

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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305-375-5829/ lilianh@miamidade.gov**MIAMI-DADE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS WINS AWARD FOR
GROUNDBREAKING INCLUSIVE ARTS PROGRAM FOR KIDS WITH AND WITHOUT
DISABILITIES**

(Miami, June 19, 2015) – The Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs has been recognized with an Achievement Award from the National Association of Counties (NACo) for the All Kids Included - Youth Arts in the Parks Program. The NACo awards honor innovative, effective county government programs that enhance services for residents. Started in 1970, NACo's annual Achievement Award Program is designed to recognize innovative county government programs.

Youth Arts in the Parks is an inclusive, socially-oriented, sequential arts instruction program for children and youth ages 6-17 with and without disabilities (youth with disabilities are welcome up to age 22). This fun and educational program teaches kids of all abilities visual arts or creative expression in an out-of-school social setting, led by professional artists, art teachers, certified instructors and disability experts.

Youth Arts in the Parks is part of the Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs' "All Kids Included – Accessible Arts Experiences for Kids" (AKI) initiative. AKI creates inclusive arts and cultural programs so that kids of all abilities and their families can participate fully in the arts. AKI's purpose is to increase the number of quality arts experiences accessible to children with disabilities and their families, and to promote the benefit and importance of inclusionary arts and cultural programs both in school settings and the community.

Michael Spring, Senior Advisor to the Office of the Mayor and Director of the Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs stated, "We believe excellent cultural services should be accessible to all. This model program is the product of an innovative partnership among the Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs, Miami-Dade County Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces Disability Services, Arts for Learning/Miami, the Miami affiliate of Young Audiences and The Children's Trust." Youth Arts in the Parks is currently offered in the fall and spring at Camp Matecumbe, Highland Oaks Park, and Miller Drive Park.

"Our goal was to create a high quality arts program where kids with and without disabilities could learn side-by-side from exceptional teaching artists and make friends at the same time," said Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs' Chief of Arts Education, Francine M. Andersen. "In addition to learning art and creative expression, participants are made to feel welcomed and accepted, and that they are part of a social "art club". We have found that not only are we achieving our goal, but that parents have also benefitted through their children's engagement in the program, and by the support network that has developed among participating families."

For more information about Youth Arts in the Parks, please visit:
<http://miamidadearts.org/education/youth-arts-parks>.

For more information about All Kids Included – Accessible Arts Experiences for Kids, please visit:
<http://www.miamidadearts.org/education-outreach-access/all-kids-included-accessible-arts-experiences-kids-aki>

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Youth Arts in the Parks was developed by the Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs as part of its “All Kids Included - Accessible Arts Experiences for Kids” (AKI) program. AKI is an initiative of the Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs, made possible with the support of the Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs and the Cultural Affairs Council, the Miami-Dade County Mayor and Board of County Commissioners, and in part through grant funding provided by The Children’s Trust. The Children’s Trust is a dedicated source of revenue established by voter referendum to improve the lives of children and families in Miami-Dade County by making strategic investments in their future.

The Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs and the Cultural Affairs Council develop cultural excellence, diversity and participation throughout Miami-Dade County by strategically creating and promoting opportunities for artists and cultural organizations, and our residents and visitors who are their audiences. The Department directs the Art in Public Places program and serves its board, the Art in Public Places Trust, commissioning, curating, maintaining and promoting the County’s art collection. The Department also manages, programs and operates the South Miami-Dade Cultural Arts Center, a campus of state-of-the-art cultural facilities in Cutler Bay, as well as Miami-Dade County Auditorium, Joseph Caleb Auditorium and the African Heritage Cultural Arts Center, all dedicated to presenting and supporting excellence in the arts for the entire community. Through staff, board and programmatic resources, the Department, the Council and the Trust promote, coordinate and support Miami-Dade County’s more than 1,000 not-for-profit cultural organizations as well as thousands of resident artists through grants, technical assistance, public information and interactive community planning. The Department receives funding through the Miami-Dade County Mayor and Board of County Commissioners, The Children’s Trust, the National Endowment for the Arts, the State of Florida through the Florida Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs and the Florida Council on Arts and Culture, and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. Other support and services are provided by TicketWeb for the Culture Shock Miami program, the Greater Miami Convention and Visitors Bureau, the South Florida Cultural Consortium and the Tourist Development Council.

It is the policy of Miami-Dade County to comply with all of the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. To request materials in accessible format, sign language interpreters, and/or any accommodation to participate in any Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs program or meeting, please contact Francine Andersen at 305-375-4634 culture@miamidade.gov at least five days in advance to initiate your request. TTY users may also call 711 (Florida Relay Service).