

## A Discussion with Doug Mann, Board Chair for the Maryland Citizens for the Arts

**M**aryland Citizens for the Arts (MCA) is a statewide arts advocacy group. Gary Vikan, Director of the Walters Art Museum, has served on the Board of Trustees of MCA for many years and is currently the acting Treasurer for the organization. Here, he interviews Doug Mann, Board Chair for MCA and long-time arts advocate. Also included in the discussion is Sarah Walton, the Manager of Foundation and Government Relations at the Walters and member of MCA's Emerging Arts Advocates committee, which is focused on recruiting younger members to MCA.

**What exactly does Maryland Citizens for the Arts do?** MCA informs and educates our state elected officials about the important role the arts play in Maryland and advocates maximizing the state budget for the Maryland State Arts Council every year.

**Why should a supporter of the Walters care about MCA?** The grant that the Walters, or any Maryland arts organization, receives from the Maryland State Arts Council is usually the largest single operating grant awarded annually. Right now, it's about 6.4% of an organization's total operating budget. That has an impact on programming and helps leverage support from foundations, corporations and individuals.

**So our members should care about MCA and its mission, but is there something they can do on an individual level?** Yes, there is a really important role for them to play! Elected officials want to hear from the citizens, from their constituents, not just the advocacy groups.

**Or from the paid staffers of organizations?** Exactly. You and other staff obviously have a strong self-interest,



but ultimately the voters are what matter the most to legislators. We have over 5,000 people registered as arts advocates for MCA, and we want to increase that significantly. About 5.6 million people live in Maryland, and nine out of 10 of those people attend an arts event every year.

**Wow!** Yeah, just about everybody in Maryland goes to at least one arts event. We found that when people understand the importance Maryland State Arts Council funding has for arts organizations, they are more eager to help in our advocacy efforts. Those efforts include sending an e-mail to the legislators, attending Maryland Arts Day in Annapolis or visiting with the legislators. They can play a really important role.

**How can people find out about these things?** Our new website is the best place to find out more about us. It has a wealth of information about how to become more involved with arts advocacy and is updated constantly. The MCA website can be found at [www.mdarts.org](http://www.mdarts.org).

**As a Board Member, I know that there are many things happening at MCA that are new and innovative, but what's your favorite?** I think my favorite is the Emerging Arts Advocates initiative. As you know, Sarah Walton (Walters Manager of Foundation and Government Relations) is a participant in the initiative. We are very excited about involving people in their 20s and 30s. This is an important group and a

demographic that we have not had a lot of involvement with in the past. There are many people Sarah's age who are involved in the arts and love the arts. We need to engage them in our efforts to build the next generation of arts advocates. We also want to be an organization that reflects the wonderful diversity of the arts in Maryland.

**Sarah Walton:** Drawing on a broad range of disciplines and geographic regions of the state, the Emerging Arts Advocates committee was formed to educate the next generation of Maryland arts advocates. We actively recruit new members and work to provide them with the tools necessary to effectively reach their representatives in the Maryland General Assembly.

**If the readers of this magazine take away just one thought from this, what would you want that to be?** They should go online and sign up to become an arts advocate! One of my favorite quotes is from Thomas Jefferson: "Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty." If people want the arts to be properly recognized and supported by our elected officials, they need to get personally involved. We all need to be willing to write letters and go to Annapolis to meet with the Governor and legislators—our elected officials do listen! They pay attention to their constituents. If they hear from people in their districts that the arts are a high priority, that will impact their decisions on arts funding.