

The Impact of the Arts

BY FLORA MARIA GARCIA

I am pleased to report that last December, United Arts' board approved funding of more than \$1.37 million in Operating Support Grants (of which approximately 90 percent went to our cornerstone institutions) to almost 50 cultural groups. All organizations were reviewed by skilled community representatives and cultural peers on fair but highly competitive criteria that focused on artistic quality, management ability and both outreach and educational efforts.

On February 1, United Arts will launch the 2014 collaborative *Campaign for the Arts*. Last year, *Campaign for the Arts* exceeded goal by almost \$400,000, generating nearly \$2 million, for the best finish in five years! The campaign is critically important to our cornerstone institutions because it generates operating funds—the expenditures that keep the doors open and pay our artists. Today, it is also some of the most difficult funding to secure.

During the campaign each year, local cultural groups and United Arts work together to call attention to the importance of the arts. With your help, we raise the bar each year to collectively support the remarkable cultural sector that enhances our quality of life and puts our region on the map as a center for creativity.

This past year, through a little ingenuity and with some extra funds from the Florida Council on the Arts, United Arts created a “quick turnaround challenge grant” for school districts in Osceola, Lake and Seminole counties to extend cultural outreach to children in underserved areas. All three counties moved quickly to provide matching funds. The Osceola school district enthusiastically requested that all fifth-graders get to see performances by the Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra and the Orlando Ballet.

Remembering my own powerful reaction to my first symphony, I attended this Young People's concert in early November. What struck me most was the impact this experience had on the children. An initial writhing mass of 1,000 squirming, chattering students calmed when the district administrator stood at the front of the stage and—in silence!—raised her hand for order.

When a dancer lifted a young ballerina high into the air, there was an audible gasp of delight. Sweet, youthful voices sang along to Woody Guthrie's “This Land Is Your Land.” And, during the final piece, youngsters bounced with unfettered exuberance to the “William Tell Overture.”

This is why the arts matter! They inspire us. They challenge us. They change lives. And they take us out of the everyday to lift our spirits and our minds. This is why we ask you for your continued and generous support during our collaborative Campaign for the Arts. Because we, and our cultural partners, simply cannot do it alone. We need your help. Please give, and give generously this year—for our children and for the betterment of our community. Thank you!



Flora Maria Garcia
President & CEO
United Arts of Central Florida



PHILAN M. EBENHACK