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NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS AWARDS \$24,000 GRANT TO MERCY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH FOR DANCING CLASSROOMS PITTSBURGH

Funding will support growth of youth program in Pittsburgh schools

PITTSBURGH, PA (May 17, 2011) -- Rocco Landesman, chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), today announced that Mercy Behavioral Health has been recommended for a grant of \$24,000 to support its prevention program for youth, [Dancing Classrooms Pittsburgh](#). [Mercy Behavioral Health](#), part of the [Pittsburgh Mercy Health System](#), is one of 1,145 national, regional, state, and local nonprofit organizations recommended for a grant as part of the federal agency's second round of fiscal year 2011 grants. In total, the NEA will distribute more than \$88 million to support projects nationwide.

An independent agency of the federal government, the National Endowment for the Arts advances artistic excellence, creativity, and innovation for the benefit of individuals and communities. "NEA research shows that three out of four Americans participate in the arts," explains NEA Chairman Rocco Landesman. "The diverse, innovative, and exceptional projects funded in this round will ensure that Americans around the country continue to have the opportunity to experience and participate in the arts."

"This significant grant from the National Endowment for the Arts will allow Mercy Behavioral Health to further expand Dancing Classrooms Pittsburgh and reach more fifth-grade students in the 2011-2012 school year," according to Mark Rogalsky, unit manager for prevention for Mercy Behavioral Health and site director for Dancing Classrooms Pittsburgh.

"Dancing Classrooms has a positive impact on academics, school climate and in the way students treat one another," continues Rogalsky. "Teachers and principals at participating Pittsburgh schools have also noted a decrease in behavior management problems and an increase in parental involvement. We are delighted that the NEA funding will help us bring this important program to even more Pittsburgh youth."

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Dancing Classrooms is an international, in-school program designed to build social awareness, confidence and self-esteem in children through the practice of social dance.

Since Mercy Behavioral Health introduced the program to 300 Pittsburgh children in 2009, Dancing Classrooms Pittsburgh has grown to include 33 fifth-grade classrooms in 16 schools in the Pittsburgh Public Schools and the Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh. More than 1,100 Pittsburgh children have benefited.

Dancing Classrooms is about creating an atmosphere that allows students who are typically introverted and reserved to step out and shine. It focuses physical energy and increases health through the joy of movement. It builds self-esteem and interactive social skills as it improves children's confidence and their ability to relate to others.

For information on how to start a program in the Pittsburgh area, contact Mark Rogalsky, Mercy Behavioral Health, at dancingclassrooms@mercybh.org, call 412.320.2321, or visit Dancing Classrooms Pittsburgh's blog at <http://dancingclassroomspgh.org>.

ABOUT

Mercy Behavioral Health provides recovery-oriented, community-based, mental health and drug treatment and prevention services. We also offer programs for people with intellectual disabilities in Southwestern Pennsylvania. Mercy Behavioral Health is part of the Pittsburgh Mercy Health System and Catholic Health East, sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy.

The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) was established by the United States Congress in 1965 as an independent agency of the federal government. To date, the NEA has awarded more than \$4 billion to support artistic excellence, creativity, and innovation for the benefit of individuals and communities. The NEA extends its work through partnerships with state arts agencies, local leaders, other federal agencies, and the philanthropic sector. To join the discussion on how art works, visit the NEA at www.arts.gov.

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