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## **Kresge Arts in Birmingham Grants go to Groups Using Arts and Cultural Strategies to Address Pressing Community Issues**

*(Birmingham, Ala, 5/23/10)* Today the Cultural Alliance of Greater Birmingham announces the 2010 *Kresge Arts in Birmingham* grants totaling \$79,453 will go to nine area organizations to support innovative projects utilizing the arts as a tool to unite communities and address pressing social issues.

These projects engage a wide spectrum of city residents and arts strategies, and range in scope from using storytelling to revitalize an East Birmingham neighborhood, to using theatre arts to help high school dropouts develop skills for the workplace, to matching seniors with memory-related disorders with high schoolers to create artistic expressions of their individual life journeys. (See below for a complete list of the award recipients and descriptions of their projects.)

The application review panel comprised of volunteers representing Birmingham's arts, community development, and philanthropic sectors selected these nine projects from close to 50 applicants. The grants range from \$5,100 to \$10,000 and will be disbursed immediately and support projects that will take place now through May 2011.

The Kresge Foundation of Troy, Michigan, is piloting a community arts and civic engagement project in Birmingham and four other cities - Detroit, Baltimore, St. Louis and Tucson - encouraging residents to use art and culture as a tool to address pressing issues in their own communities. Kresge enlisted the Cultural Alliance of Greater Birmingham to administer the program entitled *Kresge Arts in Birmingham*. The Foundation is investing \$200,000 over two years in each city. The 2010 grants are announced today; guidelines and application materials for the 2011 grant round will be available on the [activeculture.info](http://activeculture.info) website in December of this year.

"We are delighted Birmingham embraced this opportunity to use arts and culture to engage its community," says Regina R. Smith, arts and culture program officer at the Kresge Foundation. "And we are quite thrilled to be funding such creative, thoughtful projects. We hope this work will encourage civic dialogue and challenge both new and established audiences."

## **BIRMINGHAM PROGRAMS RECEIVING FUNDING IN 2010:**

### **Alabama Community AIDS Fund/AIDS Alabama - \$5,100**

To support "Giving Voice at Gateway," a three month creative writing program for 15 adolescent girls in the custody of the Alabama Department of Human Resources. These African-American girls have severe emotional problems often as a result of abuse or neglect and are among a demographic that accounts for 79% of the new cases of HIV in Alabama. Weekly activities include selected readings, specific writing assignments, verbal sharing, journaling, and interactions with professional writers culminating in a printed anthology of participants' work.

205-324-9822

[aidsalabama.org](http://aidsalabama.org)

### **Birmingham Children's Theatre - \$10,000**

To support the "What's the 411? Theatre for Social Change" project developed in response to area middle school students' identification of the key issue currently affecting their lives as anxiety about becoming homeless or displaced. BCT and its partners will help middle schoolers from the East Thomas neighborhood to develop and produce a 40 minute dramatic presentation that addresses these concerns. The students will take the production to Birmingham homeless shelters, community health centers, faith-based community centers, among other locations. Each performance will include a student led intergenerational dialogue and post-performance Q&A.

205-458-8181

[bct123.org](http://bct123.org)

### **Birmingham Urban League - \$7,028**

To add a new component to their GED preparation and job readiness program to cultivate specific communication and interpersonal skills needed to successfully get and keep a job. Twice a week, Red Mountain Theatre Company personnel will use theatre arts to help 80 youth develop their speech, concentration, body language, presentation and other communication skills for the workplace. Members of the RMTTC board and key supporters will provide program participants with training in money management and health and other life skills.

205-326-0162

[birminghamurbanleague.net](http://birminghamurbanleague.net)

### **Desert Island Supply Company - \$10,000**

To support the use of storytelling to reach across boundaries of race, age, socio-economics and origin to unify and revitalize the Woodlawn community. The project includes digitally recording stories from five decades of neighborhood residents, weaving these stories into a series of spoken word performances by high school students and adults, storytelling and writing workshops for neighborhood residents, publishing a book of Woodlawn stories and creating a website for ongoing storytelling projects.

205-202-0055

[desertislandsupplyco.com](http://desertislandsupplyco.com)

**Episcopal Place - \$10,000**

To start the "Seasoned Arts" program to combat negative stereotypes about aging and help seniors remain healthy and independent through mental and physical activity. The Seasoned Performers and the Virginia Samford Theatre will provide six weeks of theatre classes and community theatre experiences to 20 low income seniors living at Episcopal Place and in the Southside neighborhood. The program will culminate in a performance for the community.

205-939-0085

[episcopalplace.org](http://episcopalplace.org)

**Gateway - \$7,325**

To support Children's Dance Foundation in providing three months of twice weekly classes of dance, movement, drama and drumming to 30 adolescent youth living on the Gateway campus who are at high risk for homelessness, unemployment and criminal behavior because of abuse or neglect and mental illness. Developed with input from these young people, the classes will help develop self-control, cooperative behavior and creative problem-solving skills in a safe environment with trustworthy adults. Also youth will take field trips to observe and visit with area working artists including professional dancers who use art as means of fully expressing self.

205-510-2600

[gway.org](http://gway.org)

**Media For Health - \$10,000**

To support development, production and airing of a dramatic serial radio novella that will address issues of healthy lifestyles and chronic disease in Birmingham's Mexican immigrant community. A non-profit Latino theatre in Minneapolis, the UAB Department of Theater, local writers, actors and technical personnel are among the many key partners involved in the Spanish Language Radio Drama project.

205-870-9422

[mediaforhealth.org](http://mediaforhealth.org)

**Project Hopewell - \$10,000**

To expand activities associated with the Chocolate Nutcracker production in order to combat childhood obesity. Health professionals will collect pre- and post-production data from approximately 150 youth participants many from the Hillman neighborhood. A nutritionist will work along the artistic staff to promote healthy eating habits. Youth will participate in 10 weeks of intense physical activity associated with learning dance routines and the preparing for school and community performances.

205-923-0203

[projecthopewell.com](http://projecthopewell.com)

**VSA arts of Alabama - \$10,000**

To support the "Take a Walk in My Shoes" art project which provides an intergenerational visual conversation about the journey of life. Twenty seniors with memory-related disorders from two adult day care programs in different Birmingham neighborhoods will be matched with 20 high school students from two high schools for one-on-one conversations about life experiences, passions, and values, and to collaboratively use the 'canvas' of sneakers and a cane to create artistic expressions of their individual life journeys. An exhibit of all 40 finished pieces will travel to seven locations including City Hall and the Avondale Public Library. A video of the project including interviews with all participants will be part of the exhibit and posted on YouTube.

205-307-6399

[vsartsalabama.org](http://vsartsalabama.org)

## **KRESGE ARTS IN BIRMINGHAM PARTNERS**

**Kresge Foundation** – The Kresge Foundation of Troy, Michigan, is a \$3.1 billion private, national foundation that supports communities by building the capacity of nonprofit organizations in six fields: health, the environment, arts and culture, education, human services and community development. In partnership with grantees, Kresge seeks to influence the quality of life for future generations by creating access and opportunity in underserved communities, improving the health of low-income people, supporting artistic expression, assisting in the revitalization of Detroit, and advancing methods for dealing with global climate change. In 2009, the Kresge awarded 404 grants totaling \$191 million. Visit [kresge.org](http://kresge.org) for more information.

**Cultural Alliance of Greater Birmingham** - As the arts council for Jefferson County, the Cultural Alliance funds, supports, nurtures and promotes arts and cultural organizations and working artists across all disciplines and levels of expertise. The Cultural Alliance's mandate is to:

- oversee the implementation of the Cultural Master Plan of Greater Birmingham created by over 1,000 area residents in 2003.
- advocate for the entire cultural sector including the securing of a permanent source of funds to re-grant to arts and cultural organizations;
- broadly market the cultural sector helping providers reach new audiences and increase their earned income;
- facilitate bringing together diverse voices throughout the cultural sector to address opportunities, problems and issues; and connect arts education providers with educators.

The Cultural Alliance is well experienced in developing and implementing transparent, accountable and cost effective granting programs including the Jefferson County Community Arts Fund and Grants to Individual Artists. Visit [activeculture.info](http://activeculture.info) for more information.

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