



DC COMMISSION ON THE ARTS & HUMANITIES

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Aaron L. Myers II, Executive Director

August 21, 2023

The following is a summary of the agency's activities and operations.

1. Staff Updates

New Staff:

Welcome to our newest staff members, Events Coordinators Chris Naoum and Edward Daniels, Curator Michelle May-Curry, Special Assistant Andrew Jacobson, and IT Support Staff Bruce Smith.

Interviews were recently held for an additional Public Art Coordinator position; a selection is being finalized.

Applications are being reviewed for the Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Officer position which closed August 18. Interviews will begin soon.

Applications are currently being accepted for an additional Attorney Advisor to join our legal team. Deadline to apply is this Thursday, August 24.

Staff Departures:

Congratulations and best wishes to Paralegal Specialist Jocelyn DeCastro and Program Analyst (Finance) Kia King, who both ended their service at CAH in July, and to Resource Allocation Analyst (Finance) Melisa Leonard, whose last day will be this Friday. On behalf of the entire staff, our sincere appreciation to all three for contributing their time and talent to advance this agency and its mission. We miss them already but know that they will continue doing great things in their careers.

2. Labor Day Weekend Music Festival Update

As previously reported, this year's Labor Day Weekend Music Festival at the Lincoln Theatre would be a celebration of the 50th anniversaries of two historic cultural events: the birth of Hip Hop music and the passage of the District of Columbia Home Rule Act. Due to circumstances beyond our control in the contracting process, the Festival will be presented the final weekend of October, instead of Labor Day Weekend, with the theme remaining the same. The issue boiled down to differing interpretations of what is meant by artistic services. Eventually, the Office of Contracting and Procurement accepted our interpretation, but by that point, there was simply not enough time left before Labor Day Weekend, hence, the move to late October. Participating artists will be announced next month, and admission will be free.

3. Miss Fiesta DC and Mayor's Arts Awards

CAH has partnered with the Mayor's Office on Latino Affairs to support the 2023 Miss Fiesta DC pageant at the Lincoln Theatre and will cover the rental cost of the theatre. The pageant will be held on Thursday, August 31.

CAH is also in partnership with the Office on Cable Television, Film, Music, and Entertainment to underwrite the rental and event expenses of the Lincoln Theatre on behalf of OCTFME for their presentation of the 2023 Mayor's Arts Awards on Thursday, September 28.

4. Howard University Folk/Traditional Arts Partnership

CAH Grants and Legal have been working with Howard University to solidify the details of our folk/traditional arts partnership. The draft grant agreement is currently with the team at Howard for their review. This partnership will satisfy new requirements from the NEA mandating that all SAA's have a folk or traditional arts program either in-house at the agency or in partnership with a local university or nonprofit organization.

5. FY24 Grants

The majority of our FY24 grant programs have closed their applications and submissions are currently working their way through the panel review process. Application for the FY24 Capital Projects grant (formerly known as Facilities and Buildings) closes tonight at 10 pm. The FY24 Large Capital Projects grant program, established by the Fiscal Year 2024 Budget Support Act, is still in development, and will be discussed further during the Commission Meeting.

To date, over 1,460 applications have been submitted for CAH's FY24 grant programs.

6. SAG-AFTRA

Executive Director Myers and Chief of Staff Scott met recently with the Executive Director for the local branch of the Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (SAG-AFTRA) to learn how the ongoing strike might be affecting their members based in Washington, DC. As a government agency, CAH does not take sides in disputes such as this; however, we do want to make sure that any SAG-AFTRA members who are District residents are aware of any resources and support services that the government already provides and will be sharing that information with the Local. We also suggested that the Local connect with OCTFME as well to share information.

7. Accessibility

As part of the agency's continuing efforts to be accessible to all District residents, Public Affairs Specialist JR Russ and Graphic Designer Teresa Boersma have created a CAH business card in Braille and are currently exploring the use of Braille on other agency collateral pieces.

8. Ben's Chili Bowl

Lastly, congratulations to Ben's Chili Bowl which celebrates its 65th anniversary tomorrow. In November, co-founder Virginia Ali will celebrate her 90th birthday and CAH is working with the Ben's Chili Bowl Foundation on an event in her honor at the Lincoln Theatre.