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## Begalka: Art cuts could have far-reaching effects

It's a tough time to make a dime in the fine arts. The latest blow came Thursday, when the U.S. House of Representatives approved additional cuts to the National Endowment for the Arts budget, which would reduce it to \$124.5 – vs. the \$145 million included in the original proposal.

The latest budget amendment, spearheaded by Rep. Tim Walberg, R-Mich., reduces funding to the 2007 level.

"The cuts to the NEA are terrible," said Richard Kuranda, executive director of the Raue Center for the Arts in Crystal Lake. "It's a sign of its times. We can have three 'Big Momma's House' films in a short period of time, but we can't support classical music. It makes no sense. ... I don't think people realize we are cannibalizing our own resources, our own people."

At first blush, the impact might appear minimal. Kuranda estimated the Raue lost a combined \$25,000 during the past three years in flow-through funds from the Illinois Arts Council. But consider the ripple effect.

"It really hits us, not with one piece of paper, but on multiple levels," Kuranda said. "Our dance company really takes a hit. A lot of dance companies need touring support grants just to go out on the road."

Before the latest round of cuts, Americans for the Arts President and CEO Robert Lynch leveled criticism at President Barack Obama's budget proposal, which included a \$21 million decrease for the NEA compared to \$167.5 million Congress appropriated last year.

"At a time when NEA dollars are the critical lifeline helping state and local budgets survive as philanthropic dollars are dwindling, this drastic reduction does not take into account the incredible return on investment those funds generate to federal, state and local treasuries," Lynch stated.

The Illinois Arts Alliance recently honored Crystal Lake for its support of the arts, but that also works in reverse. Kuranda said the Raue pumps an estimated \$4.1 million a year back into the local economy; increasing traffic at downtown restaurants and attracting out-of-town guests.

"We're lucky because we're independent. If I need to make immediate cuts I can," Kuranda said. "Will it have a huge impact on us? Probably not. But we'll feel it ... we're not going to feel these impacts as a society for the next three to five years. Students will not be as well-read. The downtowns are not going to be as vibrant."

Kuranda predicted many nonprofit arts organizations might not survive. That would be huge loss, perhaps one our nation – already trailing other countries in arts education – might never recover from.

### Photography seminar

Mary Neely of Waukegan will discuss how non-representational digital photography can be accomplished with composition alone, rather than using digital effects, during a meeting of the Lake County Art League at 7 p.m. Monday in the lower level of the State Bank of the Lakes in Grayslake.

An art photographer with works in Illinois and Wisconsin galleries, Neely has exhibited in the Evanston Art Center's Biennial exhibition, the Chicago Art Open exhibits and at many fine art festivals.

LCAL members' artwork also will be critiqued and judged as part of its monthly competition. Light snacks are served. For information, visit [www.lcal.org/Home.html](http://www.lcal.org/Home.html).

### Art meet and greet

The Waukegan Art Council is hosting a Meet and Greet Tuesday for the general public to spotlight the planned renovation of the Karcher Hotel into an artist enclave. Visit the Green Town Tavern, 110 S. Genessee St. in Waukegan, 6:30 to 8 p.m. to learn about the \$12.5 million project.

Artspace, a developer of affordable housing for artists and their families, plans to transform the old hotel into the Karcher Artspace Lofts. The facility, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, will

consist of 36 units and about 2,400 square feet of retail and commercial space on the first two floors. The goal is to create a central hub for artists and art-lovers from across Lake County.

A majority of the financing for the Karcher Artspace Lofts already is earmarked from federal Low Income Housing and Historic Preservation tax credits, as well Department of Housing and Urban Development funds. But about \$500,000 must be raised from private donations to complete the project.

For information, visit [www.artspacewaukegan.org](http://www.artspacewaukegan.org).

#### **Photo winners**

Caffé Luna is exhibiting 23 photographs through March 21, by artists Shannon Joy Hemsoth of Union, Billie Bosonetta of Crystal Lake and John O'Leary of Aurora. The three winners were selected from 35 contestants who submitted 150 entries.

Professional photographer Nancy Shepherd selected the winners.

The photographers were invited to show photographs of their choice.

O'Leary, an Aurora native who has a degree in wildlife biology, said he made a point as a boy to visit the Fox River and photograph wildlife. He continues to do so.

Hemsoth prefers people-centric, human-interest images.

Bosonetta focuses in on technique, exhibit curator Lynn Carlson said.

A reception for the honorees is planned between 2:30 and 4 p.m. March 5 at Caffé Luna, 6230 Northwest Highway.

Hours are 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. weekdays, 6 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sunday.

For information, call Carlson at 815-459-9151 or Shepherd at 815-338-7406.

#### **Teacher's, students' watercolors on display**

McHenry County College art instructor Diane T. Wlezien of Marengo and about 20 of her students will be exhibiting watercolors and acrylic paintings March 1 through April 4 in the community room of the Woodstock Opera House on the Woodstock Square.

It marks the 13th show, said Wlezien, who has been teaching adult education classes at MCC since 1993.

Wlezien said the subject matter is far-reaching, and includes a "Portraits of War" assignment. Students were able to interpret the latter as they wished.

"The turnout for the reception and show last year was very strong. I think people still enjoy the artwork very much," Wlezien said. "I think the show at the Opera House is more about the community viewing their fellow artists who are among them. It could be your neighbor. It brings it more to the level that artists are people who you know."

A public reception is planned 2 to 4 p.m. March 5 in the Opera House, 121 Van Buren St.

Regular viewing hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays and noon to 5 p.m. Saturdays.

For show information, call Wlezien at 847-516-8302 or visit [www.opulentart.com](http://www.opulentart.com).

• Kurt Begalka can be reached at [kbegalka@shawsuburban.com](mailto:kbegalka@shawsuburban.com).

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