

**2010 GOVERNOR'S ARTS AWARD
ACCEPTANCE SPEECH
GIVEN BY EMERITUS BOARD MEMBER CHERI WITZ
FEBRUARY 11, 2011**

PARTNERS IS HUMBLED TO BE ONE OF THE AMAZING RECIPIENTS OF THE 2010 GOVERNOR'S ARTS AWARD. AS I LEARNED ABOUT THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE OTHER AWARD RECIPIENTS BEING HONORED TONIGHT, IT REMINDED ME OF THE POWER OF PASSION. EACH EXEMPLIFIES WHAT HENRY JAMES MEANT WHEN HE SAID..."IT IS ART THAT MAKES LIFE, MAKES INTEREST, MAKES IMPORTANCE AND I KNOW OF NO SUBSTITUTE WHATEVER FOR THE FORCE AND BEAUTY OF ITS PROCESS."

AT THE SAME TIME WE ARE GRATEFUL TO GOVERNOR MATT MEAD, FORMER GOVERNOR DAVE FREUDENTHAL AND TO THE WYOMING ARTS COUNCIL FOR FOCUSING THIS SPOTLIGHT ON THE VIBRANT ARTS COMMUNITY IN WYOMING AND FOR INCLUDING PARTNERS.

PARTNERS IS ESPECIALLY HONORED BECAUSE WE ARE NOT JUST AN ARTS ORGANIZATION, WE ALSO ARE AN EDUCATION ORGANIZATION. WE OFTEN BEGIN PRESENTATIONS ABOUT PARTNERS BY EXPLAINING THAT WE **DO NOT** PROMOTE THE ARTS. INSTEAD WE PROUDLY SAY THAT PARTNERS USES THE ARTS. FOR US, THE ARTS ARE OUR TOOLBOX FOR BUILDING A GREAT EDUCATION.

BY USING THE ARTS, I DON'T MEAN TO SAY THAT WE TAKE UNFAIR ADVANTAGE. BUT, PART OF PARTNERS MISSION IS "TO PROMOTE CREATIVITY AND IMPROVE LEARNING IN THE SCHOOLS." THE ARTS PROVIDE US WITH CRITICAL TOOLS TO GET STUDENTS TO THINK AND CREATE IN A WAY THAT IS BENEFICIAL IN EVERY ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE. THE KINDS OF ARTS BASED PROJECTS THAT WE MAKE POSSIBLE IN SCIENCE, MATH, HISTORY AND LANGUAGE ARTS CLASSROOMS ARE HANDS ON, PERSONAL AND PRODUCE A TANGIBLE PRODUCT THAT STUDENTS MUST EVALUATE ESTHETICALLY. THERE IS NOT ONE, OR EVEN TWO, CORRECT ANSWERS. THE PROCESS REQUIRES THE DIVERGENT AND THEN CONVERGENT THINKING THAT DEFINES CREATIVITY..CREATIVITY ISN'T OPTIONAL; IT IS THE METHOD FOR ACHIEVING SUCCESS.

OUR PROJECTS ARE MADE POSSIBLE BY THE SECOND PART OF OUR MISSION WHICH IS TO 'BRIDGE THE EDUCATION AND ARTS COMMUNITIES.'" WHEN WE BRING EXPERTS FROM THE COMMUNITY INTO THE SCHOOLS TO FACILITATE OUR PROJECTS, WE ELEVATE LEARNING AND PROVIDE STUDENTS WITH AN OPPORTUNITY TO CREATE WORKS NOT POSSIBLE UNDER NORMAL CLASSROOM CIRCUMSTANCES. ON THE AVERAGE EACH YEAR PARTNERS BRINGS 20 DIFFERENT ARTISTS AND EXPERTS FROM 15 OTHER COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS INTO SCHOOL CLASSROOMS.

WHAT'S REALLY AWESOME IS THAT STUDENTS FIND THESE PROJECTS TO BE ENGAGING, THOUGHT PROVOKING AND DOWNRIGHT FUN! . SCHOOLS HAVE FOUND THAT LITERACY IS ADVANCED BY A DESIRE TO UNDERSTAND, MASTER AND USE THE MULTIPLE FORMS OF HUMAN COMMUNICATION EMBODIED BY THE ARTS TO GRASP MATTERS DEEPLY AND TO EXPRESS PERSONAL MEANING. ULTIMATELY, STUDENTS ARE HELPED TO LEARN, TO WRITE TO SPEAK WITH SKILL AND ENTHUSIASM WHEN TO DO SO MATTERS TO THEM.

OF COURSE NONE OF THIS WOULD BE POSSIBLE WITHOUT SUPPORTIVE AND COMMITTED SCHOOLS. THROUGH IT ALL... THE IMPLEMENTATION OF STATE STANDARDS, BODY OF EVIDENCE AND NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND... THE TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS IN THE TETON COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT HAVE REMAINED COMMITTED TO THE ARTS AS A CENTRAL PART OF CROSS CURRICULAR, INTEGRATED ARTS LEARNING. MORE RECENTLY THE PRIVATE SCHOOLS IN JACKSON HOLE ALSO HAVE WELCOMED COLLABORATIONS WITH PARTNERS. WE ALSO HAVE HAD THE GOOD FORTUNE TO HAVE A PASSIONATE, HANDS ON BOARD OF DIRECTORS TO FUNDRAISE AND GUIDE THE PROGRAM...A SPECIAL THANKS TO ENGRID SULLIVAN AND AMY GOICOECHEA WHO ARE BOTH HERE TONIGHT.

FINALLY, WE ARE INDEBTED TO THE WYOMING ARTS COUNCIL AND THE WYOMING CULTURAL TRUST FUND FOR HELPING US DEVELOPE CREATIVE THINKERS FOR THE FUTURE OF WYOMING. LAST JULY, NEWSWEEK MAGAZINE REPORTED THAT A RECENT IBM POLL OF 1,500 CEO'S IDENTIFIED CREATIVITY AS THE NO. 1 LEADERSHIP COMPETENCY OF THE

FUTURE. ADDITIONALLY THE STATE SUPPORT WE HAVE RECEIVED LENDS IMPORTANT CREDIBILITY TO OUR WORK AND ENCOURAGES OUR OTHER GENEROUS DONORS TO CONTINUE SUPPORTING US. AND NOW, AS ICING ON THE CAKE, WE ARE A 2010 RECIPIENT OF THE GOVERNOR'S ARTS AWARD. A MILLION THANKS! AND CONGRATULATION TO THE OTHERS WE CELEBRATE TONIGHT.