

# Grant-funded YoungArts Miami to develop arts base here

BY ZACHARY S. FAGENSON

A three-year, \$600,000 grant from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation to the National Foundation for Advancement in the Arts could help fill the gap in arts education and mentorship left by cuts to arts education in schools.

The money will act as a sort of seed funding for a program titled YoungArts Miami. The new program, according to Director of Regional Programs for the NFAA Gregory L. Jackson, would mirror the foundation's national program that brings in talented, high school-age artists and helps them prepare for a career in the arts, provides them with awards and grants, and recommends them for a presidential scholarship.

"This new initiative certainly helps us make better inroads to the Miami and South Florida community," Mr. Jackson said by telephone Monday. "And it gives us an opportunity to support high school students in Miami and South Florida above and beyond what we do at the national level."

The grant will help fund workshops for high school students and teachers as well as offer students master classes with world-renowned artists, residency work and additional op-



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**Christina DePaul**

portunities to perform or display their work.

Once grant money is gone, Mr. Jackson said, NFAA will seek out corporate and individual sponsors for the established program.

And with the arts taking a back seat in academics, the Miami program will help students who don't received a grant from the NFAA to at minimum have some of the building blocks they can use in arts programs at universities or conservatories.

About 10% of the 6,000 to 8,000 applicants receive scholarships and awards, according to the NFAA's Web site. Of that 10%, up to 150 are flown to Miami for a week of professional development in the arts before final auditions to be nominated as one of 20

Presidential Scholars in the Arts.

The group joins 121 academic Presidential Scholars during a recognition week in Washington, DC.

The stiff competition recognizes only the best of the best. But just because students aren't selected as scholars or potential scholars doesn't mean they can't have a successful career in the arts.

The new program "will be able to help us help students have a better sense of what it means to be a young emerging artist," Mr. Jackson said. "The arts have sort of taken a back seat [in schools], and I think this program really addresses some of these issues in terms of giving student greater opportunities to have a creative outlet."

Meanwhile, Christina DePaul, president and CEO of YoungArts, the core program of the National Foundation for Advancement in the Arts, said this program will mimic some aspects of a similar program in New York that sought potential scholars in their early high school years.

"At the sophomore level [students are] figuring out what they want to do," she said. "Juniors become more serious and seniors" are the age taken by YoungArts.

The far-reaching South Florida program will begin at 4 p.m. Sept. 24, when more than 100 teachers are to gather at YoungArts' offices at 777 Brickell Ave. to learn more about the regional program.

The teachers, through both workshops and the help of YoungArts, will learn how to help guide students through the scholarship application process and ways to keep their curricula up-to-date.

"Some skills truly stay with you for a lifetime," she said. And "with the influx of technology, those skills have to change. "Our students were born digital," she added.

The program is to also include workshops for parents that will focus on how they can help their children along the path

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to a career in the arts. If successful, the Miami program is to serve as a model for other metropolitan areas.

"Some parents don't know what to do with these creative geniuses, but we want to help them not have a fear of them going into the arts," Ms. DePaul said.

And even though some students who study an art with the foundation's help may not spend their lives practicing it, Ms. DePaul argued that the training provides an array of skills that will be useful no matter where they end up.

"They're going through some of the struggles of being someone who thinks outside of the box," she said.

Helping them manage that mindset, she said, is a skill that can lead to success in either business or the arts.