



NEWS AND INFORMATION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Steps to Art Raises \$50,000 for Preschool Arts Education Initiatives

Elefanten Children's Shoes, Americans for the Arts and Children's Musician Laurie Berkner Award \$5,000 to Ten Pre-K Programs

PORT WASHINGTON, Wis.– This fall, Elefanten children's shoe retailers helped tots put their best foot forward with the arts by participating in a new charitable initiative called Steps to Art during the busy back-to-school shopping season. Steps to Art, a collaboration of celebrated children's musician Laurie Berkner; Americans for the Arts, the national organization for advancing the arts and children's shoe manufacturer Elefanten USA, raised \$50,000 to fund preschool arts education initiatives through the sale of an exclusive CD titled *"Bumblebees & Googleheads: Fun Songs by Laurie Berkner."*

The program was born out of concern that the more than four million children enrolled in preschool do not have enough access to meaningful arts programs that can enhance academic, social and cognitive development.

"The response we received from arts organizations and preschools across the country demonstrates the immense need for more funding and more work in the area of preschool arts education," said Robert L. Lynch, president and CEO of Americans for the Arts. "Clearly, every community wants and needs more arts programming for its youngest children."

To raise awareness of the need for preschool arts education, Elefanten spearheaded a national fundraising and information campaign aimed at educating parents and caregivers about the benefits of exposing children to the arts at an early age. A national ad campaign, six-city Laurie Berkner concert tour and informational web sites helped gain national attention for this important issue.

"Elefanten is about the joy of discovery and what is more exciting for a child than engaging in the arts?" said Mark Kohlenberg, president of Elefanten USA. "We are thrilled our retailers and Elefanten customers raised \$50,000 to provide children with more opportunities to creatively express themselves and enhance their education."

Ten organizations received \$5,000 grants to assist them in their efforts:

- The Arts Council of Winston-Salem and Forsyth County (Winston-Salem, NC)
- Burklyn Arts Council (Lyndonville, VT)
- Hawai'i Alliance for Arts Education (Honolulu, HI)
- Kathy Dunn Hamrik Dance Company (Austin, TX)
- MacPhail Center for the Arts (Minneapolis, MN)
- Making Books Sing, Inc. (New York, NY)
- Music & Arts Center for Humanity (Bridgeport, CT)
- Pierce County Arts & Cultural Services (Tacoma, WA)
- Preservation Worcester (Sutton, MA)
- Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts (Vienna, VA)

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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