More Than $82 Million Awarded for Arts Projects Nationwide
Includes $45,000 awarded to Tanner Dance

SALT LAKE CITY, June 14, 2017—National Endowment for the Arts Chairman Jane Chu has approved more than $82 million to fund local arts projects across the country in the NEA’s second major funding announcement for fiscal year 2017. Included in this announcement is an Art Works award of $45,000 to the Tanner Dance Program at the University of Utah to continue its Side-By-Side Dance Residency Program in elementary schools. The NEA received 1,728 Art Works applications and will make 1,029 grants ranging from $10,000 to $100,000.

“The arts reflect the vision, energy, and talent of America’s artists and arts organizations,” said NEA Chairman Jane Chu. “The National Endowment for the Arts is proud to support organizations such as Tanner Dance, in serving their communities by providing excellent and accessible arts experiences.”

Tanner Dance’s Side-By-Side Residency Program places seasoned dance specialists and live musicians in elementary school classrooms on a weekly basis to teach creative dance technique and composition. Dance specialists work “side-by-side” classroom teachers to create lesson plans that incorporate academic subjects such as science, math, language arts, and social studies into dance instruction. Guided by these instructors, students create choreography based on classroom curriculum to perform for families and fellow students at the end of the semester. This program takes place in 20 elementary schools throughout Utah, including one school in rural southern Utah that participates weekly via videoconferencing through the support of Southern Utah University and the Utah Education Network. The program hopes to grow to serve more schools in the 2017-2018 school year.

Amber Clayton, the principal at Granger Elementary, shared her school’s experience with the program:

Tanner Dance had a powerful impact on Granger Elementary last school year. Granger Elementary is a large, diverse Title I public elementary school in West Valley, Utah. Some folks are surprised when they learn that our student body is made up of nearly 1,000 students representing more than 30 first languages. The Salt lake Valley is undergoing substantial demographic changes, and I know that we specifically sought the opportunity to work with Tanner Dance because art can be a powerful modality for learning, especially when language and culture are a challenge.

Martha Graham once said, “Dance is the hidden language of the soul”. If you had seen our dance specialist work with our six, second grade teachers and their 130 students, you would know this to be true. She masterfully collaborated with each teacher to develop their skills around art and movement. Our already imaginative second graders blossomed as artists as they learned to express themselves through dance. Whether they spoke English or Swahili, whether they were Autistic or neural-typical, whether they were able or disabled, EVERY second grader at Granger was a choreographer, a dancer, an artist, and a performer last year. A wheel-chair bound 2nd grader with a severe and painful skin condition told his teacher, “When I go to dance, I feel like I am normal. When I dance, I feel like I am free.”

To join the Twitter conversation about this announcement, please use #NEASpring17. For more information on projects included in the NEA grant announcement, go to arts.gov.
About Tanner Dance

Confident that the use of wholesome creative activity allows young people of all ages to develop alert minds, healthy bodies, and strong character, Virginia Tanner established the Tanner Dance Program in 1937. Her founding philosophy has become an enduring legacy of almost eight decades. Today, the program complements and extends the University of Utah’s mission of teaching, research and service, serving more than 40,000 students and members of the community annually on campus and at satellite locations, as well as in elementary schools and community centers throughout Utah. The program moved into its new home in the Beverley Taylor Sorenson Arts & Education Complex in February 2014.