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MARYLANDER MARY ANN MEARS RECEIVES PRESTIGIOUS NATIONAL GOVERNOR'S ASSOCIATION ARTS AWARD

ANNAPOLIS, MD (July 9, 2009) – Governor Martin O'Malley today announced that Mary Ann Mears, a Maryland artist, longtime arts advocate and founder and Chair Emeritus of the Arts Education in Maryland Schools (AEMS) Alliance, has received the Distinguished Service to the Arts award from the National Governors Association (NGA). Nominated for the prestigious award by Governor O'Malley, Ms. Mears will be among eight honorees to receive awards for their contributions to public service next week during the NGA's annual meeting in Biloxi, Mississippi.

"Mary Ann Mears is a true champion for arts education," said Governor O'Malley. "She has been a leader in Maryland's arts community for more than 40 years and her relentless advocacy to ensure that every child has the right to an education that includes participating, practicing and perfecting the arts has greatly improved Maryland's quality of life."

The NGA Awards for Distinguished Service to the Arts, established in 1980, are given in two areas: artistic production and arts support. This award recognizes outstanding service to the arts, focusing on contributions that improve the quality of life and bring distinction to a state.

"I am honored that Governor O'Malley nominated me for this prestigious award. His nomination highlights the value placed on the arts and arts education by our Governor and the people of Maryland," said Mears. "I share this recognition with all of those that have worked with me and AEMS over the years on behalf of arts education in our schools."

"No one is more deserving of national attention in arts education than Mary Ann Mears," said State Superintendent of Schools Nancy S. Grasmick. "I've been fortunate to work closely with Mary Ann for nearly 20 years. In that time, Maryland arts education has become the envy of the nation and helped put our schools at the head of the class."

Ms. Mears is prominent artist, and former member of the Maryland State Arts Council, and an advocate for quality arts education to every student in Maryland public schools. She is the founder and former chairperson of the Arts Education in Maryland Schools (AEMS) Alliance, now serving as Chair Emeritus. Her work with the Maryland State Department of Education resulted in the adoption of the Voluntary State Curriculum in the Fine Arts and the integration of outcome-based performance measures in arts education.

AEMS is a statewide partnership dedicated to advancing the cause of arts as a basic component of public education with the mission of building support for high quality, systemic arts education in dance, music, theater and visual arts for all Maryland school children. The organizations began as a program of the Maryland State Arts Council that grew to become a separate not for profit organization. AEMS receives operating support from the Maryland State Arts Council.

The Maryland State Arts Council, an agency of the Maryland Department of Business & Economic Development, Division of Tourism, Film and the Arts, is dedicated to cultivating a vibrant cultural community where the arts thrive. In FY 2008, the Maryland arts industry contributed \$1.2 billion to the State's economy and provided 15,000 jobs to Maryland residents. For more information about the Maryland State Arts Council visit the MSAC web site at www.msac.org or call 410-767-6555 or TDD/TTY 800-735-2258.

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