



NEWS AND INFORMATION

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Nashville Mayor Bill Purcell, Iowa Governor Tom Vilsack, and New Orleans Center for Creative Arts | Riverfront Receive 2006 Public Leadership in the Arts Awards

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Americans for the Arts and The U.S. Conference of Mayors today presented the 2006 Public Leadership in the Arts Awards to **Nashville Mayor Bill Purcell, Iowa Governor Tom Vilsack**, and New Orleans' premier arts training center for high school students, **New Orleans Center for Creative Arts | Riverfront (NOCCA)**. The awards honor elected officials and artists or arts organizations that have demonstrated outstanding leadership in advancement of the arts.

The awards were presented at the Mayors Arts Luncheon as part of the U.S. Conference of Mayors' 74th winter meeting in Washington, DC. The awards have been given annually by Americans for the Arts and The U.S. Conference of Mayors since 1997.

In honor of NOCCA, three high school students from NOCCA traveled from New Orleans to perform for the hundreds of U.S. mayors at the luncheon to demonstrate the strong musical training that the school has to offer. Following the students' performance, one student spoke to the mayors about his personal struggle as a result of Hurricane Katrina and how a focus on music has helped him maintain a positive outlook.

"Today we honor Governor Vilsack and Mayor Purcell for their dedication to building and expanding arts programs in their areas and helping to make the arts accessible to all Americans," said Robert L. Lynch, president and CEO of Americans for the Arts. "We are also proud to recognize the New Orleans Center for Creative Arts | Riverfront as one of the nation's top arts training institutions and leader in developing programs that help youngsters realize their creative and artistic potential."

"Access to the arts adds to our quality of life. We honor these visionaries who have changed the lives of countless people through their support of the arts. Their contributions to our nation's communities, especially our children, are invaluable," said Conference President and Long Beach Mayor Beverly O'Neill.

Nashville Mayor Bill Purcell receives the **2006 National Award for Local Arts**

Leadership for his unwavering support for the arts in Nashville and its unique identity as “Music City, U.S.A.” The Purcell Administration sponsored an ordinance to establish a Percent for Public Art Program, making public art accessible to the entire community. During the past six years, the mayor has increased city funding to local arts organizations by 61 percent. During the current budget cycle, he secured more than \$8 million in capital funds to support four of Nashville’s major arts institutions. Metro Nashville has donated property and provided substantial financial support for the Schermerhorn Symphony Center, a more than \$120 million state-of-the-art concert hall, to open in downtown Nashville in September 2006.

Iowa Governor Tom Vilsack receives the **2006 National Award for State Arts**

Leadership in recognition of his dedication to establishing arts programs in Iowa. Through the governor’s leadership, the state launched the Vision Iowa Program, which has had a significant positive impact on communities throughout the state by investing in education, cultural, and recreational attractions. Under the governor’s leadership, the state established the Iowa Cultural Trust, which will provide general operating support funds for Iowa arts organizations. In addition, Vilsack established a program certifying Cultural & Entertainment Districts in communities across Iowa. The program demonstrates that the arts and cultural opportunities enhance property values, the property value of surrounding businesses, and the tax base of a region.

New Orleans Center for Creative Arts | Riverfront receives the **2006 National Award for Excellence in Arts Programs for Youth**.

NOCCA is Louisiana’s premier arts training center for high school students. Because NOCCA suffered damage as a result of Hurricane Katrina, they just recently reopened for classes, but only from satellite locations. They expect to re-open their main campus in May 2006. With about 850 students attending annually, the center provides pre-professional instruction in all areas of the arts tuition-free to students who successfully audition. A Louisiana treasure that recently marked its 30th anniversary, NOCCA counts many well-known and highly successful artists as alumni, including musician and actor Harry Connick, Jr. and musicians Branford, Wynton, Delfeayo, and Jason Marsalis.

***Americans for the Arts** is the leading nonprofit organization for advancing the arts and arts education in America. With offices in Washington, D.C. and New York City, it has a record of more than 50 years of service. Americans for the Arts is dedicated to representing and serving local communities and creating opportunities for every American to participate in and appreciate all forms of the arts. Additional information is available at www.AmericansForTheArts.org.*

The U.S. Conference of Mayors is the official nonpartisan organization of cities with populations of 30,000 or more. There are 1,139 such cities in the country today, each represented in the Conference by its chief elected official, the Mayor.

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