

4a Arts Awareness and Advocacy

October 18, 2009

October has been proclaimed **National Arts and Humanities Month** by President Obama. While this pleases the arts community, many areas of our state and our school systems are disappointed to see that the stimulus package did not save some of the non-profit organizations and school programs. In the month of August some 10,000 non-profit positions were lost in our country and schools either closed arts programs or severely cut them.

Arts for a Complete Education (ACE) coalitions are being activated throughout the state and calling for community support to save school arts and non-profit arts programs. Administrators have voiced the "something is better than nothing" policy which does not mean their actions are good for arts education or the children of our state. One example can be found in Lee County (Fort Myers). All elementary music and art programs were on the table for elimination. A last minute "save" was developed when an art and a music teacher with seniority were assigned to share two schools. One semester of either visual art or music is offered at one school and then the teachers trade schools for the next semester. This means the children are receiving one semester of art and one semester of music. Those teachers without seniority were either reassigned to classroom positions or fired. Many were forced to move from Lee County. The only advantage to this situation is that music and visual arts is being taught by certified educators. Those arts specialists that were put into the classroom have a job, but no longer teach the subject they love.

This situation is far beyond keeping jobs. Children are no longer receiving a quality arts education and this changes their future. Hopefully the Legislature will support education and the arts during the next session and changes will be made.

Respectfully yours,

Sonja Rozier, A&A Chair