

Earthquake - 1989 W.P. Santa Cruz Co

Relief on the way to quake-damaged arts organizations

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Local artists and arts organizations that lost performance and display space, funding from business sponsors, investments and inventory in the Oct. 17 earthquake may be getting some speedy relief from a government-corporate joint grant.

Robin Porter, program manager for grants and marketing for the Cultural Council of Santa Cruz County, said the National Endowment for the Arts announced yesterday it would be providing "challenge grants" to arts organizations hard-hit by the earthquake or Hurricane Hugo.

The challenge grant requires \$3 in private donations for every \$1 in government aid.

A group of corporate donors, who have banded together to form the Northern California Grantmakers Association, has committed to meeting the matching grant goal, Porter said. These include the Hewlett-Packard, San Francisco, and Fleischacker foundations.

Porter said Santa Cruz County may get more than \$500,000 from the program.

In announcing the federal funds yesterday, John Kreidler of the San Francisco Foundation said, "Speed is of the essence in helping individuals and groups that are in jeopardy. There is virtually no fat in the operational systems of arts organizations and many of the Bay Area's individual artists and groups are in grave financial danger as a result of the quake."

Porter said the most immediate problem for many local arts organizations is that they were displaced by the quake. Headquarters for the Santa Cruz Symphony and Cabrillo Music Festival were both in the Sesnon House at Cabrillo College, which sustained heavy damage.

The Fox Theatre in Watsonville was one of only two buildings in the county that could hold audiences of 1,000 before the quake, and if it cannot reopen, the loss could affect many local performing groups.

Porter said it's too early to tell exactly how the local summer arts festivals, such as the Fats Waller Memorial Festival, will be affected by the quake.

Visual arts groups are also struggling. The Santa Cruz Art Museum has had to lay off its staff while its building remains yellow-tagged and its art inventory remains in storage. The

building housing Pajaro Valley Arts Council's art gallery on Main Street in Watsonville also faces

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an uncertain future.

But perhaps a bigger problem for the arts is that many of the businesses that supported them through grants and ads in programs are themselves displaced or closed, Porter said. This could have a long-term, devastating effect, Porter said.

They also face a possible loss of income from the public. Even if performances aren't canceled or museums aren't closed, many local residents may have less cash to spend on tickets to performances and museums or to purchase art. Many regular donors also may have less to give because they funneled more donations into earthquake relief efforts.

"Unless (artists and organizations) can find another source of income, they may be able to limp through this year, but they can't carry a deficit into next year," Porter said. "It becomes a ball and chain they have to carry into the future, and it only gets worse."

Artists and organizations must apply for the aid by Jan. 5. Applications are available at the Cultural Council, 2827 Rodeo Gulch Road, Space 2, in Soquel; or at Wild Rose Artists' Supplies or the Salud Para La Gente administrative offices in Watsonville.