



City and Borough of Sitka

100 Lincoln Street Sitka, Alaska 99835

Coast Guard City, USA

September 29, 2014

Office of the Governor
The Honorable Sean Parnell
Sean.parnell@alaska.gov
PO Box 110001
M/S 0001
Juneau AK 99811-0001

RE: Governor's Award for Arts and Humanities

Dear Governor,

I am writing in support of the nomination of Alaska Arts Southeast's Sitka Fine Arts Camp (SFAC) for a Governor's Award for the Arts and Humanities. The SFAC makes a significant contribution to the arts and humanities in Alaska by making high quality arts experiences available for community members and visitors alike.

In 2007, Sheldon Jackson College, the oldest educational institution in Alaska closed its doors. Hundreds of Sitkans lost their jobs and a beautiful National Landmark Campus located in the center of our community was boarded up and sat, virtually empty, for four years. In January 2011, the former college trustees gifted the core 20 buildings on the campus to Alaska Arts Southeast to become the permanent home of their SFAC, a summer arts program that has served thousands of Alaska kids since 1973 and has received considerable state and national recognition for the quality of its programs.

With a campus to fill and years of neglect to repair, Alaska Arts Southeast expanded its mission beyond its traditional summer fine arts programs and shared with the community a vision of a revitalized campus with the arts at its center and strong collaborations with their neighboring organizations. The Campus revitalization project is incredibly exciting for Sitka. With the help of over 1500 community volunteers putting thousands of hours into the physical restoration of the campus, it has been transformed and is no longer a derelict, boarded-up site blighting our town.

Allen Hall, a building which was the historic centerpiece of the Sheldon Jackson Campus and closed for over twenty years, is now open to the public, hosting events such as the Seafood Festival, the Health Fair, the Wild Food Potluck, and Fourth of July Races, and various SFAC events – all part of Sitka Fest, a festival celebrating arts, music, science, and humanities through community events hosted by partnering nonprofits and attended by thousands of community members and visitors.

This last summer, its 39th year, the SFAC had over 700 students participating. They came together from 28 states and four countries to learn and create, participating in a total of nine camps over the course of the summer. 104 students received \$55,485 in financial aid. During the school year, 280 students participated in the after school arts program which included visual art, theater, dance, and music classes. The Campus has become a center for community activity.

The SFAC program reaches Alaskan children and families all over the state, has been a part of the Alaskan creative process since 1973, and deserves the Governor's recognition for the many years of dedication, hard work and contributions to the arts and humanities in Alaska. Thank you for your consideration of this award to the Sitka Fine Arts Camp.

Sincerely,

Mim McConnell
Mayor

Providing for today ... preparing for tomorrow