



Promoting creative power in people with disabilities

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Musical Musings From Mali to Michigan

DETROIT, MI: December 10, 2009 — VSA arts of Michigan is proud to announce the selection of the ***artsJAM Percussion Ensemble*** as one of thirty performers for the **2010 International VSA arts Festival** hosted in **Washington, DC, June 6-12**. This group of twenty youth will perform African drumming with teaching artist and mentor, Baba Kevin Collins on Tuesday, June 8 in a double billing with Hine-So of Mali. VSA arts has titled the performance *From Mali to Michigan*. A panel of distinguished jurors from the international performing arts community selected the *artsJAM Percussion Ensemble* from many national and international proposals.

The *artsJAM Percussion Ensemble* is made up of twenty metro Detroit youth attending VSA arts of Michigan - *artsJAM Gallery & Studio Program*. This program provides youth with learning disabilities, emotional and cognitive impairments, and autism an opportunity to experience the arts, while building life and vocational skills. Participating youth are engaged in the creative process from the conception of the work to the completed product, and in the preparation of the work for exhibition, performance, and/or marketing to the public. Activities take the form of classes and special events planned and implemented by VSA arts of Michigan education staff and teaching artists who serve as mentors to the student participants. *artsJAM* meets the needs of youth with disabilities by engaging them in positive non-academic learning that directly addresses many of their Individualized Education Plan (IEP) goals, and leads to skills that enhance academic learning.

Youth in the VSA arts of Michigan *artJAM* program are between the ages of fourteen and twenty-six with an identified IEP or disability. VSA arts of Michigan hosts three artsJAM programs at various locations in Detroit and Flint. A group of youth from each of these programs will perform at the 2010 International VSA arts Festival in Washington, DC.

Baba Kevin Collins has worked with VSA arts of Michigan for over fifteen years, giving back to the youth of communities in Michigan through music participation and creation. A nationally respected musician in genres ranging from African, Cuban, and Latin drumming to jazz, blues, and big band, Collins is also the proprietor of K.C. Productions.

VSA arts of Michigan is a member of the network of VSA arts, an affiliate of The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. VSA arts is an international nonprofit organization founded 35 years ago by Ambassador

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Jean Kennedy Smith to create a society where people with disabilities learn through, participate in, excel in, and enjoy the arts. *VSA arts* provides educators, parents, and artists with the resources and tools to support arts programming in schools and communities. *VSA arts* showcases the accomplishments of artists with disabilities and promotes increased access to the arts for all people. Each year, 7 million people participate in *VSA arts'* programs through a nationwide network of affiliates and in 54 countries around the world.

VSA arts of Michigan supports its programs and services across the state through grants from national *VSA arts* under an award from the United States Department of Education Office of Special Education, the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs, and through contributions from corporations, foundations, and individuals.

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