News and Information

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World-Renown Musician Herbie Hancock to Receive 2011 Legendary Artist Award and Acclaimed Actress and Playwright Anna Deavere Smith to Receive 2011 National Artist Advocate Award

Carmel, IN Mayor James Brainard, Philadelphia Mayor Michael A. Nutter and New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson Honored With 2011 Public Leadership in the Arts Awards

WASHINGTON, D.C.— Americans for the Arts, America’s leading nonprofit organization for advancing the arts, and The United States Conference of Mayors, today announced that Herbie Hancock will receive the 2011 Legendary Artist Award, and Anna Deavere Smith will receive the 2011 National Artist Advocate Award. In addition, Carmel, IN Mayor James Brainard, Philadelphia Mayor Michael A. Nutter and New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson will receive the 2011 Public Leadership in the Arts Awards.

The awards honor elected officials and artists that have demonstrated outstanding leadership in the advancement of the arts. Recipients will receive the honor on Thursday, January 20 at The United States Conference of Mayors’ 79th annual winter meeting in Washington, D.C. Americans for the Arts and The United States Conference of Mayors have given out the awards annually since 1997.

“Anna Deavere Smith has been an extraordinary advocate for the arts, showing how the arts are integral to creating better American communities and citizens, and Mr. Hancock continues to inspire artists with his innovative stylings. Mayors Brainard and Nutter and Governor Richardson have all demonstrated immense dedication to the development of arts programming within their respective communities and states,” said Robert L. Lynch, president and CEO of Americans for the Arts. “Their extraordinary leadership and commitment to cultural initiatives and advancement of the arts showcases the key role the arts play in spurring economic growth while simultaneously enhancing quality of life.”

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“Every year, the U.S. Conference of Mayors recognizes the efforts of those who believe as much as we do, that the arts are the heart of our society. Arts and culture help shape a city’s quality of life, but mayors also understand the connection between the arts and business and the arts’ impact on the local economy,” said U.S. Conference of Mayors CEO and Executive Director Tom Cochran.

A 12-time GRAMMY Award-winner, Herbie Hancock is a jazz icon who has been an integral part of every jazz movement since his arrival on the scene in the 1960s. When he was 20 years old, Hancock was invited by Donald Byrd to join his band. Byrd later helped him secure a recording contract with Blue Note Records. As a member of the Miles Davis Quintet, Hancock became one of the pioneers of modern jazz improvisation. Hancock’s recordings during the ’70s combined electric jazz with funk and rock sounds in an innovative style that influenced a whole decade of music. In 1983 Hancock’s “Rockit” won a GRAMMY for Best R&B Instrumental, and he received the 1987 Oscar Award for Best Score for his work on Round Midnight. In 2007, Hancock’s River: The Joni Letters won the GRAMMY Award for Album of the Year, making Hancock the first jazz musician to receive this honor in 44 years. Today, Hancock continues to be a major creative force in jazz and a trailblazer in the world of music.

"I am honored to receive Americans for the Arts’ Legendary Artist Award,” said Hancock. “The arts have the power to change lives and communities. I have known this all my life. More than 50 years into my career, I continue to work to enable as many young people to experience the arts as possible."

In addition to her renowned work as an actress, playwright, teacher and author, Anna Deavere Smith established the Institute on the Arts and Civic Dialogue at Harvard University and now at New York University. Its mission is to support the development of art that illuminates social conditions; to deepen the capacity of artists to communicate with their audiences; and to build an international community in which artists, students, activists and scholars could work together to develop the artist as a voice in society. In addition, she serves on the boards of the Aspen Institute and the Museum of Modern Art, and currently serves as the inaugural Artist in Residence at the Center for American Progress in Washington D.C. In October 2010, Ms. Smith delivered the keynote address—a penetratingly innovative performance on what she called “winner-take-all society”—before the nation’s largest philanthropic foundations gathered at the Independent Sector Conference to discuss American Democracy at a Crossroads.

“I am so honored to receive the 2011 National Artist Advocate Award,” said Ms. Deavere Smith. “In my work I try to give voice to people whose lives tell the story of the human condition and let them advocate for the most humane society we can achieve.”
Public Leadership in the Arts Awards

During his four terms as mayor of Carmel, IN, James Brainard used the arts as a catalyst for economic development and community revitalization. He was instrumental in the creation of a revitalized downtown with the Arts & Design District serving as an anchor. This endeavor has given new life to a forgotten area of the city. In addition, he created the Support the Arts fund, which mandates that one percent of the city's general fund support local arts organizations. What’s more, the account is set up as a non-reverting fund. As such, any money not used at year’s end is not lost but flows into next year’s fund.

“I am deeply honored to be recognized by Americans for the Arts and The United States Conference of Mayors, two groups that do wonderful work, for my efforts in using the arts and culture to promote Carmel and to re-invigorate and re-invent our downtown,” said Mayor Brainard. “I am so proud that Carmel is being held up as a model to others for our transformation and look forward to next week when we formally open our world-class Center for the Performing Arts.”

Upon taking office in January, 2008, Philadelphia Mayor Michael A. Nutter made a major commitment to arts, culture and creative economy. In his first approved budget as mayor, he doubled funding for the Philadelphia Cultural Fund, the primary city-funded competitive grant-making program. In addition, Mayor Nutter re-opened the city’s Office of Arts and Culture—renamed the Office of Arts, Culture and the Creative Economy—and created a new cabinet-level position to lead it. He directed $500,000 in Community Development Block Grant funds to be used for a new Creative Industry Workforce Grants program, marking the first time Philadelphia HUD funds have been used for an arts-centric grant program. With his encouragement, the school district has committed to ensuring certified arts teachers are in every single school in the district. Further, Mayor Nutter has used his remaining inauguration funds to support ArtsRising—a new citywide art education initiative.

"Philadelphia's economic and cultural health feeds off the vibrancy of our local arts and culture sector," said Mayor Nutter. "On behalf of all Philadelphians, I want to thank Americans for the Arts for recognizing the strides made by our city in fostering an environment that creative professionals can thrive in, while giving back to our communities."

In his term-limited eight years in office, Governor Bill Richardson has proved to be a strong supporter of the arts, arts education and arts-based economic development. He supported and signed the Fine Arts Education Act, which provides arts education for elementary school children in New Mexico and established a state Music Commission to promote New Mexico musicians and music. He supported the development of the New Mexico History Museum, and awarded the University of New Mexico $3 million to create the "Art, Research, Technology
and Science Laboratory” (ARTS Lab) to support the state’s efforts in the burgeoning digital media industry. In addition, Governor Richardson elevated the Office of Cultural Affairs to a cabinet-level agency of the Department of Cultural Affairs, and supported a new program to create arts and cultural districts across New Mexico to boost local communities and arts-based economic development and cultural tourism efforts.

“As a devoted supporter of the arts—in all forms—I am honored by this recognition,” said Governor Richardson. “I've always been guided by the belief that artistic endeavors not only enrich our quality of life, but also serve as important economic drivers”

To view a list of previous award winners, please visit: http://www.AmericansForTheArts.org/news/annual_awards/public_leadership/default.asp.

The U.S. Conference of Mayors is the official nonpartisan organization of cities with populations of 30,000 or more. There are 1,139 such cities in the country today, each represented in the Conference by its chief elected official, the Mayor. Additional information is available at www.USMayors.org.

Americans for the Arts is the leading nonprofit organization for advancing the arts in America. With offices in Washington, D.C. and New York City, it has a record of more than 50 years of service. Americans for the Arts is dedicated to representing and serving local communities and creating opportunities for every American to participate in and appreciate all forms of the arts. Additional information is available at www.AmericansForTheArts.org.

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