

MEDIA RELEASE
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DOWNTOWN SUFFOLK ARTS GROUP AWARDED STATE GRANT

SUFFOLK, VA: The Virginia Commission for the Arts and Virginia Tourism Corporation has awarded a matching grant to the Suffolk Downtown Arts organization and citywide partners to launch the *"heART & Soul of Downtown Suffolk: A Walkable Art Destination"* campaign. Funding for this program has been sought for three years by downtown arts partners including the Suffolk Art League, Suffolk Art Gallery, Suffolk Center for Cultural Arts, Shooting Star Gallery, Suffolk Division of Tourism and newer partners such as Jesters, The Plaid Turnip and Rosa's Coffee Cantina. Applicants from across Virginia applied for this competitive grant program. Each proposal was weighted on a merit scale, taking into consideration such factors as the type and scope of the applying organization, the impact and priority of the proposed project, and the impact of the project's ability to increase and track overnight stays and visitor revenue in the community.

Conceptualized by representatives from downtown arts groups and City of Suffolk staff, "The heART & Soul of Downtown Suffolk: A Walkable Art Destination" is a collaborative marketing initiative showcasing downtown Suffolk's multiple arts venues, each housed in re-purposed historic structures, which are—as one might say—the soul of our community. The libraries, schools, hotels, department stores and soda shops of yesterday are now visual and performing arts centers and eateries in the heart of downtown. Through the development of a custom website, marketing collateral, advertising and research database—Downtown Suffolk's burgeoning arts and cultural scene will take center stage for locals, day trippers and leisure travelers. The goal of this campaign is to solidify downtown Suffolk as a well-known walkable arts destination, ultimately benefitting the entire community with increased foot traffic and potential customers. *"The heART & Soul of Downtown Suffolk: A Walkable Art Destination"* new website is expected to launch in January 2012 and as an added feature will highlight citywide art events and exhibits. *"heART & Soul"* brochures and collateral will be distributed throughout the fall; special events are being slated for February and beyond. For more information, contact the Suffolk Art League at 757.925.0448 or at suffolkartleague@verizon.net.

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