

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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LOCAL ARTS SCHOOL AWARDED CITATION OF EXCELLENCE FROM STATE ARTS COUNCIL FOR SUPERB SERVICE TO NEIGHBORHOOD YOUTH AND THEIR FAMILIES

(Elizabeth, NJ) – Executive Director Alysia Souder and President of the Board Betty Prezzy Bryant are thrilled to announce that the Institute of Music for Children has received a Citation of Excellence and a \$22,000 grant from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts in recognition of their outstanding and innovative arts education programs for urban youth ages 3-21. The Institute is the first organization in Elizabeth ever to be honored with the Citation of Excellence, and one of only 25 in the entire state. It was also the only organization in the city to receive a grant this year^{*}; its grant was also the 2nd largest new grant to any organization in the state.

“The Institute is so proud to bring this honor to Elizabeth, to Union County and to the 650 area families who enliven our classes every day. To be recognized by our peers for the quality of our work is humbling and exciting, and makes us strive even harder,” said Ms. Souder.

The Citation honors the Institute “for achieving the highest standard of excellence as recognized by [its] peers.”

The awards, along with grants and recognition from some of the state’s leading arts supporters – the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, the Victoria Foundation and the Hyde & Watson Foundation – demonstrate that the Institute has arrived as a major force in arts education.

The Institute was founded in 1995 as a mission of the Third-Westminster Presbyterian Church as a response to cuts in school arts funding. Today that problem has exploded into a full-blown crisis – studies show that access to arts education for minority students has dropped 21%, versus a 1.3% drop for Caucasian students.

Today, the Institute is New Jersey’s fastest growing arts-based youth development agency. In the past three years, the organization has tripled in size, going from an annual budget of \$175,000 to over \$525,000 in 2014, and expanding service from 60 kids to 650 students throughout the summer and school year.

“The Institute is dedicated to a vision of H.A.R.M.O,N.Y. – Helping Achieve Responsible Motivated Optimistic Neighborhood Youth. This award tells us that 18 years in, we have made that vision a reality, and changed the lives of thousands of kids,” extolled Ms. Bryant.

^{*} With the exception of the excellent Union County Local Arts Program, our local arts funding conduit, which happens to be in Elizabeth but is not a stand-alone arts company.

The Institute offers high-quality, economically accessible classes in the performing arts, instrumental music and multimedia to over 600 students each year. Courses include group and private instruction in over 20 art forms, including acting, singing, dance, guitar, drums, piano, filmmaking and electronic music. Classes are taught by working professional artists, including percussionist Rudy Bird (Lauryn Hill, Kenny Jarrett and others), Peruvian author and composer Hector Morales, and recording artist Elizabeth Nino.

This Institute of Music has been a blessing to our youth who are in desperate need of opportunities to express themselves and develop their talents in a positive way. I am blown away by the students' performances. It exceeded all expectations. We now know how much our children are capable of and we must continue to give them the resources to succeed.

- City of Elizabeth Office of Youth Program Director Stan Neron

Registration for new classes will open September 9 and spaces are already filling up. Classes start the second week of October and run for 24 weeks. Contact Program Director Leslie Sims at 908.469.1211x6 to schedule a registration appointment.

ABOUT THE INSTITUTE OF MUSIC FOR CHILDREN: The Institute of Music for Children develops the personal and communal potential of 600 urban youth annually by offering economically accessible, high-quality arts training in a secure environment. The Institute believes that artistic expression and the creative process prepare children for success, endow them with life skills and self-confidence, and realize our vision of H.A.R.M.O.N.Y - Helping Achieve Responsible Motivated Optimistic Neighborhood Youth.



<http://www.instituteofmusic.org>

ABOUT THE NEW JERSEY STATE COUNCIL ON THE ARTS The New Jersey State Council on the Arts is a division of the NJ Department of State. It receives funding in direct appropriations from the State of New Jersey through a dedicated Hotel/Motel Occupancy fee and grants from the National Endowment for the Arts. Since 1966, its volunteer members and professional staff have worked to improve the quality of life in New Jersey by helping the arts to flourish. To learn about the Council, please visit <http://www.artsCouncil.nj.gov>. For more information about what's happening in the arts statewide, visit <http://www.jerseyarts.com>

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