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For Immediate Release
November 18, 2009

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VLAA LAUNCHES NEW WEBSITE

A completely redesigned and greatly enhanced website was launched today by the St. Louis Volunteer Lawyers and Accountants for the Arts (VLAA). With a totally fresh appearance and format, the new site contains more information, while also being more visually appealing. The new website can be viewed at the same address: www.vlaa.org.

In addition to the site's many new technical features, the graphic design and interface present a dramatic improvement. "We streamlined the site's navigation, making it more intuitive and user-friendly," said Sue Greenberg, VLAA's executive director. "Our extreme makeover goal was to make the site attractive, easy to navigate, uncluttered and expressive of how we interact with the arts community, volunteers and donors. We designed the site to allow for the ongoing addition of new content, including material prepared by our terrific law student volunteers."

The new homepage highlights VLAA's three primary focus areas: Get Help, Get Smart and Get Involved. This dual presentation allows users the ease and efficiency of rapidly downloading the nonprofit organization's newly designed application forms for legal and accounting assistance and its volunteer registration forms, as well as links to popular educational programs and publications.

The homepage also leads visitors to a new Success Stories page. "Compelling stories are our most powerful communication tool. Storytelling can help us connect with the arts community and it enhances our recruitment, fundraising — just about everything we do," Greenberg said.

"The makeover is giving us an opportunity to make our site feel more personable and friendly because we've included photos and quotes from artists, arts administrators and supporters," Greenberg said.

The new design also makes it easier for users to find web content. The new "Search" feature allows visitors to search the entire site using key words. Several pages include a "Quick Links" block that provides easy access to sample agreements or other content. For example, visitors can

easily jump with and between the extensive pages for independent filmmakers. Other content, such as VLAA's nationally acclaimed sample policies, has its own page.

The upgraded site also gives online visitors an easy, instant and secure way to make annual or recurring donations and tribute gifts. "While online giving is still relatively small compared to well established offline methods, we know it is a growth area — especially among younger donors — that cannot be ignored," Greenberg said. "And we're pleased to have our "Donate Now" portal in place for the holiday giving season."

In response to the number of increased calls from people looking for free legal services that are not arts-related, there is new page listing pro bono legal service providers in the St. Louis region. The Art Space page, which includes listings of live/work and studio space, has been reformatted. The annotated Resources page now includes recommended blogs. There also is information about what is happening with our organizations and a page for the media and bloggers.

Social media tags are embedded throughout the site so that visitors can share VLAA news and information with others on Facebook, MySpace and Delicious. The new site also promotes ArtZipper, the Regional Arts Commission's cultural calendar.

VLAA worked with Kent Safranski and Patrick Keefe of St. Louis-based The Creative Outfit to create the website. Their design reinforces VLAA's visual identity throughout the site.

Arts organizations and nonprofit services organizations are encouraged to link to the upgraded site.

"Our website is an integral part of our plan to communicate our activities and accomplishments to our arts constituents, volunteers, donors, the media and the general public. This new site makes it easy for anyone interested what we do to find information and answers to questions in a clear and concise manner," Greenberg said.

VLAA helps artists and arts organizations with their legal and accounting problems and sponsors a variety of educational programs. VLAA receives financial support from the Regional Arts Commission; the Missouri Arts Council, a state agency; and the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency.

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