

LEVERAGING INVESTMENTS IN CREATIVITY AND METLIFE FOUNDATION  
RECOGNIZE INNOVATIVE ART PROJECTS NATIONWIDE

*\$100,000 in total awarded to six organizations for developing space for artists*

New York, NY – Leveraging Investments in Creativity (LINC) and MetLife Foundation announced the six winners of the nationwide, competitive 2009 MetLife Innovative Space Awards. The awards recognize outstanding efforts in the design and development of affordable space for artists, which is an integral part of LINC’s *Space for Change: Building Communities Through Innovative Art Spaces* program. These spaces provide a stable foundation from which artists may pursue their works and shape the neighborhoods they inhabit. The winning programs were selected from more than 90 applications from 29 states; awards range from \$10,000 to \$50,000.

“The MetLife Innovative Space Awards recognize exemplary artist spaces for their innovation, affordability, sustainability and positive community impact,” said Dennis White, president and CEO, MetLife Foundation. “These winning programs serve as models for other communities interested in creating and benefiting from sustainable art spaces.”

“The development of affordable living and working spaces for artists plays a powerful role in the production of their works. The award recipients reflect the diversity of America, while sharing excellent programming, socially progressive development and the ability to provide creative and economic sustenance. Each model has elements replicable in other locales,” said Judilee Reed, executive director, LINC.

The grand prize winning organization, the International Sonoran Desert Alliance (ISDA), received a \$50,000 grant in recognition of its development of the Curley School, which serves as the anchor for an arts-based revitalization movement in the border town of Ajo, Ariz. and neighboring Tohono O’odham Nation and Sonora, Mexico. The 7.5-acre, school campus, developed by ISDA, features the award-winning rehabilitation of two historic buildings into 30 affordable live/work rental units for artists, as well as an auditorium with an indoor/outdoor stage. Adjacent buildings contain a retail gallery, business incubator, and work, classroom, and collaboration spaces. Artists have access to professional development programs that provide business planning and means to capital financing. In the future, ISDA plans to develop an international artist retreat center and the inclusion of an art space in the town plaza, which is in close proximity to the Curley School.

The other winning organizations each received a \$10,000 award:

- **The Carnegie Center for Literacy and Learning** offers robust programming for professional writers and also fosters improved literacy levels in its local community, recognizing the impact that art can have on basic life skills.

- **City of Asylum/Pittsburgh, Pa.** provides outstanding levels of service to artists in exile through a residency program with a full range of support services for the personal and professional recovery of artists and their families.
- **Open Book 2.0 in Minneapolis, Minn.** exemplifies collaboration among local non-profits. Three independent organizations, The Loft Literary Center, Milkweed Editions, and Minnesota Center for Book Arts pooled resources to form a vibrant literary arts center.
- **Soo Theatre and STARS in Sault Ste. Marie, Mich.** jumpstarted the economic and cultural revitalization of its area by bringing arts education and programming to the region. Soo Theatre is now a cultural asset that allows the local hospital and university to attract and retain talent.
- **Watts House Project in Los Angeles, Calif.** meshes artists' skills with local needs to improve households, creating a bond between artist and neighbor by integrating sustainable building and landscaping into everyday life.

“Artist spaces should be fundamental to well-planned communities. We hope a broader set of stakeholders, including policy makers, planners and other civic leaders, will embrace arts and culture as significant components of effective development strategies,” said Susan Silberberg, associate director, MetLife Innovative Space Awards and lecturer in Urban Design and Planning, MIT.

*Space for Change: Building Communities Through Innovative Art Spaces* was launched in 2009 by LINC in partnership with MIT’s Department of Urban Studies and Planning, through a funding collaboration between the MetLife Foundation and Ford Foundation. To learn more, visit [www.lincnet.net/artist-space](http://www.lincnet.net/artist-space).

#### About LINC

Leveraging Investments in Creativity (LINC) is a 10-year initiative to improve artists’ ability to make work, build social capital and contribute to democratic values. For more information, visit [www.lincnet.net](http://www.lincnet.net).

#### About MetLife Foundation

MetLife Foundation was established by MetLife to continue the company’s long tradition of corporate contributions and community involvement. Grants are made to support health, educational, civic and cultural organizations and programs. The Foundation contributes to arts and cultural organizations, with an emphasis on increasing opportunities for young people, reaching broad audiences through inclusive programming, and making arts more accessible for all people. For more information, please visit [www.metlife.org](http://www.metlife.org).

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