



A Poem to Celebrate the First 50 Years of the NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF STATE ARTS AGENCIES

1. Legacy

Let's say today is the very first one
you are delivered to a state arts agency,
a bulging envelope floats to your desk top
as if dropped from a fluffy cloud;
it says "Birthright" in large letters, you open it,
remove the scroll and read from the list of your inheritance:

- The National Standard for Arts Information Exchange
with data on every state arts council grant
- SAA research, newsletter, best practices, funding, expenditures
- Networking with everyone who does the job you do
- Congress protecting the NEA program funds 40%
for the States' top priorities
- Coalitions in place to push federal cultural agencies,
arts education, Arts & Humanities Month
- NEA partnerships: Poetry Out Loud,
State Folk Life, the Governors arts reports,
arts sector dollars and jobs data drilled down to state level
- Lexicons of "public value" and "creative economy"
- Links with the Regionals
- Individual funding, foundation support for initiatives,
--- all and more built in the first fifty years
are the family fortune your labor increases.

2. Calling

Will the NASAA being built be more like a smart phone,
beehive, implant, social network, hot tub,
think tank, all of the above or something
that today we cannot even think of?

I like to think of NASAA as a kind of aspen forest, our stately trees
all connected at the root of public service through the arts,
democracy a silver underside of all the leaves of our activities,
their benefits a host of breezes flowing through and out and everywhere.

I like to think of NASAA as a wheel barrow, as in the story
of stone masons pushing their loads, asked what they are doing.
One says, I'm moving stones; next says, crafting a support wall;
next says, cathedral – I am building that; and next,
I am connecting this: my earthly life with a heavenly meaning.
The wheel barrow helps do all the hauling:
the tasks, the jobs, the purpose and the calling.

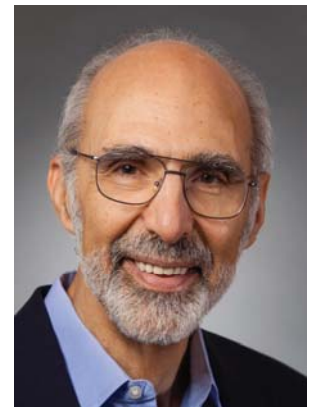
What does that mean – it's a "calling"
– to work where public service and art coincide?
We know the arts are products, are markets, are traditions, are skill sets,
rainbows of artifacts, cornucopias of experience;
you could say that NASAA is the lab and the factory of their public benefits,
you could say, when questioned who would add creative artistry
to words and numbers so that children could learn *everything*,
we are among the ones who answer "Here we are."

The thing about associations is their members own them,
do the work, constitute the customers, and reap the benefits.
So they are like a family farm or garden that you seed,
you cultivate, and you harvest more than you put in.
Together you position for the sun, you fertilize your field,
you plan for rain, you have one axiom to maximize
your yield in any weather: Better Together.

A Forum	A Force	A Family
Knowledge	Representation	Community

3. Credo

To serve and to lead knowledgeably
I learn from these and they learn from me
We stand for the arts and we stand for the states
We stand with each other
To make our voice great
I hold these hands, these hands hold me
I chose this community
We are NASAA
Ready for the next 50!



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jonathan Katz".

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