

Philanthropy Journal

OF NORTH CAROLINA

Changing hands

Nonprofits respond to Republican election victories

Nonprofit leaders in North Carolina and throughout the U.S. are adapting to major changes in the legislative landscape. Recent Republican victories at the local, state and national levels represent both challenges and opportunities for the sector, nonprofit leaders say.

BY THE PHILANTHROPY JOURNAL STAFF

"We've got to hold our own," the speaker said, pounding her fist on the podium. "We have to present a united front. After

Christmas, we must immediately go back to the grassroots and get people in the communities to get in contact with their legislators."

The audience at the Carolina Theater - a gathering of directors, fundraisers, funders and lobbyists for nonprofit arts groups - broke into hearty applause.

Republican legislative victories had not been on the original agenda for the annual state arts meeting, but Elizabeth Taylor, executive director of Arts Advocates of North Carolina - as well as other conference speakers - knew the issue had to be addressed.

Nonprofit leaders in North Carolina and throughout the U.S.



George Pfeiffer



Betty McCain

also are responding to the results of recent mid-term elections. While not everyone agrees on the outcome, all feel the urgency of assessing the impact on the sector.

Republicans made historic gains in the November balloting - winning majorities in both houses of Congress and among state governorships. In North Carolina, Republicans took control of the House and many county boards - many of which had not seen a GOP majority this century.

New legislators come armed with promises to change governmental priorities. The state GOP's "Contract with the People of North Carolina" calls for the rejection of any new taxes, limits on the growth of state spending, major reform of the criminal justice and welfare systems and reductions in the size and power of the state Department of

Public Instruction.

Nonprofit leaders say the Republican approach holds mixed messages for the state's "independent sector."

"It means challenges that include both problems and opportunities," says George Autry, president of MDC, a nonprofit think tank in Chapel Hill. "Problems in the sense that those nonprofits that are public/private partnerships dependent on government funding are maybe endangered. On the other hand, the opportunities come from the promise of more reliance on the nonprofit sector."

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Gaining access Clinic provides free care

As legislators debate proposals for health care reform, High Point residents without health insurance can get free care at the High Point Community Clinic.

BY EALENA CALLENDER

On an average day, about 14 percent of North Carolina's residents go without health insurance. In Guilford County alone, the number of uninsured residents is close to 40,000.

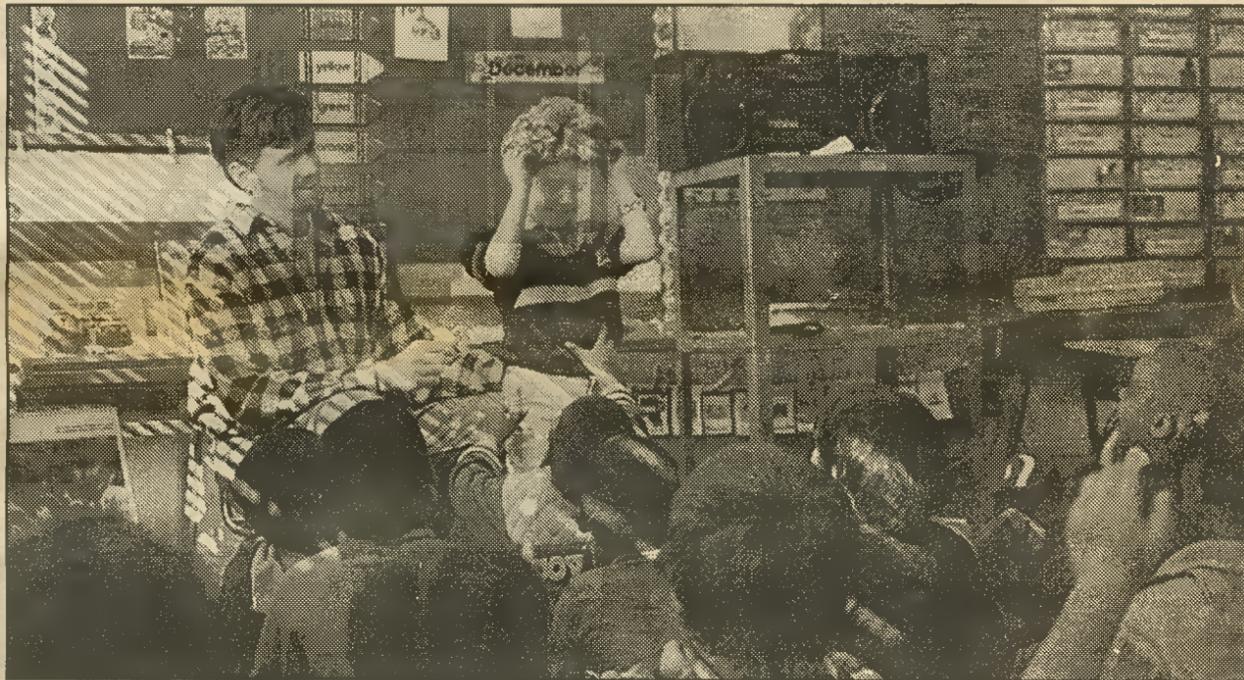
Since 1993, a free clinic in High Point has worked to provide free primary care to the city's growing population of citizens with too little health insurance or none at all.

When the Directions Task Force was established by Mayor Becky Smothers in 1992 to make recommendations and proposals on social issues, including health care, it found that almost one-third of High Point's residents have too little health insurance or none at

Look for CLINIC, page 13



Mary Lyons



Kevin Warner, a dance instructor at Sunset Park Elementary School in Wilmington, says using the arts a teaching tool helps to inspire students to think more creatively and critically, improving overall learning in the classroom.

Photo by Susan Gray

Creative lessons

Arts breathe new life into classrooms

The arts can effectively improve classroom learning, say a growing number of North Carolina educators and arts advocates. They've got proof. They're trying it out. News of their success is spreading. And funders are noticing.

BY SUSAN GRAY

Simon, 8, used to be out of control. He tossed his workbooks around his third-grade class-

ARTS

room like Frisbees, rebelled against authority and spent many afternoons sitting in the corner of his principal's office, frowning at the fish.

In November, all that changed when clarinetist Todd Palmer visited Simon's school, Sunset Park Elementary in Wilmington, to perform jazz.

Simon - whose name has been changed here to protect his identity - was transfixed by the show. He couldn't take his eyes off Palmer and,

when it ended, he pranced down the hall, mimicking Palmer's riffs with a make-believe clarinet.

After that, Simon never returned to the principal's office. He started listening to his teachers, and his grades improved.

"It was amazing what happened," says Adelaide Kopotic, Sunset Park's Principal. "It's incidents like that can change a life forever."

Simon found a new expressive outlet, Kopotic says, and that opened up a new world of learning to him.

A growing number of educators and nonprofit leaders are pointing to

examples like Simon's as ways in which the arts can effectively improve the quality of education in schools. Music, drama, dance and the visual arts, they say, are valuable educational tools that can turn around discipline problems and enhance learning for all students by stimulating active participation, critical thinking and creative problem solving.

"Because the arts cultivate the imaginative thought processes - the source of creativity - they energize the motivation to learn," says Charles

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HandMade in America aims to raise the visibility of North Carolina crafts and boost economic opportunities for craftspeople.

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The Michael Jordan Foundation, which was created by the basketball superstar to support children, has opened a Charlotte office and is seeking corporate support.

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In Charlotte, a volunteer organization has found a way to recruit busy working people by offering flexibility, convenience and variety.

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