Arts fund to help groups

By MARK LAMBERT

The Community Fund for the Arts, a newly created agency dedicated to raising money for arts organizations in the Baton Rouge area, announced on Thursday that 10 groups will share an estimated $510,000 that the agency plans to raise.

Ken Uffman, 1986 Fund Drive general chairman, coined the group "the United Way for the arts," saying that more than $150,000 already has been promised from Baton Rouge-area businesses and corporations.

Uffman said the job will not be an easy one.

"Right now, Baton Rouge is under severe stress financially," Uffman told the group representatives who are looking to get part of the funding. "Every corporation is being asked to curb or curtail their expenses. This is the environment we are in.

"We're coming after these businesses after their budgets have already been fixed for this year," he said.

Uffman said that, after reviewing the financial records of the groups looking for funds from the agency, he discovered that about 400 businesses have donated the bulk of the money dedicated to the arts in Baton Rouge.

He said he will ask 1,700 businesses and corporations to give money.

"The same group that has been insisting upon one drive for all arts organizations is being asked to put its money up front this year," he said.

The 10 groups that were named to receive funding are the Arts and Humanities Council of Greater Baton Rouge, Baton Rouge Ballet Theater, Baton Rouge Little Theater, Baton Rouge Opera, Baton Rouge Symphony Association, Foundation for Historical Louisiana, Louisiana Arts and Science Center, Playmakers of Baton Rouge, River City Festivals Association and public radio station WRKF.

Seven additional groups were named eligible to receive project assistance or development funding if additional money is available. Those groups are the Baker Heritage Museum, Baker Little Theater, Baton Rouge Gallery, Baton Rouge Gilbert & Sullivan Society, Louisiana Arts and Artists' Guild, Louisiana Ballet and Lyric Opera Theater.

"Arts are important to the life of this community," Uffman said.

"Rand McNally recognized the arts organizations in Baton Rouge as being one of the best in the country. We shouldn't let the businesses in this area let it fall on its face."