

NEWS RELEASE

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VSA Alabama Receives VSA National Award for Excellence in Innovative Programming

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) April 26, 2011 — VSA, the international organization on arts and disability, is proud to announce that VSA Alabama has received the National Award of Excellence in Innovative Programming for people with disabilities by providing arts programs to the community that are new and inventive.

This award honors VSA Alabama's continued efforts through programs such as a strong Junior Patron program, its pilot H.E.R.O. (Helping Everyone Realize Opportunities) partnership with Shades Cahaba Elementary School and its Kresge Arts in Birmingham project: "Take a Walk in My Shoes."

"Take a Walk in My Shoes" lends an innovative approach to addressing the pressing societal issue of Alzheimer's disease and/or dementia, as well as the intergenerational gap that is often perceived to exist between older and young adults. Through a series of workshops, teens were introduced to senior adults and had the opportunity to engage, one-on-one, in conversations about life stories. By collaborating to create artwork together, the senior adults and the students depicted their life experiences and explored the similarities and differences from their unique perspectives. The project is chronicled in a mini-documentary that is shown as part of the exhibit as well as posted on YouTube and the artwork then travels between venues in the Birmingham region.

"VSA Alabama's work consistently creates opportunities in the arts for both children and adults with disabilities," said Carol McGrath, VSA director of affiliate services. "Out of all our 40+ affiliates nationwide, VSA Alabama stood out for excelling in Innovative Programming, and we are so pleased to congratulate them on their accomplishments!"

VSA affiliates coordinate comprehensive programming across their respective states, providing arts education opportunities in the classroom and in the community, as well as support and encouragement for professional artists with disabilities.

About VSA Alabama

VSA Alabama is a statewide, nonprofit organization dedicated to serving children and adults with disabilities and chronic illnesses through the arts. Through community agencies, schools, healthcare sites and its Birmingham ArtPartners studio, VSA Alabama serves over 4,000 people each year. VSA Alabama is an affiliate of VSA, the international organization on arts and disability serving millions of people every year through a network of nationwide affiliates and in over 50 countries worldwide. VSA was founded in 1974 by Ambassador Jean Kennedy Smith as an affiliate of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. For more information on VSA Alabama, please visit our website: www.vsaalabama.org or call 205.307.6300.

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