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**GRAND RAPIDS ART MUSEUM RECEIVES NEA GRANT AND MATCHING GIFT TO
SUPPORT "LANGUAGE ARTISTS: CREATURE CONNECTIONS"**

*NEA Award of \$10,000 is Matched by Farmers Insurance Group in Support of Educational
Programming*

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich., May 18, 2011 – The Grand Rapids Art Museum (GRAM) is a recipient of the award for an *Arts Education in American Communities* grant by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) in the amount of \$10,000. The NEA grant required a local matching gift. Farmers Insurance Group, an organization that has supported GRAM's education efforts since 2004, made the matching gift.

GRAM was invited by the NEA to apply for the *Arts Education in American Communities* grant. The grant supports the program "Language Artists: Creature Connections." Specific funding is for development of instructional strategies, a teacher resource CD, and curriculum materials. Funds are used to support GRAM's Education Department, program consultants, guest speaker honorariums, a program book, and printed materials including teacher packets, classroom posters, CD materials, and in-gallery training/presentation materials.

"Language Artists: Creature Connections," created in partnership with Grand Rapids Art Museum, Grand Rapids Public Schools (GRPS), and Kendall/Ferris State University, was launched as a pilot program designed specifically for third grade educators and students combining literacy and the visual arts for a field trip like no other. The project was conceived as a unit of study where third grade students explore the Art Museum while building essential skills such as cause/effect, compare/contrast, and elements of narrative.

GRAM and Kendall worked with GRPS curriculum specialists, literary coaches, teachers, and support staff to develop a specialized program that includes a teacher packet with CD, pre-visit literacy and art activities, and post-visit lesson plans to guide classroom learning and exploration.

The pilot program focused on highlights from GRAM's permanent art collection by using inquiry-based teaching strategies similar to those in the provided mentor text *How Artists See Animals* by Colleen Carroll.

A special after-hours event took place at GRAM on May 17 and included a display of 53 artworks and writing samples from some of the recent GRPS student participants in the program. Over 300 parents, teachers, literacy coaches, and children (including the third grade students, a.k.a. Language Artists) attended the event that featured keynote speaker Dr. Cindy Todd, Program Chair of Art Education for Kendall College of Art and Design at Ferris State University, who presented "Art and Literacy: The Brain Connection."

About the National Endowment for the Arts

The National Endowment for the Arts was established by Congress in 1965 as an independent agency of the federal government. To date, the NEA has awarded more than \$4 billion to support artistic excellence, creativity, and innovation for the benefit of individuals and communities. The NEA extends its work through partnerships with state arts agencies, local leaders, other federal agencies, and the philanthropic sector. To join the discussion on how art works, visit the NEA at www.arts.gov.

About Farmers Insurance Group®

Farmers Insurance Group of Companies is the third-largest insurer of both private Personal Lines passenger automobile and homeowners insurance, and also provides a wide range of other insurance and financial services products. Farmers operates primarily in 41 states across the country through the efforts of approximately 20,000 employees. Farmers exclusive and independent agents, along with Farmers employees, are responsible for servicing more than 15 million customers. Foremost Insurance Company, a subsidiary of Farmers Insurance Group, was founded in 1952 and is headquartered in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Foremost is a leader in insuring specialty products such as mobile homes, motor homes, travel trailers, and specialty dwellings.

About the Grand Rapids Art Museum

The mission of the Grand Rapids Art Museum (GRAM) is: to inspire discovery, enjoyment, and learning about art; to serve as a welcoming and inclusive cultural resource; to collect, conserve, and interpret authentic works of art of the finest quality. Established in the heart of downtown Grand Rapids, the new Art Museum is internationally known for its distinguished design and LEED Gold certified status. Established in 1910 as the Grand Rapids Art Association, GRAM has grown to include more than 5,000 works of art, including American and European 19th and 20th century painting and sculpture and more than 3,500 works on paper. Embracing the city's legacy as a leading center of design and manufacturing, GRAM has a growing collection in the area of design and modern craft.

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