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Any Given Child Jacksonville celebrates four years of progress for arts education

On Tuesday, September 26, Regions Bank hosted a Partnerships in Progress reception to celebrate the achievements of Any Given Child Jacksonville over the last four years, with guests from a variety of businesses and organizations that have been involved since the beginning.

The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts launched Ensuring the Arts for Any Given Child in 2009. The national initiative brings communities together to implement comprehensive, sustainable arts education agendas so all K-8 children have equitable access to learning in the arts. In 2013, Jacksonville was selected as the 14th Any Given Child community alongside cities such as Austin, Sacramento and Portland.

“Most people here know that Jacksonville has a lot to offer,” said Allison Galloway-Gonzalez, executive director of AGC Jacksonville, “but all too often it takes someone from the outside to remind us of our strengths. The Kennedy Center saw a city that, despite its large-scale and sprawling geography, really seems like a small town that constantly interweaves culture, business, education and government. It saw great leadership, resources and passionate individuals, but it also saw a need – a need to collaborate.”

Since 2013, AGC Jacksonville has made tremendous strides toward achieving its goals of raising awareness and building capacity to ensure every K-8 student in Duval County receives access to a quality arts education. Following a public launch and awareness event in November 2014, AGC Jacksonville has been focused on five major objectives – program services, capacity building, advocacy and communications, cross-sector collaboration, and advancement.

From fall of 2014 through spring of 2017, AGC Jacksonville was in the implementation phase of its process, helping initiate, facilitate and track the following outcomes in Duval County:

- Two arts educators at each K-8 public school
- More than \$4 million in local arts-related scholarships to Duval County Public School students
- Four times the number of professional development offerings for arts educators
- Twice the number of administrators in the DCPS arts department
- Creation of a new arts magnet middle school – Fort Caroline – and four new arts integration elementary schools – Brentwood, John Love, Hyde Grove and Hyde Park
- Three times the number of local media mentions in support of arts education
- More than \$750,000 in new gifts to local arts education initiatives
- Engagement of new sectors in support of the arts, including STEM industries

“The educators, artists, philanthropists and business partners have been essential in making all of this possible,” said DCPS Director of Arts Jeff Smith. “We can’t stop here, especially in a year of transition where we need every advocate’s voice amplified.”

Smith was recognized at the event for his tireless work to improve and expand arts education for students in our community. His service as an advocate and remarkable visionary helped make the accomplishments of AGC Jacksonville possible.

“Our community was determined,” said Galloway-Gonzalez. “From the first year with the Kennedy Center and the Community Arts Team – 39 leaders in Jacksonville who spent the first year collecting data, developing a strategic plan and structuring this effort – to the steering committee and working groups who have spent the last three years monitoring, guiding and innovating progress and partnerships locally. It is a wonderful moment to be able to mark progress – especially after setting some ambitious collective goals!”

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Any Given Child Jacksonville is uniting diverse stakeholders that include Duval County Public Schools personnel and students, arts organizations, artists, and business and community leaders. We have worked ceaselessly to raise awareness and build capacity to ensure every K-8 student in Duval County receives access to a high-quality arts education. Learn more at capkids.org/agcjax.