



November 9, 2011

Selection Committee:

It is my honor to recommend Charles Ahovissi, Director of the African Culture Connection for the Heritage Award to be presented at the Governor's Arts Awards. I had the pleasure of working with Charles on a one-week residency for our PAWS enrichment program at Kearney Public Schools. I have never been so moved by an artist-in-residence, nor have I ever witnessed such a strong student response. It was a week none of us will ever forget. Charles danced and drummed his way into our hearts.

During his residency, Charles taught students to play strong African rhythms on authentic djembe drums. He taught lively African dance moves that represented rich stories from the past. He taught Africa's varied culture through stories and photos that demonstrated to students that Africa is far more than lions and rhinos roaming through the Savannah. Charles weaved us through a week-long tapestry of the experience of the African people. We were hooked.

Many artist-in-residence can teach their crafts, but none do it with the flair of Charles Ahovissi. He engages the students physically, emotionally, and intellectually; all while instilling the values of respect, self-discipline, and a strong work ethic. Charles is simply amazing with the students.

Our mission for PAWS (Personal Achievement Workshops) is to make learning fun...Charles is the personification of our mission. His impact was so strong that our program purchased a set of djembe drums. The music teacher is using them to teach rhythm in the classroom but she has also created a "Drum Circle" club afterschool. Charles Ahovissi has had a lifelong effect on our students.

If you have seen Charles Ahovossi in action, you'll understand why it is my honor and pleasure to recommend him for the Heritage Award. I am happy to visit with you about our amazing experience with Charles. Please call me at 308-698-8028 anytime.

Sincerely,

Tori L. Stofferson
Director of Extended Learning Opportunities



Kearney Public Schools

Excellence In Education
Meadowlark Elementary

November 8, 2011

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Please accept my recommendation for Mr. Charles Ahovissi, Director of the African Culture Connection as a recipient for the Heritage Award at the Governor's Arts Awards. I have had the privilege to work with Mr. Ahovissi on two week-long residency programs. One of the programs was at Central Elementary in Sidney, Nebraska where I was a principal for 7 seven years. The second week-long residency was at Meadowlark Elementary where I am currently the principal. Mr. Ahovissi understands the importance of building relationships with students and staff which fosters a positive and direct correlation with his residency program. Mr. Ahovissi models his professional behavior while providing a vision for the entire student body and staff. I have personally witnessed Mr. Ahovissi's dedication and drive to maintain values, communication skills, teamwork characteristics, and vision, which make him an **IDEAL** recipient of the Heritage Award.

Mr. Ahovissi's character has influence on the students and staff with a respect that is well deserved. He is a hard working, goal-oriented, inspirational, and sincere individual. He has the ability to play a commanding role with the students and staff and is able to make decisions without second-guessing. He has a unique ability to deal with attitudes, values and motivations of various students and staff, and is easily distinguished as a leader.

Many creative and innovative ideas have been designed with detailed plans to make them challenging, exciting and stimulating for the students. Having the students and staff connect their residency experiences through hands-on-activities is critical in connecting life-long learning lessons. He continually strives for students to perform at a level of excellence that are introduced and practiced before a presentation for parents and community members.

Mr. Ahovissi plans valuable, educational activities in African music and lifestyles. He has an innovative way of incorporating exciting activities for the students to learn the many facets of Africa and its varied cultures that can be found throughout the country. Bringing this message is a priority for Mr. Ahovissi.

Mr. Ahovissi's ability to integrate teamwork activities, coupled with his special ability to form a cohesive and bonding relationship with the students is profound. Through his success and willingness to never give up, Mr. Ahovissi gains the respect of the students and staff. Anyone who has been affiliated with Mr. Ahovissi respects his demeanor and expertise as an artist-in-resident extraordinaire. His professional characteristics are always evident when working with students and staff. Given the opportunity to coordinate the residency activity with him is a privilege.

Mr. Ahovissi is a very **STRONG CANDIDATE** and has my **HIGHEST RECOMMENDATION** for receiving the Heritage Award at the Governor's Arts Awards.

Please feel free to call me if you have any questions concerning Mr. Ahovissi or any of his abilities at (308) 698 – 8210.

Sincerely,

Mark Stute

Mark Stute
Principal



Mark Stute, Principal
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