

Dear Cultural Supporter:

I'm so pleased to share with you that United Arts has three new staff members in key positions: Elizabeth Rodriguez Neuman, development director; Rafael Torres, grants and education manager; and Arika Richardson, development manager. All bring with them a high level of expertise, a love of the arts and fresh perspectives; we are fortunate to have them on the United Arts team (read more about them on the next page).

United Arts takes its role as the region's arts advocate very seriously, and nothing is more important to us — and to the organizations that we support — than increased funding for the arts. Given last year's 94 percent funding cut to the Division of Cultural



Flora Maria Garcia

Affairs by the Florida Legislature, I started meeting with Central Florida state legislators last August to raise concerns and garner their support in reinstating funding in the 2019 legislative session. Further, United Arts coordinated meetings between legislators and arts leaders for Arts & Culture Day at the Capitol on March 13; we prepared 23 arts leaders with talking points and packets of information for legislators, ensuring that they deliver effective messaging when speaking to state legislators about arts funding.

On January 15, State Representatives Ana Eskamani and Carlos Guillermo Smith hosted an arts advocacy Town Hall and panel discussion of arts leaders, which also included State Representatives Amy Mercado and Geraldine Thompson. The forum, held at the Orlando Repertory Theatre, was attended by more than 200 arts and cultural supporters, and was covered by the press.

Last November, I, along with my Tampa and St. Petersburg counterparts, organized an advocacy summit attended by more than 50 local arts agency leaders from throughout Florida with the sole purpose of focusing advocacy efforts to reinstate funding to the Florida Department of State, Division of Cultural

Affairs. This year the Division's recommendations in four grant categories total more than \$61 million to fund 664 matching grants throughout the state. For Central Florida groups, if funded by the legislators, it means more than \$7 million in grants. The stakes are high this year, and we will not know results until the end of the legislative session.

We are also working with the Division of Cultural Affairs and the Center for Arts in Medicine University of Florida to design a statewide conference focused on the Arts and Healthy Communities. The statewide conference is taking place on September 23 and 24, 2019, at the Dr. Phillips Center for the

Performing Arts. This conference will bring keynotes from all over the country to address how the arts positively affect troubled veterans and individuals dealing with chronic illnesses, as well as research results on the impact of art and healing, and more. This conference will expand everyone's knowledge base, including leadership in the healthcare industries.

Together with the dedicated efforts of our legislators, area leaders, cultural partners and donors, we continue to work toward a more stable funding situation, to sustain our cultural organizations and the valuable programming they bring to our communities, our economy and our lives.

Sincerely,

Flora Maria Garcia
President & CEO
United Arts of Central Florida

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