



*A sculpture by Sebastián at the Brownsville Museum of Fine Art*

## TCA Convenes Roundtable Conversations in McAllen and Brownsville

On February 16 and 17, TCA gathered representatives of arts and cultural organizations from the Rio Grande Valley to discuss challenges and opportunities for these nonprofits, artists, and local government. These roundtable discussions were funded by a National Endowment for the Arts grant with the purpose of bringing stakeholders together to discuss issues they share or want more information about.

On February 16, representatives from McAllen, Edinburg and Harlingen met at the [McAllen Public Library](#), and on February 17 representatives from Brownsville, Harlingen and Port Isabel came together at the historic [Alonso Building](#). The two gatherings were facilitated by Mimi

Quintanilla, principal at Quintanilla Schmidt Consulting, and former director and museum educator at the Witte Museum in San Antonio. 38 representatives from 26 arts and cultural organizations attended, along with TCA Commissioner David Garza of Brownsville. TCA representatives discussed TCA programs and initiatives and distributed information on the arts and education compiled by the [Texas Cultural Trust](#).

Quintanilla took participants through an analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing organizations in the Rio Grande Valley, which is one of the fastest growing places in the United States with an estimated population of 1,305,782. One participant summed up the experience by saying, "I learned how many cultural organizations are in the Rio Grande Valley and how disconnected we are all from each other. I think the reason for this is because of our smaller funding sources and that we don't make time to participate in events produced by other organizations and artists."

Preliminary conclusions include developing a regional cultural alliance to improve communication and collaboration and to share ideas and resources. Several participants expressed interest in developing activities collaboratively that would have more potential to attract larger numbers of visitors and audiences. TCA extends thanks to all of the participants and particularly to the McAllen Public Library, the Alonso Building, and the Brownsville Historic Association for their hospitality and for providing a wonderful setting for these discussions.

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## Legislative Session Update



*Photo courtesy of Texas Legislature Online*

Texas' 85th Legislative Session is well underway. Since our last newsletter, the [House Appropriations Committee](#) was appointed. The Committee has John Zerwas (Richmond) as its Chair and Oscar Longoria (Mission) as Vice Chair. The other members of the Committee are: Trent Ashby (Lufkin); Greg Bonnen (Friendswood); Giovanni Capriglione (Southlake); Scott Cospers (Killeen); Sarah Davis (West University Place); Jay Dean (Longview); Dawnna Dukes (Austin); Helen Giddings (DeSoto); Larry Gonzales (Round Rock); Mary E. González (Clint); Donna Howard (Austin); Linda Koop (Dallas); Rick Miller (Sugar Land);

Sergio Muñoz, Jr. (Palmview); Mary Ann Perez (Houston); Dade Phelan (Beaumont); John Raney (College Station); Kevin Roberts (Houston); Justin Rodriguez (San Antonio); Toni Rose (Dallas); J.D. Sheffield (Gatesville); Ron Simmons (Carrollton); Gary VanDeaver (New Boston); Armando Walle (Houston); and Gene Wu (Houston). A [subcommittee](#) has been appointed to review items listed in Articles I, IV & V of House Bill 1 (TCA's appropriation is made in Article I).

The [Senate Finance Committee](#) has likewise named its [working group](#) on Articles I, VI, and V of Senate Bill 1. TCA's Legislative Appropriations Request was for base-level funding (i.e., flat funding in line with the 2016-2017 biennium) of \$17.1 million over the biennium. The House Appropriations Subcommittee and the Senate Finance Committee have reviewed TCA's Legislative Appropriations Request and discussed all requested amounts. TCA's Legislative Appropriations Request will be considered as part of Senate Bill 1 and House Bill 1. As filed, both bills recommend that TCA receive the Base Appropriations Request amount minus \$4.33 million (for the biennium) for Cultural District Projects. Currently, the committees have not restored the Cultural District Projects funds, but the Legislature may be able to review the request and take action on it later in the Session.

Since the Texas Legislature meets biennially, it will make decisions on two years' worth of State budgeting, including TCA's budget for fiscal year 2018 (September 1, 2017-August 31, 2018) and

## 2017 Texas Poetry Out Loud Winner Named

On Saturday, February 25, 2017, the Texas Commission on the Arts held the state finals competition of the [Poetry Out Loud](#) national poetry recitation contest in Austin. High school students from across Texas competed for a chance to represent the state at the national contest in Washington, D.C. in April. The winner of that competition receives a \$20,000 scholarship.

The Poetry Out Loud state finals competition was hosted by the [Bullock Texas State History Museum](#). 22 students, each having first won their school competition, were evaluated on qualities such as physical presence, voice and articulation, dramatic appropriateness, evidence of understanding, overall performance, and accuracy. Internationally recognized poet Naomi Shihab Nye served as master of ceremonies for the event. The judges for the competition included poets Lauren Berry, Cyrus Cassells, Jodi Egerton, and Pablo Martínez.

After two rounds, the field was narrowed to five finalists: Destinee Aguirre, a junior at Lewisville High School; Sewar Almasalha, a sophomore at Klein Oak High School in Spring; Grace Cai, a senior at the Hockaday School in Dallas; Sam Muir, a sophomore at Cedar Park High School; and Erin Swearingen, a junior at Jack C. Hays High School in Buda. Ultimately, Ms. Cai won the 2017 Poetry Out Loud state final. As state champion, she will receive \$200 and an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, D.C. where she will compete at the national level in late April. Additionally, her school will receive \$500 for the purchase of poetry books and materials. The Texas runner up was Destinee Aguirre. She will receive \$100, while her school will receive \$200 for the purchase of poetry books and materials. TCA congratulates all the 2017 participants, their teachers, and their families.



*Grace Cai, Texas' champion (photo: Stephanie Gage)*

## Professional Development Webinar Series: Building Audiences through Strategic Marketing

With so many options for marketing these days, it's important to be strategic about which audiences you can reach with each option. TCA's next free professional development webinar on **April 19** will be **Building Audiences through Strategic Marketing**. Presenter [Kim Phillips](#), Vice President of the [Denton Convention and Visitors Bureau](#), will share tips for reaching the audiences you'd like to see in your exhibit halls and auditoriums. A webinar invitation will be sent out in early April.

For more than 24 years, Kim Phillips' career has been dedicated to Texas tourism, meeting planning and destination marketing. In 1989, she got her start with the Del Rio CVB in Del Rio, Texas. She then went on to work as the Convention Sales Manager at the Kerrville CVB from 1995 to 1996. In 1996, Kim established the Lewisville CVB and served as its director for the next seven years. She joined the Denton



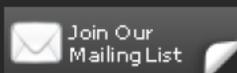
*Kim Phillips*

CVB as Vice President in February 2003. Kim is also very involved at the regional and state levels of the tourism industry, and has served as a Chair on the Board of Directors for the Texas Travel Industry Association.

If you missed **Recruiting, Retaining, and Building a Diverse Board of Directors**, our February webinar with the Wichita Falls Alliance for Arts and Culture's **Margie Reese**, you're in luck! All of the professional development webinars are recorded and available on our Professional Development [Vimeo page](#) for free.



*Congratulations to all the Poetry Out Loud school champions who competed at the state finals!  
Photo: Stephanie Gage*



Texas Commission on the Arts

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The Texas Commission on the Arts receives funding from the Texas State Legislature, the National Endowment for the Arts, The Texas: State of the Arts license plate, the Texas Cultural Trust, and Texas Women for the Arts.

