

Grants for arts total \$1.6M

• **Berkshire County organizations receive more than half a million in funds to boost nonprofit programs.**

By Trevor Jones

Berkshire Eagle Staff

GREAT BARRINGTON — The financial world of nonprofit organizations always seems to feel a bit precarious. But a number of local organizations could breathe a slight sigh of relief Wednesday with the announcement of \$1.6 million in state grants for Western Massachusetts' groups.

The news was announced at the Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, Mass Humanities, a state-affiliated nonprofit organization, state Rep. William "Smitty" Pignatelli, D- Lenox, and state Sen. Benjamin B. Downing, D-Pittsfield. Funds will be allocated to nonprofit arts, humanities, and science organizations, local cultural councils and education programs.

In Berkshire County, 60 organizations received funding totaling \$520,660.

One of those organizations was Community Access to the Arts (CATA), which works with disabled people through visual and performing arts. The organization received \$5,500 to be used toward general funds. Liana Toscanini, the organization's development and marketing director, said unlike typical grants which have laborious application processes and can only be used for specific programs, the state funds they received involved a more interactive application process and can be used in any way they're needed.

Though not all of the organizations receiving funds went through the same process, groups like CATA, which have a long-standing relationship with the state, are able to win grants through full-staff site visits from the Massachusetts Cultural Council.

Toscanini said that is helpful for CATA because it frees administrators to focus on their operation and allows grant writers to "see us in action, because you can't really put that down on paper."

Anita Walker, executive director of the Massachusetts Cultural Council, said organizations like CATA are important parts of the community, and can be relied upon more heavily during difficult financial times like these.

"The cultural sector is essential to the continued prosperity in Massachusetts," said Walker.