



NEWS AND INFORMATION

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Americans for the Arts Honors Alene Valkanas with the First Annual State Arts Advocacy Award Named in Her Honor

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Americans for the Arts, the nation's leading nonprofit organization for advancing the arts in America, today presented the first annual 2006 State Arts Advocacy Award to Alene Valkanas. Named in her honor, the Alene Valkanas State Arts Advocacy Award was created to honor an individual who has dramatically affected the political landscape through their arts advocacy efforts at the state level. The Award was presented by Nina Ozlu, chief counsel for Americans for the Arts, today at the Illinois Arts Alliance's 25th Anniversary gala celebration in Chicago.

Robert L. Lynch, president and CEO for Americans for the Arts, stated, "Alene has been a tireless leader and passionate advocate for the arts and arts education in Illinois and throughout the country. Her unwavering commitment is renowned and we are delighted to designate this award in her honor."

Alene Valkanas has been dedicated to state and arts advocacy for more than 25 years. As Executive Director of the Illinois Arts Alliance (IAA) for the past 20 years, Valkanas has been an active and vocal champion of Illinois' vibrant cultural community, defending the freedom of artists, developing innovative programs and research projects, and tirelessly advocating on behalf of the organizations that bring the arts to all of us. During her tenure at IAA, she has quadrupled its membership and created a statewide network to support the arts.

Valkanas is a founding member of the Washington-based Center for Lobbying in the Public Interest, a founding member of the State Arts Action Network, and a former officer of the Donors Forum of Chicago.

"Alene's lasting legacy reaches far beyond Illinois," said Gretchen Johnson, executive director of the Washington State Arts Alliance. "By exercising leadership and imparting wisdom with

grace, she has had a lasting impact on arts advocacy from Arizona to Vermont and from Florida to Washington State.”

“Alene is an exemplar of excellence in every way,” said Pamela G. Holt, executive director of the Maryland Citizens for the Arts. “Her brilliance, intuitiveness, and foresight have heightened the awareness and appreciation for the work of arts advocates and the establishment of an award in her honor is most fitting.”

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.

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