

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Colorado Organizations Unite to Infuse Over \$400,000 into ECE-12 Arts Education, Removing Barriers for Underserved Students**

DENVER, CO – September 19th, 2023

Today, in a bold initiative, Bonfils-Stanton Foundation joins forces with leading philanthropic organizations and Think 360 Arts for Learning to announce "Equity in Arts Learning for Colorado Youth." This collaborative grant aims to be a catalyst for transformative change in ECE-12 arts education throughout Colorado.

### **A Catalyst for Transformative Change**

"For years, we've been sharpening our focus on creating a more equitable arts and culture ecosystem," said Gina Ferrari, Director of Grant Programs at Bonfils-Stanton Foundation. "Today, we're taking a significant step toward levelling the playing field in arts learning. It's not just an initiative; it's a call to action for other organizations to join us."

"Colorado Creative Industries (CCI) is thrilled to be engaged in this important initiative alongside our valued partners. Our funding allows this grant to be available to schools and nonprofits beyond the metro area, particularly to those in underserved rural areas around the state," said Josh Blanchard, Director of CCI.

### **Breaking the Systemic Barriers**

This multi-organization alliance—including Bonfils-Stanton Foundation, Denver Arts and Venues (DAV), the Gates Family Foundation, CCI, and The Denver Foundation—is the first of its kind in Colorado. The nearly half-million-dollar fund aims to dismantle the systemic barriers that have long prevented marginalized youth from experiencing the life-altering benefits of arts learning. Think 360 Arts for Learning serves as a critical thought partner and the administrator of the grant program.

Daisy McGowan, Executive Director of Think 360 Arts, said, "This collaboration represents the intersection of vision and action. It's a prime example of what can happen when organizations decide that change is not just necessary but achievable."

### **The Stark Reality in Colorado Schools**

The urgency for this initiative is underscored by stark statistics. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, students in high poverty schools are more than twice as likely to have no access to the arts. Further, the Department of Education reports that access to arts education for students of color is significantly lower than for their white peers. The positive impacts of arts education on school culture are evident through student motivation, attitudes, and overall attendance. "In Colorado alone, 28,000 students attend schools without any formal arts education. That's 28,000 young lives missing out on the creativity, problem-solving, and empathy that the arts can nurture," said Ginger White, Executive Director of DAV.

## A Multi-Pronged Approach to Equity

The application process is now open. Colorado arts and culture nonprofits, along with schools in collaboration with artists or arts and culture organizations, are encouraged to submit their proposals. Emphasis should be placed on proposals that prioritize the distinct identities and requirements of students, promote in-depth learning and the development of meaningful relationships, address clear gaps in school or community arts education, engage experienced artists and cultural bearers, and ensure high accessibility for youth participants.

Visit [www.think360arts.org/grant-opportunities](http://www.think360arts.org/grant-opportunities) to learn more about the Equity in Arts Learning for Colorado Youth full grant guidelines and to register for a Zoom Information Session on Thursday, September 28, 2023, 4:30 p.m.

## An Investment in the Future

Bonfils-Stanton Foundation has pledged an initial \$200,000 per year for the next three years as a pilot program and is joined by DAV (\$100,000), CCI (\$50,000), Gates Family Foundation (\$50,000), and The Denver Foundation (\$25,000).

"Our goal is to raise a fund total that exceeds half-a-million dollars," Ferrari added.

"We've seen the research; we know the benefits. Now it's time to put our money where our mouth is and enable every child in Colorado to experience the transformative power of the arts," McGowan concluded.

For more information, contact:

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