



NEWS AND INFORMATION

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Lackawanna County, Pennsylvania to be Honored with the 2006 National Award for County Arts Leadership

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Americans for the Arts, the nation's leading nonprofit organization for advancing the arts in America, in conjunction with the National Association of Counties (NACo), will present the 2006 National Award for County Arts Leadership to the Lackawanna County Commissioners of Lackawanna County, Pennsylvania. The award will be officially presented to the commissioners during the annual NACo meeting in Chicago on August 7, 2006. This is the first time that a county in the commonwealth of Pennsylvania has received such an award.

The National Award for County Arts Leadership is part of a series of Public Leadership in the Arts Awards given annually by Americans for the Arts. The award honors an elected county board or individual leader who has significantly advanced the arts in the communities they serve. The Lackawanna County Commissioners were chosen for their dedication to supporting the arts in the area and to incorporating culture into the county's economic development plan.

Robert L. Lynch, president and CEO for Americans for the Arts, stated, "The work of the Lackawanna County Commissioners on behalf of the arts has helped make Lackawanna County a national leader in promoting strong arts and cultural programs. The commissioners are exhibiting exemplary leadership in the state of Pennsylvania by dramatically increasing funds to the arts and cultural sector, while funds on the state level are declining."

In 2004, under the leadership of County Commissioners A.J. Munchak and Robert C. Cordaro, an innovative Education and Culture fee was created to encourage and support artistic endeavors within Lackawanna County. The approximately \$1.2 million in revenue generated by this fee was dedicated to funding regional arts assets as well as arts and education

activities. This is the first time in county history that the arts were included as a line item in the budget.

The Lackawanna County Commissioners dedicated over \$750,000 to support three anchor institutions: the Scranton Cultural Center, the Everhart Museum, and the Lackawanna County Library System. The remaining funds were targeted to make project grants available to artists and arts organizations as well as to fund innovative public art projects.

"We believe that fostering arts and cultural activities is critical to our area's revitalization and growth. Supporting the arts is an important end unto itself but is also the basis for economic development in the new economy. Since art is the expression of our better self than the people of Lackawanna County are certainly showing the world their best," said Lackawanna County Commissioner Robert C. Cordaro.

Since then, the Lackawanna County Commissioners created the County Office on Education and Culture, hired a full-time director of education and culture, and formed a partnership with the City of Scranton to support the creation of a large artist live/work space in Scranton.

Americans for the Arts established the National Award for County Arts Leadership in 1999 to recognize the positive role county government leaders play in improving arts programs, increasing funding to the arts, and making the arts accessible in their communities. Past recipients include: Douglas M. Duncan, County Executive in Montgomery County, Maryland; the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors; County Commissioner Park Helms of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina; County Commissioner Betty Lou Ward of Wake County, North Carolina; the Broward County Board of Commissioners of Broward County, Florida; and the Jefferson County Commission of Jefferson County, Alabama.

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.

NACo, the only national organization that represents county governments in the United States, continues to follow the traditions established by those early county officials. With its headquarters on Capitol Hill, NACo is a full-service organization that provides an extensive line of services including legislative, research, technical, and public affairs assistance, as well as enterprise services to its members. The association acts as a liaison with other levels of government, works to improve public understanding of counties, serves as a national advocate for counties, and provides them with resources to help them find innovative methods to meet the challenges they face. NACo is

involved in a number of special projects that deal with such issues as the environment, sustainable communities, volunteerism and intergenerational studies. Additional information is available at www.naco.org.

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