

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Art-Reach announces the 2016 CULTURAL ACCESS AWARDS, to be held at The FRANKLIN INSTITUTE, April 5th, 2016. This event will recognize Mimi Kenney Smith, COMHAR and The Franklin Institute for their work in increasing cultural engagement for people with disabilities and low-income in the Philadelphia Region. In 2015, Art-Reach served over 64,000 people with disabilities and low-income – enabling them to attend live arts, museums, historic houses and gardens through its programs, including ACCESS Admission (allowing any ACCESS cardholder a \$2 entry fee to our 31 partnering museums), Ticketing (connecting discounted tickets from 175 arts partners to our 172 member human service organizations) and Encore (curated workshops and tours designed for groups with cognitive or physical disabilities). Art-Reach has gone from serving 17,000 a year to over 64,000 in the span of two years. “Art-Reach works every day to break down the barriers that prevent engagement for underserved audiences,” shared John Orr, Executive Director at Art-Reach, adding “but each year we come together as one community to recognize the work of those among us who are leading the way to a more accessible future.”

The 2016 Benefit Committee will be chaired by Michael Norris, Art-Reach’s leader for 8 years, now Vice President of External Relations at The Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance since March 2012. The event’s Lead Sponsor is Pat’s King of Steaks, a strong supporter of cultural accessibility in Philadelphia

The public event will include cocktails and lite food, the award ceremony and a verbally described tour of The Franklin Institute’s award-winning Your Brain exhibition – a unique opportunity to experience one of the many ways Art-Reach serves its constituents, and a special pop-up performance by members of the PA Ballet, Art-Reach Arts partners. Tickets are \$150 and \$300 and can be purchased on the Art-Reach website at www.art-reach.org.

Lead Sponsor, Pat’s King of Steaks has championed Art-Reach’s work significantly this year. Owner Frank Olivieri states, “We at Pat’s King of Steaks support Art-Reach because we believe that children with disabilities deserve to have all of the opportunities to realize their dreams through art. We have built a relationship that we cherish with Art-Reach. We look forward to growing with them in the future.”

Mimi Kenney Smith former Producing Artistic Director, Amaryllis Theatre Co. and Executive Director, VSA (Very Special Arts) of Pennsylvania. Mimi has been a champion for the disability community through her work with performers with disabilities and pushing the cultural community forward with accessibility training and knowledge. Mimi’s collaborative style led to the Independence Starts Here initiative with Art-Reach to equip local theaters with accessible equipment for live performances. Kenney Smith remarks, “This work and, through it, my relationship to Art-Reach, has been a great gift in my life. I’ve learned things I never fully understood, made many friends I still cherish, and have had a chance, with

the support of many, many people, to start to change things in Philadelphia for the better. What more could you ask for?"

The Franklin Institute's president and CEO, Larry Dubinski will be accepting the award for The Franklin Institute. "The Franklin Institute is one of several outstanding organizations in Philadelphia who are creating programs and events to serve various audiences with a shared goal of increasing widespread cultural access and engagement," shared Larry Dubinski, President & CEO of The Franklin Institute. "We are dedicated to this important initiative, proud of its success and honored that Art-Reach has chosen to recognize The Franklin Institute with the 2016 Cultural Access Award."

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