

A World of Art: VSA International Festival

by Marjorie Neset

Just a typical week in Washington DC, an ex-President's funeral, a Gay Rights Parade, sun, heat, humidity, rain, greenery, awed tourists surrounding national monuments and cherry-flavored Belgium beer. And a not so typical festival with art from around the world—brilliant and moving, professional and emerging, subtle and in-your-face, colorful and oh so black and white—all part of VSA national's *Dare to Imagine International Arts Festival* and all created and performed by artists with disabilities. The festival was held June 9–12, in conjunction with the annual meeting/Arts in Education conference.

Held in different international cities only once every five years, the 2004 festival was quite an accomplishment for the national office, with visual work and performances from nearly every state in the nation and 60 countries. One New Mexico artist, Geraldine Mlynek, was juried in to show a piece in the international visual art exhibit. In person representing New Mexico were apprentice artists Maria Tonya Rivera, Cindy Luna and Roger Torres, along with his brother Rueben; VSA staff Tony Fragua, Sarah Elizabeth Bennett, Wendy Zollinger, Deborah Mashibini, Marjorie Neset; and VSA board president Orlie Sedillo and Jeanette Sedillo.

Opening night with its plethora of performing artists wowed everyone, the line-up further proof—if anyone still needs it—that disability doesn't limit imagination or creativity. In fact, it may add a dimension otherwise unavailable to those of us who haven't moved beyond everyday considerations and concerns. VSA apprentice artist Roger Torres proudly carried the New Mexico state flag in the opening ceremony.

VSA New Mexico board president Orlie Sedillo attended several conference activities, confirming for him "that yes, it is really true that art does bring people together. To see people from so many cultures with the shared strength and talent to overcome whatever obstacles have been in their way and make wonderful art...what impressed me."

Both Orlie and artist teacher Wendy Zollinger mentioned what an honor it was to hear Jean Kennedy Smith speak. The Kennedy family began Very Special Arts (VSA arts) and the international festival, as well as Special Olympics in the 1970s to ensure that people with disabilities have opportunities to participate in the cultural and athletic activities that the rest of the population enjoys.



There were many festival highlights. "I talked to people from Kuwait to Kentucky and enjoyed it all," Wendy noted, "but the best

part was seeing Cindy Luna rocking and rolling at the opening night concert." Artist teacher Tony Fragua was inspired by how adaptable and ingenious people with disabilities are "to live their lives and make art in such an imperfect world."

For a few days the arts overwhelmed all those buildings and monuments where laws are made and wars declared, and where statesmen and warriors are immortalized in marble and stone for either the declarations or the subsequent dying. We can ponder the idea that if the kind of

communication through the arts that took place at this festival between people of diverse cultures, disparate religions and distinct beliefs was more encouraged and supported, we might need fewer such monuments.



Community Classroom for the Arts

by Wendy Zollinger

Have you ever dreamed about creating a work of art? A painting, a piece of pottery, a quilt to hang on your wall? Painting and pottery. Quilting and drawing. Some of the things you can do in classes at VSA's North Fourth Art Center. Join your friends and neighbors in our new and exciting Community Classroom for the Arts.

This autumn, under the direction of renowned artist Frank McCulloch, and coordinated by experienced artist and teacher Wendy Zollinger, the North Fourth Art Center will offer classes providing an opportunity for a wide variety of creative expression. For six Saturdays in October, November and December, VSA will hold several visual art classes for the community in the Multi-Sensory Studio annex, located right next door to our main building just off Fourth Street and Griegos. Community Classroom for the Arts is designed to give participants the opportunity for personal fulfillment, the development of artistic skills, and just plain fun!

Community Classroom Saturday classes will be held in an "open studio" atmosphere buzzing with creative energy. The setting offers the chance to check out what other classes are doing and see if one of them may interest you in the future. Participants of all abilities and all levels of artistic experience are welcome, especially beginners, and those sixteen and older. Classes will be led by accomplished artists with years of teaching experience.

\$65.00 for six weeks of classes,
October 23 – December 4, 2004
\$15 materials fee for each class, payable to instructor at first class

Leading the Way with Pathfinders

by Susanna Kearny

VSA arts of New Mexico is joining a select group of Albuquerque organizations to embark on Pathfinders, a training program for nonprofits developed by the National Center for Social Entrepreneurs. From June through December, Entrepreneurial Pathfinder sessions will give six Albuquerque nonprofits the opportunity to explore entrepreneurial avenues in step with their organizational values and missions.

The Pathfinders program is being financed by some of New Mexico's major corporations and foundations as a way to help the nonprofit community diversify their funding sources. These major funders have made a three-year commitment to finance training for at least two groups per year. "I know of no other place in the country where funders have taken such a proactive approach," said David Parker, national consultant for Entrepreneurial Pathfinders. VSA arts of New Mexico thanks PNM, Wells Fargo, United Way, Presbyterian Healthcare, McCune Charitable Foundation, Lockheed Martin/Sandia National Lab, First State Bank, Don Chalmers, Bank of Albuquerque, FHL Foundation and Blue Cross Blue Shield for their vision and support of nonprofits in New Mexico.

DRAWING & PAINTING

Learn the fundamentals of painting, including the basic elements of design, composition and color. Working in watercolor, tempera and acrylic, learn to mix colors and apply the various mediums in a creative and expressive way. Some elements of drawing, including line, shape and form will also be taught. Teacher: Tony Fragua, Visual Arts Program Director of VSA arts of NM and prize winning artist.

CERAMICS

Learn basic handbuilding techniques needed to create works of art in clay. These will include pinch pot, coil and slab methods. Students will work on projects such as bowls, incense holders, wind chimes, jewelry, rattles, and ocarinas (whistles). Techniques of glazing will also be taught. Teacher: Laurence Wellborn, experienced teacher and a master of ceramics.

QUILTING

Learn the basics of quilting while making a small wall hanging. Learn about choosing fabrics and what tools to use to speed up the process. Techniques will include piecing by hand, constructing a quilt top, making a "quilt sandwich" and finishing touches. You'll be provided with a wall quilt kit. Teacher: Joan Clawson, experienced quilter and teacher of State Fair prize winners.

On October 16, 2004, VSA will dedicate the North Fourth Art Center's new outdoor sculpture and will hold an open house for all VSA programs, including Community Classroom for the Arts. The event will include mini workshops and demonstrations by Community Classroom teachers. Join the celebration party, try out some of the art activities, and sign up for the art class of your choice. If you want to reserve a place in the class contact VSA now for early registration! Stop by North Fourth or call Wendy 345-2872 x14.

