



## NEWS AND INFORMATION

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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#### **Americans for the Arts Presents 2009 State Arts Advocacy Award to Sheila Smith**

WASHINGTON, D.C.— At its annual convention in Seattle today, Americans for the Arts, the nation's leading nonprofit organization for advancing the arts in America, presented the 2009 Alene Valkanas State Arts Advocacy Award to **Sheila Smith, executive director of Minnesota Citizens for the Arts**. The award honors an individual who has dramatically affected the political landscape through arts advocacy efforts at the state level.

Robert L. Lynch, president and CEO for Americans for the Arts, stated, "Sheila has been a tremendous leader and passionate advocate for the arts and arts education in Minnesota. Her unwavering commitment to local, state, and national support for the arts deserves this recognition."

Sheila Smith has led Minnesota Citizens for the Arts (MCA) since 1996. Last year, MCA and the Vote Yes Minnesota campaign, successfully advocated for the passage of the Minnesota Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment. The state constitutional amendment will now dedicate three-eighths of one percent of the sales tax to preserve the state's clean water, great outdoors, arts, and history for the next 25 years. The arts will receive 19.75 percent of the three-eighths percent collected, which adds up to approximately \$30 million in the first year, tripling the current funding level.

Minnesota Citizens for the Arts is a statewide arts advocacy organization that organizes the arts community to lobby the Minnesota State Legislature and Congress. Its mission is to ensure opportunity for all people to have access to and involvement in the arts.

The Alene Valkanas State Arts Advocacy Award is presented by the State Arts Action Network of Americans for the Arts.

**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](http://www.AmericansForTheArts.org).

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