



NEWS AND INFORMATION

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03/12/2002

Americans for the Arts, Elefanten Children's Shoes & Children's Performer Laurie Berkner Take a Giant Step Forward to Support Preschool Arts Education

WASHINGTON, D.C. —Americans for the Arts, children's shoe manufacturer, Elefanten USA, and children's recording artist,

"Preschools aren't part of the public school system and currently receive little or no federal funding for arts education programs," said Bob Lynch, president and chief executive of Americans for the Arts, based in Washington, D.C. "But we know 95 percent of American adults agree that the arts teach intangibles like creativity, self-expression, and individualism. Steps to Art will help raise awareness of this important issue and provide parents of preschoolers with the information and resources they need to be advocates for arts education in their community."

In addition to raising awareness, Steps to Art will raise funds through the sale of an exclusive CD titled "*Bumblebees & Googleheads: Fun Songs by Laurie Berkner*" featuring the award-winning children's musician described by critics as "a Sheryl Crow for the kiddies." The CD, featuring irresistible sing-along songs from her three best-selling recordings, will be available for \$10 at participating Elefanten retailers nationwide, including Nordstrom stores. All proceeds will go to Americans for the Arts to fund eligible preschool arts education initiatives. Laurie Berkner will also perform at least three concerts this fall on behalf of Steps to Art in major markets, including New York City and Seattle.

"As a former preschool music teacher, I saw firsthand the power of combining music and art to engage and inspire young children," said Laurie Berkner, whose video songbook recently received the *Parenting magazine* Video Magic Award for toddlers. "I look forward to using my music to help struggling arts education programs across the country."

In addition to live concert events, marketing efforts such as public relations, in-store merchandising, and advertising will be employed to drive awareness of Steps to Art to parents of preschoolers nationwide. Ads will appear in August Back to School issues of *Martha Stewart for Kids*, *Rosie*, *Parents* and *Child*.

"Elefanten is all about the joy of discovery," said Mark Kohlenberg, president of Elefanten. "Instilling a love of the arts at an early age can enrich children's lives in so many ways. That's why we founded Steps to Art. We look forward to working with our partners to bring this message to life this fall."

ELEFANTEN USA is the no. 1 European brand of children's shoes in the United States. The company has been creating little works of art for children since 1908 and was founded by Gustav Hoffmann, inventor of the left and right shoe concept for children. Steps to Art is Elefanten's charitable initiative dedicated to improving the lives of young people through the arts.

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 40-year record of objective arts industry research. As the preeminent arts advocacy organization, it is dedicated to representing and serving local communities and creating opportunities for every American to participate in and appreciate all forms of the arts. For more information, visit www.AmericansForTheArts.org.

LAURIE BERKNER has been dubbed "one of the hippest children's artists" by *Family Fun magazine* and has received national attention with major media coverage and high-visibility performances at venues from the White House to NBC's "Today Show." Her special brand of simple, unsophisticated yet well-crafted music engages children emotionally and physically, and is enjoyed, not just tolerated, by parents. Her critically-acclaimed CDs, "Victor Vito", "Whaddya Think of That?" and "Buzz Buzz" (Two Tomatoes Records) are available through retailers nationwide.

Americans for the Arts is the leading nonprofit organization for advancing the arts and arts education 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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