

Arts Program

River Oaks Square Arts Center, Alexandria

Since 1984, River Oaks Square Arts Center (ROSAC) in Alexandria, Louisiana, has been a major cultural influence for the Central Louisiana region by promoting contemporary visual arts and fine crafts stimulating interest in, exhibition of and appreciation for regional, resident and local artists and their work. The center provides studio space for forty-eight artists and also offers an on-site arts academy for continuous classes for individuals of all ages. For over seven years, ROSAC has provided classes and exhibitions of art that has been created by hundreds of at-risk youth and people with intellectual and physical disabilities.

Through the support from local foundations and state funding, ROSAC has been able to provide painting and ceramics classes for people who are served by the John Eskew Training Facility, which is a vocational training agency that strives to improve the quality of life for people with intellectual and physical disabilities to be fully included in all aspects of their community. Throughout the past five years, approximately 300 individuals have been able to attend ceramic and painting classes at ROSAC each year where they have the opportunity to be guided by a professional artist in creating works of art that culminates in a public art exhibit which hangs for six weeks in one of the center's gallery spaces.

No other organization in the region offers this opportunity for people with intellectual and physical disabilities to be involved and included in a community art education program that promotes creativity, acceptance and higher self-esteem. ROSAC would like to continue and expand this community art education opportunity to other individuals with intellectual disabilities who reside in Central Louisiana.

Through support from the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council, ROSAC would build a collaborative relationship with area organizations such as the Central Louisiana Resource Center for Developmental Disabilities and Families Helping Families to broaden the scope of individuals with intellectual disabilities to participate in ceramics and painting classes at ROSAC. The Central Louisiana Resource Center for Developmental Disabilities would also offer technical support to further enhance this community outreach opportunity.

ROSAC would offer weekly ceramics and painting classes for six individuals in each class for a minimum of forty weeks per year. Each participant would attend a weekly class for one month and could request to participate in future classes if space could be accommodated. Through this offering, approximately 144 people with intellectual disabilities could annually participate in this enrichment program thereby giving them the ability to integrate into their local community and have their art work seen and valued by people of all ages.

The cost to provide this art education program is approximately \$15,000 per year. This cost includes the professional artists' fees for the instructors who teach the classes and all of the materials for the creation of the art pieces. The classes are offered free of charge with the only expense for the participant being their transportation to/from the class. Additionally, ROSAC provides support by covering the costs for the firing of the ceramic pieces in the kilns, the cost of the glazes for the ceramic pieces and technical and administrative support from the Executive Director and the Artistic Director.

ROSAC would like to request consideration of inclusion in the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council's strategic plan through financial support of \$10,000 annually over the course of the five year plan to expand this positive enrichment opportunity for more than 140 individuals with intellectual disabilities each year. Through the council's support, more than 700 individuals with intellectual disabilities will gain a valuable and rewarding experience that can open new forms of positive expression and inclusion in the community.