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Virginia Arts Festival awarded large community grant

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The Virginia Arts Festival has been awarded a \$160,000 grant from ArtPlace America to support its "Beyond the Concert Hall — Connecting Neighborhoods" project. advertisement

The money will be used to strengthen its connection between visiting artists, performing spaces and neighborhoods within a one-mile radius of its headquarters in downtown Norfolk. That area includes the Attucks Theatre, located in the city's predominantly black commercial district, and the low-income Youngs Terrace neighborhood.

"The Virginia Arts Festival believes in the power of the arts to transform lives and change communities," Festival Director Robert W. Cross said in a prepared statement. "We are honored that ArtPlace supports our vision and commitment to a diverse and underserved neighborhood that is adjacent to a thriving downtown and vibrant arts district."

The grant will allow the arts festival to expand its activities at the Attucks Theatre and increase its educational outreach to P.B. Young and Tidewater Park Elementary schools and Ruffner Middle school, said Cross. Also planned are performances and other events in informal settings and outdoor spaces in the Young Terrace community.

Part of the money will be used to expand the festival's steel drum band for youth called the Rhythm Project into P.B. Young Elementary. Sarah Bishop of United Way/ United For Children, a partner in the grant application, said, "We are thrilled that this grant allows us to expand the Rhythm Project into the school day curriculum, providing valuable mentoring and leadership training for these students."

ArtPlace is a collaboration among more than a dozen philanthropic foundations, including The Ford Foundation, The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, and The Rockefeller Foundation, plus individuals and banks. The arts festival was among 55 organizations that received grants totaling \$14.7 million designed to use the arts in shaping the social, physical, and economic futures of communities.

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