matinee performances; and 3) A survey/research/focus group component to determine potential deaf/hard of hearing and sight impaired audiences, to make information of reaching them a part of Illusion's overall marketing plan, and to identify Illusion's long-term AD/ASL needs.

Rosetown Playhouse, Roseville, \$1,161.17 -- To purchase two Personal PA hearing assistance devices that will work with our theatre sound systems to make an easier listening experience for our hearing-impaired audience members.

The O'Shaughnessy at St. Catherine University, St. Paul, \$15,000 -- To improve access to The O'Shaughnessy for patrons and performers with disabilities by creating entrances to the theater and dressing rooms that are in compliance with the requirements set forth in the ADA.

Circus Juventas, St. Paul, \$15,000 -- To refine and promote its "Wings" program which makes circus performing arts classes and performance opportunities available to children and youth with physical and developmental disabilities. Funding would help cover cost of staff, special equipment, outreach activities and class fee subsidies to recruit additional participants.

Interact Center for Visual & Performing Arts, Minneapolis, \$13,875 -- To purchase furniture and equipment that will make it possible for more artists with disabilities to have inspiring, supportive and accessible opportunities to engage in art making. In our 14 years history, artistic quality has grown exponentially, but some of our equipment is not accessible at all, lighting is inadequate for vision impairments, and furniture is worn out and not always safe.

Young Dance, Minneapolis, \$9,496 -- *All Abilities Dancing* is an initiative to build physically integrated dance into the fabric of our organization. Funds from the ADA Access Improvement grant will go specifically towards outreach, teacher training, curriculum development, and an ASL interpreter for all company classes, rehearsals, and performances.

Upstream Arts, Inc., Minneapolis, \$15,000 -- To increase our accessibility to specific groups of individuals with disabilities, Upstream Arts will host a series of trainings for its teaching artists, led by local experts including disability service providers and Special Education teachers. We will also host a week long intensive training on American Sign Language.

GRANT REVIEW PANELISTS:

The grants were reviewed by an eight-member panel of persons active in the metro arts and disability communities. They read, discussed and ranked the applications, and their recommendations were approved by the VSA Minnesota board of directors. Panelists included:

Barb Boelter, Eagan, parent of a young adult with disabilities, past president of Metro Deaf School, and a past board member of PACER Center;

Warren Bowles, Minneapolis, actor, director, playwright, Mixed Blood board member

Paul Deeming, Eagan, a certified ASL theatrical interpreter and a case manager for DeafBlind Services Minnesota;

Jeanette Frederickson, St. Paul, attorney, past PACER board, parent of a young adult who is deaf

Adrienne Mason, St. Paul, disability advocate/speaker, Goodwill/Easter Seals board, past Metro Center for Independent Living (MCIL) and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) committees

Lia Rivamonte, St. Paul, executive director of Banfill-Locke Center for the Arts

Kurt Wiger, Plymouth, coordinator of volunteers and interns at Courage Center in Golden Valley, and a member of several access advisory panels.

For more information, contact VSA Minnesota, 612-332-3888 voice/tty, access@vsamn.org or go to www.vsamn.org.