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**2011 GOVERNOR'S ARTS AWARDS SHOWCASES EXCELLENCE IN KANSAS ARTS**

Topeka, Kan. – On March 3, the Kansas Arts Commission and a crowd of 340 attendees, honored the dedication and contributions to the arts in the state of Kansas with the 2011 Governor's Arts Awards. Award recipients were recognized at a reception and awards ceremony from 6:00 to 8:00 pm, at Washburn University's Memorial Union, in the Washburn Room.

Sara Paretsky, a best-selling author and native Kansan, was honored with this year's Distinguished Arts Award. During her acceptance speech, which drew a standing ovation, Paretsky spoke eloquently about the arts, arguing that not only is "an educated citizenry our best guarantor of continued liberty," but that music, poetry, stories, and the visual arts have helped countless human beings through the ages "endure the dark night of the soul."

Additional honorees were Arkansas City Area Arts Council (Arts Organization); Louis Copt, Lecompton (Artist); Willa Griswold, Marysville (Arts Advocate); Martha E. "Betty" Muncy, Dodge City (Arts Patron); and Linda Reimond, Lawrence (Arts-in-Education).

Paretsky's speech and other Governor's Arts Awards recipient speeches are available online at <http://arts.ks.gov/gaa>.

Artists who received Artist Innovation Grants and Artist Collaboration Grants to fund projects in Fiscal Year 2011 were also recognized. Those in attendance were:

- Marcia Cebulka, Topeka, Artist Collaboration Grant
- Kristin Beal-DeGrandmont, Wichita, Artist Innovation Grant
- Reena Berger-Natenberg, Lenexa, Artist Innovation Grant
- Kim Eichler-Messmer, Kansas City, Kan., Artist Innovation Grant

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- Diane Glancy, Prairie Village Artist Innovation Grant
- Mari LaCure, Lawrence Artist Innovation Grant
- Stephanie Lanter, Topeka; Artist Collaboration Grant
- Gabriel Lewis-O'Connor, Lawrence Artist Innovation Grant
- Lucia Orth, Lawrence, Artist Innovation Grant
- Erika Nelson, Lucas, Artist Innovation Grant
- Francisca Maria Velasco, Lawrence; Artist Collaboration Grant

Special guests for the event were Senate President Steve Morris and Senator Roger Reitz. Earlier in the day, Senator Reitz proposed a resolution to the Senate Federal and State Affairs Committee opposing Governor Sam Brownback's executive reorganization order to eliminate the Kansas Arts Commission. The resolution was passed 7 to 2. The resolution will now move to the full Senate for a vote on Wednesday, March 16, at 2:30 pm, in the Senate Chamber of the Kansas Statehouse. If the resolution passes, the Kansas Arts Commission remains a state agency.

The awards program also featured the Allegro Community Children's Choir, Lenexa, performing *Home on the Range*, *America the Beautiful* and *The Star-Spangled Banner*; and Kelley Hunt, Lawrence, a 2007 Governor's Arts Awards Recipient and Kansas Arts on Tour Roster Artist, performing *Over the Rainbow*.

Attendees at the event had the opportunity to view and meet the producers of the popular viral video *Sunflower*. Lawrence High students Max Griffith, junior; Kathryn Lunte, senior; and Bailie Richards, junior; instructed by Jeff Kuhr, film/media teacher; produced and starred in the video.

"The 2011 Governor's Arts Awards, perhaps this year more than any other, was inspirational, exciting and simply thrilling," said Henry Schwaller, chairman of the Kansas Arts Commission. "The music, particularly by the Allegro Community Children's Choir and Kelley Hunt, moved the audience to tears and proved to everyone in attendance the power of the arts.

"All the winners were gracious and eloquent in their speeches, as was our Poet Laureate, Caryn Mirriam-Goldberg," he said. "We especially wish to thank Senators Morris and Reitz for their ongoing support of the arts and the Kansas Arts Commission."

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The Governor's Arts Awards are given annually to distinguished Kansas artists, patrons and arts educators, and have been given annually since 1974 by the Governor of Kansas and the Kansas Arts Commission. An expert panel selected the winners from submitted nominations.

The Kansas Arts Commission is a state agency, funded by the State of Kansas and the National Endowment for the Arts, dedicated to promoting and supporting the arts in Kansas. Its mission is to provide opportunities for the people of Kansas to experience, celebrate and value the arts throughout their lives. For more information on the Kansas Arts Commission, please visit the KAC website at <http://arts.ks.gov>.

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