

Miamians give generously of time, funds and expertise to support arts

BY MARILYN BOWDEN

Public funding for the arts is virtually disappearing, and some Miamians give generously of their time, money and expertise to help fill that gap.

Attorney **Aaron Podhurst**, partner in the law firm Podhurst Orseck and long-time board chair for Miami Art Museum, is a leader in that effort, said Ricky Arriola, president & CEO of Inktel Direct Corp and Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts board chair.

"One thing that makes him a leader in our community is spearheading the efforts of Miami Art Museum to raise private funds for the seed money it will take to break ground on the new museum in Bicentennial Park," Mr. Arriola said.

"He has taken upon himself not only the fundraising effort but everything else that will make that project come to life, from

THE BEST OF MIAMI 2010 ARTS AND CULTURE

selection of architects to managing the board and leading the museum into the 21st century. It's a big responsibility, and he is doing a really great job."

"All the great cities of the world need to have museums," Mr. Podhurst said. "In Europe, culture is government-supported, but in the US it has to be done through a public-private partnership."

Preserving culture also requires giving each new generation a grounding in the arts, and Mr. Podhurst said Miami Art Museum is actively reaching out to youngsters in the public school system.

"In these difficult economic times," he said, "the schools don't have the resources to do the cultural teaching they used to do many years ago. It's our

desire as an organization to be able to take kids from the public schools to the museum, give them lunch and teach them appreciation of the arts."

In addition to supporting and encouraging young entrepreneurs, venture capitalist **Carl Kruse** is a strong supporter of the arts, said Mario Artecona, executive director of the Miami Business Forum, "though he is very much under the radar. He helps smaller, up-and-coming, struggling companies."

Recently, Mr. Kruse has been recognized for founding First and Alton, which Mr. Artecona characterized as "one of the most dynamic and progressive Haiti earthquake relief organizations."

"Carl exudes the type of positive energy that encourages and motivates those who traditionally don't engage in civic issues," he said. "His enthusiasm is contagious, and his commitment to things he believes in steadfast."



Photo by Marlene Quaroni

Aaron Podhurst is spearheading Miami Art Museum's fundraising.

MIAMI TODAY

June 2, 2010

Circulation: 71,750

Mr. Kruse attributes his philanthropic activities as well as his support of the arts to an inability to say no.

"We have all these friends who come along with projects for which they need some small assistance," he said. "You can't say no to your friends. I'm working on someone right now for a \$25,000 donation for an arts project that I think I'm going to be able to secure."

But Mr. Kruse acknowledged that it's getting tougher to drum up donor support.

"Nobody wants to give any money," he said. "We do have some friends we can still tap once in a while."

Participating in the arts can be an empowering experience for kids, and **Harry Horgan**, director and founder of Shake-a-Leg, is providing arts education where it is perhaps most needed, said Mitchell Kaplan, proprietor of Books & Books and founder of Miami Book Fair International.

Shake-A-Leg Miami helps children and adults with physical, developmental and economic challenges gain self-respect, through sailing and other activities.

"Harry Horgan has done more for enriching the lives of disabled and disadvantaged youth than just about anyone I can think of," Mr. Kaplan said. "Shake-a-Leg teaches self-reliance, sustainability, and sensitivity to the natural world in an atmosphere that honors the arts."

Mr. Horgan said Shake-a-Leg's Art Center manager, artist Cynthia Shelley, has over the past five years developed a comprehensive arts program that includes the visual arts, pottery, music and dance, photography and other artistic media.

"Art is clearly an area where kids with special needs can express themselves," Mr. Horgan said. "It's a great outlet and a great way to further our goal to inspire people to get involved with business or some activity that will lead them to improving their independence."

Mr. Kaplan also named **Cheryl Stephenson**, marketing and communications director of The Bal Harbour Shops.

"Cheryl uses the high visibility of fashion and design to benefit countless charitable organizations and causes," he said. "Whether it's a fashion show, an art exhibition or a promotion with a design magazine, Cheryl knows how to leverage her love of the arts for the benefit of our community."

Ms. Stephenson said Bal Harbour Shops "has always been a very socially active, community-supportive fashion center.

"Our customer base enjoys not only the social side of turning out for events and sharing the company of other supporters. Typically they have specific charities near and dear to their hearts, and frequently engage general managers of individual boutiques to help support their causes.

"We think fashion and compassion go hand in hand and benefit everybody involved."