**Advocacy**

**Erie County Cultural Funding**

Many arts and cultural organization have benefited from operational funding from Erie County for the past three years. While we are all very grateful for the County’s commitment to support a vibrant cultural community, we should not take future funding from the County for granted.  County funding for arts and culture is determined on an annual basis, and therefore it is imperative that our outreach and advocacy to Erie County’s elected officials not waiver and continues strongly throughout the year every year.

There are some very important steps each funded organization can and should take to help ensure that arts and cultural funding included in the County Executives 2015 proposed budget be adopted by the Erie County Legislature.  These include:

1. If you are receiving county funding in 2015, write a thank you note to the County Executive, Legislature Chair John Mills, Legislature Majority Leader Joseph Lorigo, Legislature Minority Leader Betty Jean Grant, and your district legislator.  It is important to continually let them know how grateful your organization is for their support.  It would also be good to mention in the letter how grateful you are with the County’s decision to fund arts and cultural organizations in 2014.

1. Recognizing that there is a new majority in the County Legislature in 2014-2015 (John Mills is Chairman,Joseph Lorigo is the Majority Leader, and Betty Jean Grant is the new Minority Leader), it is important to familiarize the new majority caucus with our organizations. Legislators may not be aware of what your organization does and why it is important to our community. So working through your own contacts, GBCA or ASI, reach out to Legislators – write to them, go see them at their offices, and invite them to visit your facility and your programs and events.  They’ll have an opportunity to learn firsthand about your mission and why it is so valuable to our community. We all know how impactful information can be when making difficult budget decisions. Don’t wait until next year’s budget is released in the fall to do this; as we mentioned advocacy and outreach are year-long efforts.
2. Attend and send a Board member to GBCA Cultural Gathering on **Wednesday, November 5, at 9AM at the Buffalo Arts Studio.**  An informed and united cultural community can have an impact but without a coordinated effort our effectiveness diminishes.
3. Be certain to read all communications sent from GBCA and ASI and share them with other staff and Board members.  They provide important updates and information which impact the cultural community.
4. It is important for as many cultural organizations as possible to attend **the County Public Budget Hearing on November 24 at 5PM in the County Legislature Chambers.**  An impressive turnout at this meeting won’t go unnoticed by elected officials.  GBCA and ASI provide sufficient notice to every organization of the dates and times for the important meetings. **Having at least one representative from each organization is important, and not just when we have a crisis.**  During the 2013 budget process, representation from cultural organizations was very light. Let’s change that this year. Please attend the hearing.