

# Anita Vogelaar

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To Members of the Arts Fund Committee:

I am writing recommending Dr. Irene S. Vasquez for an Arts Fund grant to create a one-act drama addressing the question, "Is life worth living?". Starting from her own Latino culture and using figures and stories from that culture, she will additionally communicate the universal similarity of all cultures one to another. An important aspect as both creator and actor is her significance as a person from a migrant Latino family who has earned a Ph.D. and achieved success in the middle-American world.

I have known and worked with Dr. Vasquez for many years both in my role as an ethnographic consultant and as a person active in the Kalamazoo community, most recently as curator for last season's Hispanic American Art exhibit at the Kalamazoo Institute of Art. She gave multiple performances during the time of the exhibit, both to the public at the Art Center and to area public school workshops. A dramatic interpretation of figures from Latino culture held audiences spellbound. Her presentations provided a bridge between the cultural history of Latinos and the common bond shared by all cultures: family and society finding meaning through love, responsibility and hope. Her use of drama and humor to bring about effective intellectual involvement was magical.

In addition, during this show, she performed several original performances based on Latino themes focused on elementary children and older, adolescent youth. In all cases, she grasped the essential elements necessary to totally involve her audience in the core of what she was communicating, which, in my opinion, centered around the important themes of all cultures and transmitted the bonds all cultures hold in common. The ability to help others to see ethnic groups as individuals much like themselves rather than stereotypes is a gift that is very rare.

In many other instances, I have seen Dr. Vasquez perform both for young audiences and those who are older. The main focus of her talent is to provide a venue for intellectual development through motivational entertainment. This she does with elan and spirit, achieving goals which are surprising in their effectiveness.

I feel that her ability to follow through on her proposed idea for this performance piece is exceptional. I know that her willingness to perform throughout the community has been appreciated and well received by all who have seen her dramatizations. Popular acclaim during Art Center productions, expanded into many more presentations. Stimulating thought in adolescents about life as a whole is seldom addressed effectively. Her capability in both creation, realization and carrying out actual performances to the many audiences who are looking for this type of performance is unique.

I hope that the Arts Fund grant will enable her to accomplish the proposed project and bring a new drama to the community by funding this work.

Sincerely,

