Heartpower Performances, led by SDSU music Professor Marian Liebowitz, was recently awarded a $15,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). The grant will fund music performances and classes for at-risk audiences throughout Southern California.

“Receiving an NEA grant is a wonderful recognition that so few people succeed in securing,” said Joyce Gattas, dean of SDSU’s College of Professional Studies and Fine Arts. “I'm pleased that the NEA has acknowledged and appreciates the importance of Heartpower Performances.”

Heartpower Performances is an outreach project for at-risk audiences and is an outgrowth of the SDSU Adams’ Project Performers Network, which provides career training and opportunities for music majors.

Heartpower serves any segment of the population other music organizations can’t reach, including veterans, foster youth, the mentally ill, abused children and those in the juvenile justice system.

Performances showcase SDSU students who serve as role models to at-risk populations, and the program illustrates that music is a vehicle for them to redirect energy toward positive change.

“These are people who cannot get to concerts, but benefit from music coming to them in their environment,” said Liebowitz.

She stressed the importance of what she calls the “three E’s”: exposure, enrichment and education.

“We start by exposing them to a wide variety of music genres, including classical, jazz and pop. Enrichment comes from offering a series of concerts, not just a one-time performance. The at-risk audiences are then able to educate themselves by taking classes and learning to transform their misfortune through music.”

The audiences are not the only ones benefiting—the three E’s also apply to the student performers. The students receive training specific to their audiences and are given important experience while being introduced to new career paths.

Heartpower is one of 1,145 not-for-profit organizations in the U.S. recommended for an NEA grant as part of the federal agency’s second round of fiscal year 2011 grants. In total, the Arts Endowment will distribute more than $88 million to support projects nationwide.

NEA grants require matching funds from other sources, which Liebowitz has secured from the SDSU President’s Leadership Fund, Disabled American Veterans, San Diego Coldwell Banker Foundation, Downtown San Diego Kiwanis Foundation and La Jolla Kiwanis Foundation.

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 arts.gov.