

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 502

Commending the Staunton Augusta Art Center.

Agreed to by the Senate, February 24, 2011
 Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 25, 2011

WHEREAS, the Staunton Augusta Art Center, founded as the Staunton Fine Arts Association on March 3, 1961, celebrates its 50th anniversary in 2011; and

WHEREAS, the founding meeting of the Staunton Fine Arts Association was attended by 100 individuals and led by Ruth Owen, who also served as its first president; and

WHEREAS, in 1962, the Staunton Fine Arts Association held its first annual meeting and established its objectives of promoting an understanding and use of the arts and contributing to individual opportunities for artistic creation, interpretation, and enjoyment; and

WHEREAS, the Staunton Augusta Art Center's mission statement today—to provide diverse experiences in the creation and appreciation of the visual arts to children, adults, and visitors to the area and to offer artists and artisans a venue in which to teach as well as exhibit and sell their work—is almost identical to the original concept; and

WHEREAS, from its inception, the Staunton Fine Arts Association, originally located at 21 North New Street, desired to establish a civic art center in Staunton; and

WHEREAS, today, the Staunton Augusta Art Center, in conjunction with two other cultural nonprofit organizations, is housed in a permanent art and history center, the R.R. Smith Center for History and Art at 20 South New Street; and

WHEREAS, the Staunton Augusta Art Center has continued its strong tradition of collaborative activities, working with Mary Baldwin College's outstanding art department through its internship program and serving as a statewide partner with the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts; and

WHEREAS, in 1966, the Staunton Fine Arts Association held its first outdoor art show, instituted by Ruth Owen; today, the outdoor art show, now called Art in the Park at Gypsy Hill, is a two-day festival held every Memorial Day weekend that showcases fine art, fine craft, and live music, sponsored, in part, by Ruth Owen's daughter, Betty Owen; and

WHEREAS, in 1990, the Staunton Fine Arts Association was renamed the Staunton Augusta Art Center to encompass a larger geographic area and wider meaning; and

WHEREAS, the first gala dinner to celebrate the Staunton Fine Arts Association was held in the Stonewall Jackson Hotel in 1962, and the 2011 Golden Gala to celebrate the Staunton Augusta Art Center's 50th year will be held in the beautifully restored Stonewall Jackson Hotel and Conference Center; and

WHEREAS, the Staunton Fine Arts Association is remembered by many as being the first and only major cultural organization in the region; and

WHEREAS, in 2011, the Staunton Augusta Art Center fosters collegial, supportive, and collaborative relationships among the now 22 other art and cultural organizations in Staunton and Augusta County; and

WHEREAS, the Staunton Augusta Art Center is a 501(c)(3) organization that is primarily supported by its members and participants and also by grant funding from the Virginia Commission for the Arts; and

WHEREAS, the Staunton Augusta Art Center, for 50 years, without interruption and during times of economic uncertainty, has made the visual arts accessible to all people without admission charge and supported the work of artists in the strong belief that the arts are an integral part of the quality of life of individuals and communities, economically, academically, and spiritually; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly commend the Staunton Augusta Art Center on the occasion of its 50th anniversary; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the Staunton Augusta Art Center as an expression of the General Assembly's congratulations, admiration for the center's many contributions to the community, and its best wishes for continued success.

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