



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James Sanders Jr.

Sanders Hosts Southeast Queens Grants Fair For Artists

[JAMES SANDERS JR.](#) December 7, 2015

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Seeking to encourage and promote the growth of local arts and culture, State Senator James Sanders Jr. (D-Rochdale Village) hosted a Southeast Queens Grants Fair For Artists on December 2nd at the Jamaica Center for Arts and Learning, which featured information on how to obtain grants funding, free materials for arts projects and available space to conduct work.

"When we think of community, we think of vibrancy and life, and some of the things that say that a community is alive are its arts and culture," Sanders said. "When we look at communities that are dying, one of the first things that goes is the arts. They don't have the time, or they don't invest the time, or they invest poorly, and we can say those communities may not last."

Dozens of people including dancers, designers, poets and filmmakers attended the two-hour long event, which centered upon a panel discussion featuring representatives from the NYS Council on the Arts, Queens Council on the Arts, Exploring the Metropolis, Inc. and Materials for the Arts.

The New York State Council on the Arts offers a number of funding opportunities for individual artists and cultural organizations. Grants start at \$2,500 with areas including visual arts, architecture & design, dance, media & film, literature, and more. Individual artists must apply through a fiscal sponsor, organizations which can be viewed as conduits to acquiring a grant, and include groups such as Fractured Atlas, New York Foundation for the Arts and Queens Council on the Arts. Cultural organizations who have 501(c)(3) status can apply directly to NYSCA.

The Queens Council on the Arts (QCA) is a non-profit organization developed to support individual artists and arts organizations. In addition to acting as a fiscal sponsor, QCA offers grants every year to individual artists and organizations in a number of categories, and provides workshops and classes. Their programs include "High School to Art School," which is designed to help high school juniors and seniors build their portfolio and grant writing courses which can help with preparing one's application.

Materials for the Arts is a creative reuse agency that provides free materials to non-profit organizations with arts programming, individual artists, who are fiscally sponsored by a nonprofit organization and working in a public capacity, city agencies and public schools.

MFTA receives its items through various donors and has an ever changing stock of inventory. Approved recipients can "shop" for free items twice a week at the group's warehouse in Long Island City and take as much as they need to complete their arts-related project.

"There are certain things that we always have like fabric, paper, buttons, trim, but sometimes we receive things that we could never anticipate," explained Hallie Bahn, executive assistant at MFTA. "The other day we got 1,000 paper cranes. We also recently got pallets and pallets of wheels to toy cars, just the wheels. That's why we always say come with a list, but come with an open mind as well because you're going to find something that you would have never expected."

Founded in 1982, Exploring the Metropolis, Inc. assists performing artists and companies find affordable available spaces in which to rehearse and perform and helps cultural facilities activate their underutilized areas.

"As we all know space has become more and more of a critical issue for some time here in New York City," said David Johnston, executive director of Exploring the Metropolis Inc. "It's very important to us as an organization that performing artists in New York have the space they need to do their work and that we have world class artists working in every part of New York City wherever there is available space that is not being utilized."

While speaking to the attendees, Senator Sanders said he was inspired to see so many artists actively seeking ways to pursue their dreams and accomplish their creative goals, and he encouraged them to continue on their path.

"I am glad that you are all practitioners, that you have said that you are going to take your art, that you are going to live out loud, that you are going to insist that the world is a better place, a more colorful place, a more beautiful place, a more human place, because after all is said and done, art humanizes us and brings us together," Sanders said. "Art lets us understand that we are one. A true artist is one who shares, so I commend all of you artists for sharing, for ensuring that future generations will enjoy even more than we have had in days gone by."

The event was co-sponsored by State Senator Leroy Comrie, Applebee's, Jamaica Center for Arts & Learning, Partnership for Parks and Southeast Queens Community Action.