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ZCAF Launches Mobile Woodshop Initiatives

Receives funding from DC Commission on the Arts and Events DC

Washington, DC – November 21, 2020 [The Zenith Community Arts Foundation](#) (ZCAF) is pleased to announce it has been awarded two grants to support the development and implementation of a mobile woodshop. The first from the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities (\$50,000), and the from Events DC for (\$150,000) a total of \$200,000, to provide the essential funding to launch the initiative. The DC Arts Commission grant requires matching funds. The initial funding will be used to build a stationary woodshop and purchase equipment, including a truck that will serve as a mobile classroom and . The second grant will provide funding for the curriculum, instructors, and materials and operating costs like materials and lumber.

The mobile woodshop is intended as an experiential classroom to teach students the fundamentals and skills of woodworking. The education program is focused on a dual track. The first track is focused on teaching professional skills for individuals interested in pursuing a career in finish and rough carpentry; the second will be oriented to individuals interested in doing artistic applications and home improvement projects. The project also includes a permanent woodshop, to be located at 1429 Iris St NW, WDC, which will also serve as the headquarters for larger equipment, and raw wood storage. The Woodshop will be available to Ward 4 residents, serving ZCAFs immediate neighbors.

The Mobile Woodshop has been a dream of Margery Goldberg for years, a lifelong wood sculptor and furniture designer. “Our goal is to teach woodworking skills to a new generation. Additionally, we will raise public awareness about community involvement, the value of our urban forests to the city, local economy, and the environment” said Margery Goldberg. “We are working on securing the funds from regional companies and organizations including those in the building trades,” said Ron Nesson, President

of the Board, ZCAF. “There is incredible demand for carpenters today and this project presents an opportunity to expand residents’ exposure to wood working and career opportunities, especially for those interested in the trades.”

Brandon Todd, Councilmember Ward 4, stated that the skill training is an important project for the neighborhood and city overall. “This is an incredibly innovative approach to skill training. The mobile wood shop will allow ZCAF to travel to different wards throughout the District, increasing our capacity to teach and expand the District’s workforce of skilled craftsmen. By teaching in community centers – places that already offer public programs – neighbors will meet neighbors and build connections.” Todd also noted carpentry is in high demand, and many contractors are challenged to find the labor they need to complete projects affordably and in a timely manner.

Skills in wood working can lead to a profitable career, and the industry is aging out even though demand is rising. The industries that typically hire woodworkers include construction, furniture manufacturing, cabinet makers, musical instrument manufacturing, home improvement. Access to a woodworking education is getting harder and harder to find, as wood shops have been removed from schools.

ZCAF is currently reviewing professional carpentry education programs and will be offering training that will serve as pre-apprenticeship program for a formal apprenticeship in finish and rough carpentry. This Pre-Apprenticeship Training (PAT) intends to adopt a track that ensures students realize the necessary basic training to pursue professional industry apprenticeships. Individuals who have gone through the PAT program, will be eligible to pursue apprenticeships with one of ZCAF’s trades academy partners, and Union Training.

“Through these facilities, ZCAF will be able to offer a professional education in wood working through our program to a wide demographic,” said Goldberg. ZCAF intends to begin in Wards 4 & 8, and double annually so that by Year 5, the training will be available in all 8 Wards.

Background / Mission Statement

Zenith Community Arts Foundation (ZCAF) is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization committed to arts advocacy, arts education, and public art, as well as using art and creativity to enrich the Greater Washington DC area, with an emphasis on our local community. Based in the Shepherd Park neighborhood of Ward 4, ZCAF achieves our goals by fostering alliances between area artists, businesses, other non-profits, & government agencies.

Mobile Woodshop

Our goal is to teach woodworking skills to a new generation.

Our key target demographics include DCPS high school students, community college students, veterans, and seniors. Woodshops have been removed from schools, making it hard to learn wood working at any life stage. By learning to use their hands, cohorts will build confidence, strength of character, and problem-solving capabilities, as well as transferable skills that can be applied to well-paid careers filled with a great sense of accomplishment and pride. Remodeling a home that has been in the family for years, is affordable, sustainable, and extends pride of ownership across generations. Renovating a home is also a vibrant direction in home ownership in DC, as housing prices soar.

By bringing the tools out of the classroom and into communities in need, our cohorts can practice their skills, learn with experienced woodworkers and artists, improve their communities by helping with neighbors' home or larger neighborhood projects, develop entrepreneurial skills, and foster a sense of accomplishment and pride.

In addition, the Mobile Woodshop can be used for art projects throughout the city and in the parks. We will encourage other non-profits to utilize our mobile woodworking facilities and offer them to city festivals and community projects. The uses for a mobile woodshop are vast. Washington is the Tree Capital of the country, famous for its wide variety of trees, of which many were given as gifts by grateful nations. These precious trees are an extremely valuable resource we cannot afford to waste. By opening the doors to a career that must be done locally, we are teaching sustainability in a great partnership between forestry stewardship and neighborhood pride.

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