

NEWS

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ARTS

State arts group seeking contributions

By Don Steele
Dodge City Daily Globe

As the end of the year approaches, it's time to think about charitable contributions.

With the country still struggling to climb out of a recession, social service agencies are called on to provide more assistance to those in need: food and shelter and maybe a little something extra to celebrate Christmas.

Arts agencies are likewise struggling to keep their doors open and keep programs available to everyone, especially in our home on the range, where the governor famously fired the staff of the Kansas Arts Commission and vetoed its funding. His action made Kansas the only state in the union with no public money for the arts.

Kansas Citizens for the Arts, an agency formed about 10 years ago to advocate for public funding of the arts in Kansas, was suddenly thrown into the spotlight as the logical spearhead for raising

awareness of the importance of public funding for the arts.

"Our mission didn't really change, but our activity did," Sarah Fizell, spokeswoman for Kansas Citizens for the Arts, said in a phone interview Thursday.

According to Fizell, the agency was not particularly active before the governor's actions.

"We had a volunteer board and no staff until the fall of 2010, when I was hired part time," Fizell said.

Following the gutting of the Kansas Arts Commission, Kansas Citizens for the Arts' email list grew from 250 to over 8,000 people.

New budget session

Kansas Citizens for the Arts has a game plan for the next legislative session.

"Our plan is to get the Legislature to put that money back in the budget," Fizell said. "Given the governor's disinter-

est in the issue and his ideological opposition to arts funding, we expect a line-item veto again this year, although he recently indicated he might be revisiting his position. We don't know what that means."

What is clear is that the governor's prediction about federal arts funding was mistaken.

Kansas Citizens for the Arts warned the governor that no state funding would also mean no federal funding. But Brownback argued that funding from the National Endowment for the Arts would not be contingent on state dollars.

Fizell also pointed out that the loss of state funding has hampered fundraising efforts across the state.

"In many cases, there were local matches in place which were triggered by the state funds," she said.

Fizell observes that most local arts organizations are not yet facing closure, but many have cut back on events

which don't create revenue, meaning that only those who can afford to pay have access.

So for now, advocates will focus on educating legislators about the economic impact of the arts as well as the importance of availability of the arts in rural communities.

"We're a shoestring organization, but we intend to keep the issue out there in front of the Legislature. They're beginning to realize what that relatively small pool of dollars accomplished in their communities," Fizell said.

Locally, the Depot Theater Company and the

Carnegie Center for the Arts have both received operational support funding from the Kansas Arts Commission.

In 2008, three Ford County agencies received KAC funding: The Depot received \$8,088, Carnegie received \$6,357 and USD 459 Bucklin received \$2,000.

In 2011, the Depot received \$5,286 in operational support and \$1,000 for an "American Masterpieces" program.

Call for help

Kansas Citizens for the Arts has recently asked its

constituency to consider end-of-the-year contributions to help with the advocacy effort.

"We'll use everything we can to help educate legislators and keep the issue out there," Fizell said.

The goal is to get funding for the arts back in the Kansas budget and avoid a line-item veto by the governor.

For more information, to become a member or to make a contribution, visit the organization's Web site at www.kansasarts.org. Donations may also be made by sending a check to PO Box 733, Salina, KS 67402.



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