

## MCCPTA Cultural Arts Committee Report - October 31, 2008

The annual Cultural Arts Showcases took place at Carver Educational Center on October 1st, 2nd, 6th and 7th. We had about 30 - 35 cultural arts reps from the schools attending each day, as well as a few librarians looking for performers to hire for the county's library shows. I had help the first day from Lorna Sykes (Julius West Middle School) and from Randy Chin (Poolesville High School) each day at the registration table. Performers on the last day of the Showcases included twelve of the new artists who had just auditioned for the first time in September, and were approved by the Superintendents' Committee for Performances in MCPS.

Questions were raised several times during the Showcases by people who said their schools had received advertisements from performers not on the approved list. One of these was a performer who had auditioned but had not been approved by the Superintendents' Committee, and then sent out materials anyway to all the schools about her show. Seda Gelenian, who heads the committee and runs the Showcases, reminded everyone that although there is no rule about hiring only performers from the MCPS Performing Arts Catalogue, the audition procedure these performers have gone through is for the schools' benefit. Members of the audition committee include professional performers with much experience in judging, who volunteer their time to help ensure that performers approved for the schools will be of high quality.

There were also many questions raised about whether it would be possible to have videos of all the performers available online, for the benefit of school reps who are unavailable during weekdays to attend the Showcases. Seda Gelenian spoke with members of her committee and with several performers about this, but the consensus of opinion is that it would be too complicated to arrange. Some performers would expect to be paid and there is no money available in the budget for this; some are members of unions with very strict rules about making videos of their shows available, etc. However, she did point out to everyone that many of the performers list their websites in the Performing Arts Catalogue and some of them already do have short videos online.

A number of new people have joined the Cultural Arts listserv (PTArts) and there has been much discussion since the Showcases ended about performers who are now being hired by the schools. The listserv provides an easy way for members to communicate with each other about which shows they recommend, when they are having a show at their school that others are welcome to attend, when an out-of-town performer will be available in this area and looking for work at several schools, etc. If your Cultural Arts Chair/Committee would like to join the listserv, please have them email me with their name, school, and committee position.

During the Showcases, we asked that school reps sign in and give their school's budget for Cultural Arts if they knew what it was. Since then I have also put a message out on the listserv asking everyone for this information, so that during November I will be able to post an updated list of all the schools' Cultural Arts budgets. I am also keeping track of how many say their budgets are being increased, and how many are being cut this year. (So far, it's running about 50/50!)

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