

**Griots Storytelling Institute**

**P.0. Box 20653**

**Wichita, KS 67208**

**316-682-1909**

**www.wichitagriots.org**

**NABS Annual Report 2019**

The Award-Winning Wichita Griots: Keepers of the Stories, presents programs throughout the year at many organizations, locations and events.

Since its inception in 1998, The Griots has transformed the lives of thousands of students in the Wichita, KS community. And presents quality cultural, educational, and thought provoking programs, to enrich the lives of all ages and diverse backgrounds. The Wichita Griots are dedicated to the belief that the arts can play an important role in building understanding about inequities, shedding light on social injustice, helping to build a more expansive and inclusive societal mind set, while inspiring young people and their families to reject the current status quo and strive for more equitable change.

In March of this year, Wichita Griots celebrated over 20 Years of providing the art of storytelling in the community, at the new Advance Learning Library. Griots have contributed significantly to the Wichita arts community by sharing stories to thousands of children and families throughout the city. Stories were told in Voice, rhythmic sound and dance and Literacy awards were presented to educators who are front runners in Literacy. National known, Award winning Poetic Storyteller, Oba William King was our guest storyteller and helped to make the celebration very memorable. Wichita Griots provides programming to between 15,000 and 17,000 students and adults each year.

The Griots drummer’s participated in the 1.5 million 9th Street Revitalization Ceremony Dedication by the City of Wichita, as the arts, new sidewalks, streets, houses, and drainage was implement in a Northeast area that had shown urban blight for many years. It was wonderful to be on stage up front drumming and see the village folks responding to the drum call, and coming from all directions, the North, East, South and West.

**Wichita Griots serves the local Wichita community and its youth with the following programs:**

Arts Partners / USD 259 Elementary School Presentations

Working through Arts Partners Wichita, Griots offers a variety of presentations for grade levels K through 12. These presentations integrate storytelling, dancing, drumming, singing, theater, and visual arts into each classroom visit of all-school presentation. These presentations bring prominent historical characters to life with recreations of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I have a dream…” speech, or accounts from the life of Maya Angelou, Booker T. Washington, Mary McLeod Bethune, former President Barack Obama, and Gordon Parks, to name a few. By using the art of storytelling, combined with images, sound, movement, and language to create a culturally diverse learning environment full of encouragement and inspiration.

*This program is the furthest reaching for Griots, serving up to 10,000 students annually in the schools and neighborhoods. Griots strives to expose students to the art of storytelling in a community where arts programs are non-existent in public schools. Through Griots unique form of drawing students in through cultural form of dancing, drumming, singing, crafting and storytelling, student are learning when they do not realize it.*

Literary Arts Program

Griots confirms its commitment to engaging young audiences by distributing books through a Literary Arts program at presentations. This distribution program supports Griots mission of helping students enjoy reading and learning outside of the classroom. The goal is to provide books to students so they may eventually build personal libraries in their homes, read on their own, and increase the literacy rate in our community. Wichita Griots recently received an award $15,000 Literacy grant from the Wichita Community Foundation/Westar to help at-risk students increase their reading skills.

Tellabration TM

Tellabration TM,-150 is an annual day of celebration, held internationally the Saturday before Thanksgiving. On this day, storytellers all across the United States gather in their communities to fellowship and share the art of storytelling. Griots celebrates with local storytellers, consisting of Wichita business people and community leaders, gathering at The Kansas African American Museum to share personal stories relating to historical characters, other cultures, values, and the importance of education. These stories are interspersed with cultural singing, dancing, and drumming to create a mini “drama” out of each story. The goal is to engage and inspire young people through this unique art form by bringing the arts, education, and mentoring together all in one place and to build community support for Storytelling.

*Tellabration averages 125 -150 attendees and participants each year.*

Kwanzaa Cultural Celebration

The Kwanzaa Cultural Celebration brings the community together to learn about the seven principles of Kwanzaa. Although Kwanzaa is a weeklong celebration beginning on December 26 and continuing through January 1, Wichita Griots plans one gathering for youth to highlight the seven Kwanzaa principles: 1) Unity, 2) Self-determination, 3) Collective work and responsibility, 4) Cooperative economics, 5) Purpose, 6) Creativity, and 7) Faith. Students are paired with mentors and given the opportunity to interact with adults and learn about principles that influence their lives going forward.

*Kwanzaa Cultural Celebration averages 110 - 150 attendees and participants each year.*

Griots Cultural Arts Summer Enrichment Camp

This Camp is the highlight of the year for Griots.

This week-long enrichment camp is offered each summer, during the month of July, to youth from six to 16 years of age. 70-80 Young people from the Wichita community and surrounding areas have the opportunity to work with adult storytellers and mentors and experience the art of storytelling. With the Rhythmic Beat of the Drums, and the gathering of Village students, Griots Cultural Arts Enrichment Camp begins!

As Griots visits schools and community organizations in Wichita, the invitation is extended to participate in the Cultural Arts Summer Enrichment Camp. Students can pre-register for Camp beginning in March each year. The Camp is held for a full week in July at Urban Preparatory Academy (UPA). Students, ranging from six to 16 years of age, attend sessions from 9am to 5pm daily for five days, with a Stage Production Grand Finale on the sixth day. Held at Wichita State University’s CAC Theatre.

During Camp, students experience art, storytelling, music, poetry, writing, crafting, dance, drama, and drumming. Students are given opportunities to read, write, create, produce, and perform. Sessions are set up in classrooms throughout UPA and students make the rounds to each of the sessions throughout the day. Each session provides a mentor/instructor to work with the students and the results are wonderful. Groups of students learn to sing songs, play instruments, paint on rocks and canvas, write poetry, and tell stories. Storytelling is used in daily lessons and activities to reinforce Social and emotional learning, and character education traits such as respect, responsibility, integrity, caring, self-discipline, and self-reliance. Civic leaders, parents, volunteers and the community often attend the summer camp to listen as students share their personal stories and demonstrate a moral or lesson as the outcome.

The full week of learning comes together on the final night of Camp when all participate in the Grand Finale production. This is the time when students shine and share their newly learned skills with parents and the community. The production includes skits based on current events, topics of politics, racism, diversity, and bullying. All are portrayed by the students reading poetry, singing, dancing, drumming, storytelling, creation of set designs, and the use of technology and projections. *The Griots Cultural Arts Enrichment Camp work with 47 volunteers and mentors giving of their time. During the Grand Finale production, friends and family attends the performance, with 450-500 attending the finale where students show up and show out!!! Three new Griots members were added this year.*

Ms. Jean Pouncil-Burton, Executive Director

Wichita Griots: Keepers of the Stories