

>>> "Tom Surprenant" <tsurprenant@soundsofhope.org> 5/18/2012 7:53 PM >>>
Dear City Council:

On behalf of Sounds of Hope, Ltd., I am writing to ask the City Council to look favorably on our request for Cultural STAR funding for an exciting project. As some of you may know, Sounds of Hope, Ltd. has been an active arts organization in the city of St. Paul continuously since 1991. We are very proud of our many contributions to the vibrancy of the city and I would like to mention a few recent highlights before getting to the specific project for which we are seeking Cultural STAR funding:

1. While there are many organizations with an international aspect, few can match the breadth of international performers that we draw to the city each year. For example, last summer we drew young artists aged 9-25 to St. Paul from China, South Korea, Singapore, Vietnam, India, Bulgaria, Russia, Italy, Guatemala, Mexico, Israel, Turkey, and Madagascar.
2. Our summer Songs of Hope concert series presents the songs, dances, percussion, and folkloric dress of these diverse performers to audiences in the downtown area and throughout the city: in theatres and other public venues, in nursing homes, schools, and city parks. Our purpose is to bring to St. Paul residents the music of the world.
3. Numerous talented, local youth go through our programs, getting a unique chance to experience the larger world and to develop a global perspective in an increasingly global environment. This aspect of our work is nationally recognized. In fact, for the second year in a row, the project is now a finalist for a prestigious National Youth Arts and Humanities Program Award. On a more personal level, I can name several St. Paul kids who are now professional musicians in the city and others who are well on their way.

The specific project for which we are requesting Cultural STAR funds would help us to grow and to bring even more benefits to the city of St. Paul. For example, we would use some of the funds to hire SPNN to do a five-camera video recording of one of our St. Paul concerts. The video footage would serve many purposes. For one, the full concert would air on Cable-Access TV, giving local residents a global arts experience with young artists from many countries, including a rather unique opportunity to see and hear young artists from Iraq.

We would also use edits of the concert along with other video recordings of daily Songs of Hope life to create informational pieces to promote Songs of Hope (and St. Paul) throughout the world. Increasingly, we are searching for young artists in Asia, Latin America, former Eastern European countries, and the Middle East, and it has become important to us to have the tools needed to pursue leads and promote ourselves overseas. To give a couple of examples of recent efforts, we are currently working with a startup cultural organization in Vietnam to create an ongoing program of young artist and other cultural participants coming to St. Paul, and we are actively looking for similar connections in India, China, South Korea, Russia, and other countries.

Finally, a portion of the STAR funds would be used to create an informational video to promote the construction of new facilities in St. Paul to house our international projects. Our board of directors is very committed to maintaining our St. Paul identity and we are actively laying the groundwork to develop facilities within the city. In fact, a related project to our Cultural STAR proposal involves having a reception around the main concert to introduce some community

leaders to our vision of a busy international center in St. Paul drawing numerous visitors to the city each year from countries worldwide as performers, explorers, tourists, shoppers, learners, and cultural educators.

We feel that our project falls squarely within the intent and goals of the Cultural STAR program and we would welcome the opportunity to put city funds to good use. Thank you very much for considering this request.

Sincerely,

Tom Surprenant, Program Director

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