



## Engaged Colleges Are Central to Strong Communities

### Arts Programs Inspire Youth, Rebuild Communities

Teenagers are helping design murals that someday will adorn neighborhood streets. A local organization is sponsoring an oral history project to keep its community's heritage alive for coming generations. Children in a neighborhood dance troupe are having the time of their lives performing for family and friends. Adults are learning how to look deeply at their surroundings to capture what they see on film.

At first glance, these arts projects may appear to be no more than pleasant diversions best suited to middle- and upper-class communities. However, all of the projects mentioned above, and many more like them, are breathing new life into poor and decaying neighborhoods that residents once feared were beyond hope of revitalization.

The arts—which include music, drama, painting, photography, literature, and history—increasingly are being viewed as some of the most effective community development tools that cities and towns have at their disposal. In recent years, arts-related programming has played a prominent role in HUD's community development projects, primarily because of Secretary Andrew Cuomo's belief that there is more to developing healthy neighborhoods than building housing and renovating dilapidated buildings.

The most successful community development initiatives strengthen a community's social fabric as well as its infrastructure. Neighborhood residents make important connections with one another, enjoy heightened self-esteem, develop a stronger sense of neighborhood pride and ownership, learn new

skills, and let themselves imagine—and then fashion—a brighter future. And what is most important is that their efforts bring about long-term, life-changing results. For example, in neighborhoods across the country:

- New cultural districts bring people and businesses back into economically depressed city neighborhoods.
- Beautification projects give public housing residents the motivation and wherewithal to renovate their homes and restore their neighborhoods.
- Public art displays help ethnic groups imprint their identity on inner-city communities and gain a powerful sense of neighborhood ownership.

- Art classes offer low-income youngsters opportunities to spend their free time pursuing constructive activities and honing the intuitive skills that often are responsible for academic success.

This issue of *COPPC Central* looks at how COPCs and their community partners, under the leadership of Assistant Secretary for Policy Development and Research Susan Wachter, are using arts programming to rehabilitate local communities and give new hope to those who live there. Working with community residents to organize cultural festivals, present drama performances, restore historic districts, and sponsor art classes, COPCs continuously discover that the path to a community's revitalization often begins in the artistic soul of that community's people. ■

### ARTS PROGRAMS HELP YOUNG PEOPLE BECOME VALUED COMMUNITY MEMBERS

At-risk young people who participate in the arts are likely to improve their academic performance and outperform classmates who do not participate in arts programming, according to a recent report published by the Arts Education Partnership and the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities. The 1999 report, *Champions of Change: The Impact of the Arts on Learning*, found a direct correlation between sustained participation in music and drama activities and increased academic performance in math and reading among at-risk young people.

Following are other recent studies that support and expand on the findings reported in *Champions for Change*:

- A report released at the 1999 winter meeting of the U.S. Conference of Mayors suggests that in addition to improved academic performance, young people participating in arts programs are more skilled at conflict resolution and team building and less likely to participate in delinquent behavior and truancy.
- *Coming Up Taller: Arts and Humanities Programs for Children and Youth at Risk*, a 1996 report published by the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities, maintains that arts programs transform the lives of at-risk children by providing "building blocks" that are crucial for healthy development. The report suggests

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## Murals Celebrate Cultural Heritage

Students in the master of fine arts program at Brooklyn College in New York have spent the past two summers painting murals and mentoring local teenagers through a COPC-supported course aimed at beautifying the borough's Sunset Park neighborhood. Each summer, approximately 25 graduate and high school students participate in the college's Workshop in Public Art, a collaboration of Brooklyn College, the Brooklyn College Community Partnership for Research and Learning, and several neighborhood organizations.

Sunset Park, a neighborhood of 100,000 residents on Brooklyn's waterfront, is home to a large number of first-generation immigrants, many of whom have very low incomes and education levels, says the COPC's chief investigator, Nancy Romer. The community has been a haven for immigrants since the late 19th century, when Sunset Park first became a center for maritime trade. Despite four decades of decline in the area's maritime industry, immigrants from Spanish-speaking countries as well as Asia, Russia, and the Middle East continue to flock to the community.

The Workshop in Public Art was established to celebrate this cultural heritage, remove urban blight, and show neighborhood teens that art education can lead to satisfying career



opportunities, says Romer. During each 12-week workshop session, graduate and high school students work together to research, design, and construct a mural for public display. In 1998 the students painted an 18-panel mural that was installed over boarded-up windows of a neighborhood commercial building. The mural features colorful dancing figures that evoke the local Hispanic nightlife. A second mural, featuring fabric patterns from around the world, was created in 1999 for the lobby of the new Brooklyn Mills Business Incubator. The incubator, operated by the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce, houses and supports small textile design and production companies, many of which are immigrant owned.

"The college and high school students were all learning to paint murals together," says Assistant Professor

Rhoda Andors, who taught the workshop. "Students at all skill levels helped one another. Many of the graduate students, especially those who are teachers themselves, were really skilled at helping the younger students."

Brooklyn College provides the workshops' graduate students with six credits and \$900 in tuition remission, and the COPC has contributed \$30,000 over 2 years to pay for personnel and supplies. High school students, who attend the classes at no charge, are recruited and supervised by the Hispanic Youth People's Alternative, a local multiservice community organization.

Andors reports that the mural project helped broaden high school students' knowledge of art, offered them positive role models, and gave them a glimpse of college life. In addition, says Romer, the incubator project has helped Brooklyn College strengthen its relationship with Sunset Park's business community.

"As a liberal arts college, our outreach to the local business community has not been central," says Romer. "But the incubator mural has helped our students make a small contribution to the economic development goals the community has set for itself."

For more information, contact Nancy Romer at (718) 951-5015. ■

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that these programs create safe places in which children and youth can develop constructive relationships with peers and adults, build their sense of worth and achievement, and become valued community members.

"Too often today, instead of children discovering the joyful rewards of painting, or music, or sculpting, or writing,

or testing a new idea, they express themselves through acts of frustration, helplessness, hopelessness, and even violence," Hillary Rodham Clinton recently told the President's Committee, on which she serves as honorary chairperson. "In communities where [arts] programs already exist, they are providing soul-saving and life-enhancing opportunities for young people." ■

**COPC Central** is a free quarterly publication prepared by the University Partnerships Clearinghouse, the information service sponsored by HUD's Office of University Partnerships (OUP). **COPC Central** highlights the contributions of universities and colleges to local community revitalization efforts. You may contact the University Partnerships Clearinghouse at P.O. Box 6091, Rockville, MD 20849, (800) 245-2691, (fax) (301) 519-5767. See the Office of University Partnerships on the World Wide Web at <http://www.oup.org>.

## Preserving the Past Helps Build the Future

The Lynchburg College COPC is creating and supporting an arena highlighting the contributions of African Americans to the Lynchburg, Virginia, community. The COPC's effort to reach out to local neighborhoods is helping residents regain their sense of community. Technical assistance from the college helped the Legacy Museum, featuring exhibits of contributions from local African Americans to the Lynchburg community, open in late April 2000.

The first exhibit concentrates on the history of the medical community in the three neighborhoods of Tinbridge Hill, College Hill, and White Rock Hill. It emphasizes the historical involvement of African Americans in the community's healthcare. "There was a time when black doctors in the community could not even visit their patients at the local hospitals," declares Thelma Mundy, museum administrator. "This

major restoration work to convert the house into suitable museum space. Funding for the project was provided by Centra Health, a local healthcare provider.

"For many years, the African American community did not even have access to a library in the city," says Mundy. "Now we have a place to share our common history." She describes how the support of institutions such as Lynchburg College have added to the success of the project and foresees the Legacy Museum's relationship with the college and its students continuing long after COPC funding has ended.

Lynchburg College became involved in the Legacy Museum project when a history class, seeking to uncover historical threads in the local African American neighborhoods, discovered the story of Dunbar High School. "I like



dispersed the students to various schools throughout the city. Many prominent African Americans in the community received their education at Dunbar, and Santos hopes to record its history for future generations.

"Dunbar was a place of great community pride, a cultural center, a meeting place, and the place that the PTA, a former political force in the neighborhood and city, operated from," describes Santos. With the closing of the school, the sense of community in the three neighborhoods that it had served began to disintegrate. The loss of this common gathering space led to a weakening of the neighborhoods' political strength and eventually to the disappearance of a sense of community. The undergraduate research work on Dunbar is scheduled to be the second major exhibit at the Legacy Museum, offering residents the opportunity to rediscover their common past.

The museum will continue to draw on the expertise of the Lynchburg College faculty and the research efforts of its students to develop exhibits. The relationships developed as a result of the Dunbar project will provide an outlet for the students' research efforts and help the museum strengthen its relationship with Lynchburg. Dunbar is just the beginning of local history projects for classes to pursue.



is the type of history we want to highlight," she adds.

An informal group of neighborhood residents developed the idea for the Legacy Museum and began its formation in 1995. The museum's new home—a turn-of-the-century Victorian house—provides a historic space to display the community's past. Local residents and volunteers from community organizations helped complete

to use local history to teach research methods because it provides students the opportunity to explore their own history," explains Professor Mike Santos. "As the story of Dunbar began to unfold, the students became motivated to uncover the history of this institution."

Dunbar opened in 1923 as a predominantly black high school and operated until 1970, when integration policies

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## Developing Inner-City Comic Improv Professionals

Understanding the importance of the theater and its relationship to community building has prompted a group of theater professionals and supporters in Toledo, Ohio, to create a summer program for inner-city youth. "Developing a neighborhood interest in the theater adds to the cultural base and helps build institutions that draw people together," says Jim Hill, workshop coordinator and chair of the University of Toledo's (UT's) Department of Theatre and Film.

The UT COPC provided the department with a \$5,000 grant to teach local youth the art of acting. The summer program, held from June to July 2000, was a modified version of the theater department's creative process course and focused on comic improvisational techniques. The course, which was offered to middle and high school youth in the inner city, helped build their self-esteem and provided an opportunity for them to highlight their talents. "Having command of an audience and gaining the basic fundamental tools of live performing, having a sense of place and who you are—these are skills that the students can carry with them in life," says Hill.

Forty students in each of three sessions met daily from 9 a.m. to noon for 2 weeks; each session culminated in a performance for friends and families. Group leaders—paid UT interns—demonstrated the techniques and structure of comic improvisation and showed short video segments of professional comic improvisation artists. By imitating the video artists, participants gained confidence that they, too, can appreciate a broad expanse of humor, be funny, and perform comic improvisation. In addition to middle and high school students benefiting, the summer program provided an opportunity for undergraduate students to earn money and gain job experience to include on their résumés, while faculty broadened their teaching skills and gained experience working with inner-city youth.

The course was taught in the Monroe United Methodist Church, which also provided refreshments for the student actors. According to Hill, the class was a very popular offering during the summer session, with the workshop filling quickly. The program drew participants from 3 local middle schools, 1 local high school, and 12 area churches. The university provided student aides for

the first summer and will use past participants as teaching assistants for future classes. The Department of Theatre and Film provided props, costumes, and tumbling mats in addition to other theatrical accessories.

In addition to increasing the number of residents that enjoys the theater, department staff members hope that the exposure to acting and the performing arts will result in an increased number of students enrolling in theater as a major. One of the program's long-term goals is to help the community develop its own permanent theater, supplementing the economic and social revitalization led by the Ottawa Coalition in four predominantly African American neighborhoods in the west-central region of Toledo. The coalition is a union of 42 entities including neighborhood associations, public and private schools, churches, banks, government offices, and social service agencies whose mission is "to nurture a safe, healthy, and vibrant environment for those who work, live, learn, and play within our neighborhoods," says Hill.

For additional information, contact Jim Hill at (419) 530-4350. ■



## Dance Creates Healthy Neighborhoods

Like many older central city neighborhoods, San Diego's City Heights is struggling to overcome high rates of poverty, teenage pregnancy, school dropouts, and crime. The University of California, San Diego (UCSD) COPC uses dance as one revitalization tool in a multipronged approach to creating healthy communities and bringing non-traditional disciplines to City Heights.

UCSD's COPC program is unique because it is administered by its pediatrics department. According to UCSD COPC director Vivian Reznik, M.D., pediatricians who work in the community learn just how much childhood disease has its roots in social problems—in how children are raised and in what children see in their environment. "As a practicing physician," says Reznik, "I have come to understand that I have a responsibility to worry about socialization issues in addition to treating the physical illnesses of my young patients. City Moves! is one of the ways we're addressing the total health needs of young people in one of San Diego's inner-city neighborhoods, City Heights."

City Moves! is a community-based arts program with a goal of helping at-risk youth develop a capacity to express themselves through dance. The program offers young people safe places to go after school where they can learn about an alternative, positive means of self-expression. Dance has been used successfully to affect the personal, creative, and cognitive development of young people in other San Diego neighborhoods.

City Moves! is run jointly by the university and the San Diego Dance Institute, a nonprofit arts education organization. Under the partnership, professional dancers and choreographers from the institute work alongside faculty from the university's Department of Theatre and Dance to create a curriculum for young people. Advanced undergraduate dance

students from the university help teach the classes.

The third through eighth graders participate in the program by meeting twice a week for an hour and a half at structured afterschool classes. In these classes, held at public schools and community centers, the youngsters learn several aspects of dance, including movement, choreography, poetry, and storytelling. Classes begin with basic warm-up and movement exercises, then move on and challenge the youngsters to tell a story—either an existing story or one they write themselves—by developing a dance. With the help of a visual artist, the youngsters create scenery and props. At the end of the 12-week session the students put on a formal dance performance for the local community.

Currently, approximately 300 youth a year complete the City Heights program. Reznik reports that the children reap several benefits. First, it augments skills learned in schools: language and communication skills, working in groups, finishing tasks, and accepting responsibility. Second, through contact with professional artists, youngsters learn what it means to be disciplined and focused. Third, by interacting with college students, youngsters gain a sense of what it is like to be a college student and can envision becoming

college students themselves. The program helps these youth grow up, keeps them in school and out of trouble, and inspires them to pursue higher education and interesting careers.

But youth are not the only beneficiaries of this program; the university also benefits. The program keeps university professors' coursework relevant and engages them in problemsolving. It makes the undergraduate dance students' education more significant because of the off-campus connection. Dance students learn how to teach and how to work in inner-city neighborhoods.

"HUD's money has been critical, acting as seed money for us," explains Reznik. But City Moves! will continue after COPC funding ends. Using COPC funding as a starting point, City Moves! and the San Diego Dance Institute have been able to attract money from several sources, including the city of San Diego, which sets aside a certain percentage of its budget for the arts in underserved neighborhoods as part of its Neighborhood Arts Program; the National Endowment for the Arts; the California Arts Council; and several philanthropic organizations in the greater San Diego area, such as the San Diego Community Foundation.

For more information, contact Vivian Reznik at (619) 543-5340. ■



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## Preserving the Past Helps Build the Future



For additional information, contact Thomas Seaman, Director, Center for Community Development and Social Justice, Lynchburg College, at (804) 544-8327 (seaman\_t@mail.lynchburg.edu). ■

In announcing the new COPC grants on August 28, 2000, Secretary Cuomo said, "These institutions are already key members of their communities, and these grants will further help them to support innovative partnerships between university and community that help strengthen the economic and social infrastructure of distressed neighborhoods." Cuomo awarded \$6.4 million in new grants to 16 institutions (out of 87 applicants) just starting their activities. Eight previous COPC winners (from 28 applications) will be awarded approximately \$1.2 million in New Directions Grants to undertake new activities or work in new neighborhoods.

### New Grantees

Auburn University, Auburn, AL  
Ball State University, Muncie, IN  
Barry University, Miami Shores, FL  
California State University, Hayward, CA  
Danville Community College, Danville, VA  
Indiana University/Northwest, Gary, IN  
Medgar Evers College, Brooklyn, NY  
Medical College of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, WI  
Seattle Central Community College, Seattle, WA  
Tidewater Community College, Portsmouth, VA  
University of Denver, Denver, CO  
University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, IA  
University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA

University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA  
Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI  
Youngstown State University, Youngstown, OH

### New Directions Grantees

DePaul University, Chicago, IL  
Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, PA  
Texas A&M University, College Station, TX  
Trinity College, Hartford, CT  
University of Memphis, Memphis, TN  
University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA  
University of Rhode Island, Kingston, RI  
University of Wisconsin-Parkside, Kenosha, WI

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