

# THE ARTS IN PREVENTION PROJECTS

## A National Initiative

Introduction: The arts provide a safe container for all youth, families, and communities regardless of their culture and differences to express ideas, feelings, and opinions about coming into being as part of society, dealing with hardships, happiness, stress, and illness through creative expression. No other activity allows us that voice. The arts allow us individually, collectively and culturally to say things we might never get to say.

Statement of Need for Youth at Risk: Youths at risk usually present with multiple risk factors, have poor communication skills, unexpressed anger and mistrust adults. The creative arts can transform the lives of youths at risk of negative behaviors by increasing the protective factors which often lie silent within. The aim of the creative arts approach is to develop resiliency by increasing the youth's emotional, behavioral, cognitive and cultural competencies. The arts provide options, challenges, and an effective means for promoting growth and change. For youth, the arts provide a different perspective on their lives, a chance to imagine a different outcome and to develop a critical distance from everyday life. Sharon Brady, The Director of the School Based Youth Services at Asbury Park High School, NJ said she wants to incorporate the arts into her programs because the arts makes it easier for them to express themselves and serves as a springboard for dialogue.

In the 2004 report, The National Arts & Youth Demonstration Project, out of the School Of Social Work, McGill University they found the benefits of youth participation included: increased confidence, improved interpersonal skills, improved conflict resolution skills, and improved problem solving skills. In a previous study by Shirley Brice Heath, and Adelman Aurora Roach, Stanford University, The Arts in Non-School Hours, 1998, they reported among other findings that youth in arts programs are 25% more likely to report feeling satisfied with themselves than youth from the national sample; and that youth in arts programs are 31% more likely to say they plan to continue education after high school than students from the national sample.

For families and communities the arts can provide a voice, a way to come together, a way to work in tandem with their neighbors-to work on issues of concern, and neighborhood revitalization.

Goal: to educate prevention specialists, social workers, teachers, school administrators, politicians, community youth workers, college students and professors, counselors, artists, public health administrators in the utilization of the arts in prevention as a strategy for youth, families, and communities at risk.

To create a network of individuals and organizations that believe in utilizing the arts to reach everyone and work collaboratively achieving our goals of 'healthy individuals, healthy communities.'

To raise awareness of the impact of the arts to the general public on individuals, families, communities and society by creating panel discussions called Creating Value For The Arts in communities across the U.S.A.

Objectives:

- To educate on the relationship between prevention strategies and the arts intrinsic values
- To educate on how the arts enhance protective factors and buttress resiliency skills
- To educate on how the arts contribute to academic skills
- To discuss and share exemplary programs which have been serving youth, families and communities
- To educate on how to propose and develop an arts program or project.
- To educate on how the arts can be used as a tool for social change
- To educate on how the arts can raise awareness and dialogue on issues.
- To educate on how the arts can be used as a health promotion tool.
- To educate on how the arts can be used as a wellness tool.

Our expected contribution : to educate individuals and organizations of the fact that the arts are a viable prevention strategy; a tool for social change, a life skills tool and a tool to break down the walls of resistance so typically constructed by youth, families and communities and those especially at risk; why the arts work, how and evaluation; that the arts are comprehensive in nature dealing with multiple issues.

1. To establish a network of individuals and organizations that believe we must utilize all our resources to reach those in need, and the arts are one such rich resource. Especially for those youth, families, and communities at risk, they need approaches that will reach them at their own level, engaging them, motivating them, having them take responsibility and active participation in their own lives, empowering them with the skills they need to live healthy lives.
2. Through helping to initiate projects across the country, we hope to be able to evaluate and provide needed research and substantiate what we in the field have always known and have had the opportunity to see on the faces of the youth and individuals at work.

Strategies:

1. To market through brochures, direct mail, posters, and promotional material, newsletters and e-marketing.
2. National Breaking Down The Walls: Reaching Youth, Families and Communities Through The Arts annual conference; the Creating Value For The Arts discussions and presentations around the country.
3. National Projects
4. Publication of educational material.
5. To market the Professional Development Program, Using The Arts in Prevention, a collaboration between Center For The Arts: Prevention and Rutgers, The State University of NJ, School of Social Work's Office of Professional Development-to work in conjunction with other colleges and universities outside of New Jersey.

6. To collaborate with other national and local organizations.

University and College Partners: Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey School of Social Work; Montclair State University's College of the Arts, Office of Education and Community Outreach, Concentration in Human Services, Dept. of Sociology SUNY New Paltz.

Organizations looking to partner please call.

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