

THE ARTERY

media release

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60-YEAR-OLD OMAHA ART ORGANIZATION DISSOLVES Donates treasury to the ARTery, sponsor of Dancing Classrooms

OMAHA, Nebr.—The Associated Artists of Omaha, founded in 1946, disbanded at the end of 2007 and has donated \$2,000 remaining in its treasury to the ARTery—an Omaha nonprofit arts-education organization formed to make the arts more accessible through a variety of camps, classes, and workshops, including the celebrated Dancing Classrooms program.

Joseph Liebentritt, AAO president until the group dissolved, made the announcement, explaining that his organization was impressed with the ARTery when the two groups worked together on the AAO's April 2007 art show held at the Omaha Field Club to benefit the ARTery.

“When we decided to dissolve the AAO, we selected the ARTery as the recipient of our treasury because of the dedication of the ARTery members who helped us with the Field Club show, along with their many worthwhile activities,” Liebentritt says. “We see this donation as a way to inspire and foster the artistic spirit in a whole new generation of artists,” he adds.

The AAO archives will be available for public display at the Omaha Public Library, where the history of the group will be preserved.

Former World-Herald staffer founded AAO

Patrick James Allison Flynn (1904-1986; known as “Allison”) founded AAO in 1946. Flynn worked in the World-Herald art department for 41 years. He was president of the Omaha Press Club during the 1950s and was a recipient of the AAO's Elmer Award for arts promotion in Omaha. Flynn was also active in local drama and music groups, Liebentritt says.

The AAO was a nonprofit organization founded to bring area artists together for social events and professional growth. AAO was dedicated to art promotion and education through exhibitions, workshops, lectures, critiques, demonstrations, and other avenues. Many AAO members have become widely respected professional artists, adds Liebentritt.

Despite the success of the AAO's April 2007 benefit show for the ARTery, involving more than 70 area artists, AAO had been experiencing “dwindling membership and support,” Liebentritt explains.

“It was decided that we should end the group but go out on a positive note and give back to the community by donating our remaining funds to the ARTery,” he says.

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“The ARTery is honored and overjoyed by the AAO’s generosity and its selection of the ARTery to receive its remaining funds,” says Marian Fey, artistic director of the ARTery. “We really enjoyed working with AAO for the April show and were so grateful to receive the proceeds from the show.

“When Joe [Liebentritt] called to let me know that the AAO was dissolving, I was disheartened by the breakup of this wonderful organization, which has been so beneficial to the Omaha arts community and to the public,” she adds. “Naturally, I was pleased that they had chosen the ARTery as the recipient of their treasury balance, but it’s really a shame it has to be at the expense of the AAO’s dissolution.”

The ARTery offers its classes almost exclusively through other nonprofits, such as Girls Inc. and Camp Fire, as well as the Omaha Public Schools, where this year 17 schools are offering Dancing Classrooms as part of the curriculum, in addition to free Saturday classes at the University of Nebraska at Omaha for Dancing Classrooms alumni.

No student pays for Dancing Classrooms, says Fey, “and in our other offerings many of our students must rely on scholarships. It is the ARTery’s policy not to turn any student away for inability to pay. Thus we rely almost exclusively on donations.”

About the ARTery

The ARTery is a nonprofit arts-education organization formed to make the arts more accessible through a variety of camps, classes, and workshops, including the celebrated Dancing Classrooms program featured in the films *Mad Hot Ballroom* and *Take the Lead*. The ARTery is dedicated to using the arts to break down cultural barriers, improve critical thinking and communication skills, empower individuals, and strengthen the community.

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