



## **PRESS RELEASE**

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# **ARTS IN CRISIS?**

## ***Arts-Kids Can Help***

**PARK CITY, UTAH** —At a recent seminar in Salt Lake City entitled, “Arts in Crisis: A Kennedy Center Initiative,” Michael Kaiser, Executive Director of the Kennedy Center, discussed the challenges facing non-profit arts organizations, and he provided free arts management consulting and solutions for creating successful arts programs in this 50-state tour.

In addition to discussing ways to strengthen established arts organizations, Mr. Kaiser talked about the plight of arts education. Most children are introduced to arts in school, and the #1 concern in Utah and many other states is the loss of art education programs and budget cuts in schools. Because of these cuts, the first generation of kids is coming of age who haven’t been exposed to art in school.

“This scares me so much,” said Michael Kaiser, “it scares me much more than the recession.” The arts help kids learn creative problem solving. “With no systemic arts education, kids are at a big disadvantage,” Kaiser says. “We don’t teach any other subject that way—your child doesn’t come home and say, ‘...my 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher doesn’t like or know about math, and so she’s not going to teach it this year.’”

Arts-Kids can help bridge the budget cut gap. Arts-Kids is an after-school program using the expressive arts and group techniques to help students between the ages of 8 and 17 years old learn about art, while at the same time, meet the challenges of growing up. Programs are free to all participants regardless of a family’s ability to pay and are made possible by grants and donations.

The Arts-Kids program has been developed over the past decade to address challenges facing today’s youth. The program is often called a “primary prevention program” because the sense of belonging and “connectedness” developed in an Arts-Kids group helps kids avoid problems associated with:

- Alcohol abuse
- Drug use
- Teen suicide
- Gangs
- Bullying and teasing
- Social network problems like sexting and cyber-bullying
- Lying, stealing, vandalism

Arts-Kids and Arts-Teens programs are also intended to provide a safe place for students with ADHD, Asperger's and other forms of autism to express themselves and feel socially accepted. When a diverse group of students meet in a safe environment where they can express their feelings silently through art, or verbally through group discussion, they develop empathy for others. This "sense of otherness" and improved self-esteem helps prevent negative behaviors and helps students develop creative problem solving skills that will serve them well as adults.

Developing and nurturing the arts helps improve creative problem-solving skills that serve children well when they become adults in careers or as they cope with life's challenges. In 2008, Arts-Kids expanded its model to the Uintah and Ouray Northern Ute Reservations in eastern Utah, and this year (2010), Arts-Kids developed a formal training program to teach civic organizations, school districts and non-profits how to implement the program for kids in their own communities.

### **About Arts-Kids**

Arts-Kids, Inc. was founded in 1999 by Pat Drewry Sanger, an Advanced Practice Psychiatric-Mental Health Registered Nurse and Child/Adolescent Specialist. The inspiration for the program came from her early work in Norfolk, Virginia, where she noticed that children growing up in tough inner city environments began to become hardened and emotionally shut down by age nine or ten. Parents were often so exhausted from their efforts to survive they had no energy to support their children on an emotional level.

Ms. Sanger transferred that learning to establish Arts-Kids, an after school program which combined the expressive arts and group techniques to teach life skills to youth. By 2003, Arts-Kids and Arts-Teens groups had expanded to all ten Summit County elementary and middle schools. In 2008, Arts-Kids expanded its model to the Uintah and Ouray Northern Ute Reservations in eastern Utah, and Arts-Kids plans to expand their reach to the Navajo Tribe in southern Utah and to provide programs to teen detention centers in Utah and nationwide.

### **About Michael Kaiser**

Mr. Kaiser, dubbed "The Turnaround King," created "Arts in Crisis: A Kennedy Center Initiative" program to provide free arts management consulting to non-profit performing arts organizations around the United States. Mr. Kaiser has embarked on a national tour for the Arts in Crisis initiative, hosting arts management symposia in all 50 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia through August 2010. More information may be found at [www.artsincrisis.org](http://www.artsincrisis.org).

Mr. Kaiser is currently the Director of the Kennedy Center and founded the [Kennedy Center Arts Management Institute](#) to provide advanced training for arts administrators at varying stages of development and has created a series of programs to help train others in the field. Mr. Kaiser has created a Capacity Building Program for culturally specific arts organizations, which offers mentoring services to the leaders of African American, Latino, Asian American and Native American arts groups from across the United States. He also advises performing arts organizations around the world on building institutional strength through marketing, strategic planning and fundraising, and, in this capacity, is currently working with arts leaders in 60 countries. He has created [artsmanager.org](#), a website that provides resources to arts managers around the world.

Mr. Kaiser previously served as the Executive Director of the Royal Opera House, the American Ballet Theatre, the Alvin Ailey Dance Theater Foundation, and General Manager of the Kansas City Ballet.

**Attention Media:** Interviews and images available upon request. For more information contact Arts-Kids at 435.615.7878 or go to [www.arts-kids.org](#).

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