

THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Donors InVesting in Arts (DIVAs): A fun, creative approach to Philanthropy



Celebrating at the Executive's Ball, Donors InVesting in Arts (DIVAs) honor the work of three nonprofits using the arts to transform the lives of at-risk youth in the county. Pictured from left to right, back row, standing Tina M. Martin, Mita M. Schaffer, Catherine Leggett, Kofi Dennis, Nancy Petrisko, Amy Schaffer, Kwame Ansah-Brew. Front row, seated, Carien Quiroga, Jan Goldstein, Claire Schwadron, Jackie Ogg. Not pictured: DIVAS Shirley Ballard Miller, Dianne Felton and Cecelia Ross.

Donors InVesting in Arts (DIVAs) 2005 Grantees

Class Acts Arts - Project Youth ArtReach: Known for identifying those artists who can break through the tough exterior of youth in detention, Class Acts brings workshops, performances and week long residencies into the county's prison facilities. These "way cool" artists excel in engaging youthful offenders and helping them explore the universal challenges of growing up and staying out of trouble.

Arts on the Block: By pairing working artists with aspiring youth, students get hands-on experience in the creation of artwork, as well as the realities of marketing and pricing art and art projects. Recent assignments include, mosaic corporate logos, "Fanciful Faces" mirrors for Childrens National Medical Center and streetscape murals.

BlackRock Center for the Performing Arts: Offering a full range of performing art opportunities at a new state of the art facility in the northern part of Montgomery County. Scholarships and school-based workshops help bring this resource to those up-county who would otherwise be unable to afford them.

Donors InVesting in Arts (DIVAs) is a "giving circle" housed at the Montgomery County Community Foundation (MCCF). Each woman involved with the circle has committed to an annual gift of \$2,500 each year for the next two years to support organizations that use the performing and visual arts to reach - and engage - at-risk youth in Montgomery County.

Montgomery County is in the midst of exciting and substantial changes. Our performing and visual arts community has grown substantially and we have a wonderful array of top-notch organizations - large and small - that greatly enhance our county's quality of life.

At the same time, the county is experiencing significant challenges as its population of young people explodes. Many of this new generation of county youth come from families with very modest incomes and many are from new immigrant communities. Surprisingly, over 44 percent of families nationally (and here in Montgomery County) do not have regular after-school care for their children, and it is widely recognized that children are most at-risk during the hours after school - the time of day when juvenile crime triples and children are most likely to become involved in risky behavior. Yet, it is also well documented that youth who participate in extracurricular activities, including in the visual and performing arts, achieve better grades, have lower rates of truancy and generally have a better sense of self and their potential for success. The DIVAs created their giving circle to address these needs.

Giving circles are an increasingly popular way to introduce donors to grantmaking. Like an investment club or book club, it permits the participants to explore, learn and build a grantmaking portfolio in a critical issue area with other like-minded community residents. It is a fun, engaging learning process with great personal rewards.

Giving through a giving circle is also an excellent way to leverage resources. By pooling individual charitable gift money, thereby making larger grants, smaller donations can have a greater impact in the community.

Over the course of the past year, the DIVAs developed guidelines for grantmaking, visited and evaluated arts organizations in the region, and held a competitive grants review process that was facilitated by MCCF staff. In December 2005, the DIVAs awarded grants of \$5,000 each to three local organizations. This inaugural group of grantees represent programs that are serving all parts of Montgomery County in different disciplines of art. The DIVAs also hosted a representative from each grantee nonprofit at the Executive's Ball for the Arts.

Jackie Ogg, Manager of Donor Services at MCCF, led DIVAs through their grantmaking development process. "It is a great group of donors - each an art supporter in her own right - whose collective knowledge and passion for the arts deepened the experience for each other. We're very pleased with how the first round of competitive grants was conducted and with the diversity and breadth of service represented in the grantees."

*This page is produced by
The Community Foundation.
It is not an editorial product of The Gazette.*

Celebrating
a decade of leadership
in private philanthropy, to
benefit Montgomery
County, the region and the
nation.

~ 1996-2006 ~

Nearly 100 generous Montgomery County families and businesses have set up giving funds at MCCF to support charitable interests of their choice—in the county, the region and the nation.

MCCF's family or business funds are like "mini-foundations" and can be started with a contribution of \$10,000 or more. Individual donor funds at MCCF currently range from \$10,000 to several million in assets.

Since 1996, MCCF has distributed nearly \$14 million to hundreds of worthy nonprofit organizations, ranging from universities to after school programs, and from arts institutions to grassroots organizations.

MCCF has a general fund dedicated to urgent county needs, known as the Sharing Montgomery Community Fund, through which individuals, corporations, foundations and MCCF donor funds support high-impact programs offering food and shelter, medical care, educational enrichment for at-risk youth, community empowerment and leadership training.

MCCF provides Montgomery County residents with a highly effective way to immediately enhance and improve the lives of tens of thousands of people in the county, the region and the nation.

THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

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The Montgomery County Community
Foundation is a regional affiliate of
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