

The City of Pasadena and the Pasadena Arts & Culture Commission were proud to present the **2008 Nexus Summit: Promoting Cultural Access and Inclusion in the Arts** which was held on March 5th at the Robinson Park on North Fair Oaks Avenue.

One purpose of the Summit was to launch the newly written **Cultural Access Policy and Equity Standards** which were approved by the Arts & Culture Commission in December of 2007. These Standards will be used as a tool to heighten awareness of access and equity issues in the arts and stimulate creative approaches for expanded participation.

The Summit, which is called for by the City's Cultural Master Plan, **Cultural Nexus**, also provided a networking opportunity for community arts and service organizations, their staff members and constituents to learn about each other and the work they do and discover ways to combine their efforts.

Mayor Bill Bogaard opened the Summit by providing the context of the development of **Cultural Nexus** and expressing his support for the arts. He introduced the Chair of the Pasadena Arts & Culture Commission, Stan Kong, who discussed his enthusiasm for specific arts events in the city, such as ArtNight, Art Weekend and the PUSD student art exhibition at City Hall that the Arts & Culture Commission created and sponsors.

Mr. Kong introduced Arts & Culture Commissioner Thelma Johnson who is also the Chair of the Commission's Nexus Sub-Committee. Ms. Johnson, the primary contributor to the **Cultural Access Policy and Equity Standards**, spoke about these guidelines being a fundamental element and a directive of the **Cultural Nexus Master Plan**. She stressed that, rather than regulatory, the **Standards** have been created to guide the City and the community in learning how to expand access to the arts.

Two renowned speakers followed Ms. Johnson's presentation. **William Cleveland**, founder and Director of the Center for the Study of Art and Community, spoke to the Summit audience about the power of the arts and creativity to inspire, nurture, and heal communities—Arts Based Community Development. He cited examples of artists working in non-traditional environments such as prisons and war-torn districts where theatre workshops or visual arts programs engendered new behaviors, ideas, partnerships and solutions to previously unresolvable issues.

Betty Siegel, Director of Accessibility for The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington D. C., addressed the consideration of all audience members in arts programming. Ms. Siegel, in her position at The Kennedy Center, advises organizations and individuals on how to keep inclusion uppermost in their minds and discussed ways to extend and advance access to the arts.

Stephanie DeWolfe, Deputy Director of Planning and Development for the City of Pasadena, emphasized the importance of the arts as an economic advantage to Pasadena and introduced the City's newly appointed Cultural Affairs Manager, **Rochelle Branch**.

Ms. Branch is the City's former Public Arts Manager and gave a report on the progress that the Division has made regarding the Cultural Nexus Plan implementation. Primary focus has been a balance between the establishment of foundations and infrastructures that form the basis for the 9 policies of the plan as well as to advance projects and initiatives that will provide visible impact in the community.

An interactive session, conducted by Stephanie DeWolfe and **Joan Palmer** (former Arts & Culture Commissioner and member of the Nexus Subcommittee) gathered community input about cultural visions for Pasadena and how to achieve them, types of activities the community would like to participate in and how they are going to be accomplished, and general suggestions for the improvement of the arts and culture in our city.

The Summit culminated in a reception honoring the City of Pasadena's Arts & Culture 2007 – 2008 grantees, including arts organizations and individual artists. The assembly was entertained by spoken word and musical performances given by Kath Abela and Rick Wilson and Justin Kibbe.