

World Children's Festival Celebrates Diversity

by Abigail Maravalli



JUST THE FACTS

- Who:** The International Child Art Foundation
- What:** The 2011 World Children's Festival
- Where:** The National Mall, Washington, D.C.
- Why:** To point children toward becoming creative and enlightened community leaders, prepared to collaborate for innovation and positive social change.
- When:** June 17-19, 2011

Art has the unique ability to bridge cultural differences and cross language barriers, which is more important in today's world than ever before. A timely celebration that pulls diverse and competing groups around their shared concern for children will take place on The National Mall in Washington, D.C., this June 17-19.

Held every four years since 1999 as the "Olympics" of children's creativity and art, the World Children's Festival (WCF) has evolved into the largest international children's celebration, and a permanent quadrennial event in our nation's capital. The WCF is the culmination of the Arts Olympiad, a cost-free program for schools worldwide, which introduces to children the "artist-athlete" ideal of creative mind and healthy body. The global art and sport program recognizes that children naturally gain and apply life skills through artistic expression and athletic accomplishment.

The bipartisan Congressional Arts Caucus has endorsed the Arts Olympiad for its "important national and international implications." The Arts Olympiad winners from nearly every U.S. state and about 80 participating countries convene at the WCF, and are joined by more than 70 musical, dance and theatrical groups. Over 300 prominent educators, field experts, professional artists, Olympians, scientists and technologists host workshops and activities, which attract more than 15,000 attendees.

The education program at the festival integrates art



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and sport with STEM disciplines (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) for children's holistic development. The sequencing of intervention is based on the Peace Through Art approach of the International Child Art Foundation (ICF), featured in the leading U.K. medical journal, *The Lancet*, in Dec. 2006.

The key objective is to provide early training for children to become creative and enlightened leaders in their communities who are prepared to collaborate for innovation and positive social change. The intercultural learning opportunities and educational exchange provide children the transformative experience of a lifetime.

In "The Art of Empathy: Teaching Students to Care," Ohio State University Professor, Candace Stout, observed, "... the arts, with their inextricable ties to imagination, have the capacity to provide an unlimited source of possibilities for connecting self to other and for creating a disposition for sympathetic awareness." (*Art Education*. Vol. 52, No. 2.)

The Festival opens each day with a brief ceremony at 10 a.m., followed by dozens of workshops, activities and performances that take place simultaneously, providing children with a wide variety of activities throughout the day. The WCF on The National Mall is free and open to the public.

Come join the children at their World Festival. Inspire them and be inspired by them. ■

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Go to artsandactivities.com and click on this button to access more information about the World Children's Festival.