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A violin. A hammer and chisel. A coronet. A welding torch.

At first glance, replacing these items after a summer of catastrophic flooding might not seem to be a high priority, but for many University of Iowa fine arts students whose studio space and lockers were ravaged by the rising waters, losing a musical instrument or an art-making tool is like losing the very ability to turn feelings into words.

“It becomes a part of you,” said music education senior Kate Truscello about her violin, which was stored in a ground-level locker in the Voxman Music Building before flood waters overran the UI arts campus. “You know all the little nuances. It was really emotional.”

Since neither university insurance nor personal insurance will replace her violin, Truscello currently plays a borrowed instrument. Like many other fine arts students, she is trying to make do while searching for the \$4000 necessary to buy a new violin, bow, and case.

“Kate’s situation is a perfect example of why we started the Artists Recovery Fund,” says Mark Salisbury, graduate student in Higher Education and President of UE Local 896/COGS, the union representing graduate assistants at the University of Iowa. “Many fine arts students lost years of art work as well as the tools they were using to make new art. It’s like loosing your past and freezing your present.”

The Artists Recovery Fund is a charitable gift fund started by graduate students at the University of Iowa and assisted by members of the Campaign to Organize Graduate Students (COGS)/UE Local 896 after hearing of the estimated 50-75 students who lost tools, instruments, and artwork in the summer’s floods. Affected UI student artists and musicians will be able to apply for money to replace their tools and instruments starting in January, 2009.

On October 23, Salisbury and a committee of UI graduate students will host the first of several benefit concerts at the Old Brick Church and Community Center, 26 East Market Street, Iowa

City, to raise money for the Artists Recovery Fund. The concert will feature an array UI School of Music student ensembles. Ticket prices are \$10 in advance and \$13 at the door.

The second concert on the evening of November 13 will feature Iowa folk musician Greg Brown, the improv comedy troupe Comics in Action, local songwriters Bill Peterson and Nikki Lunden, and members of the UI Juggling Club. Ticket prices are \$25 before and \$30 the day of the performance. Both concerts will begin at 7:30 PM.

“One of the attractions of Iowa City is the quality of the arts and culture,” said Salisbury. Creating the Artists Recovery Fund is our way of thanking those who keep that reputation alive. It’s also a way to ensure that this emerging cohort of artists can continue the tradition.”

The fund is maintained by the Community Foundation of Johnson County. Donations from community members and organizations can be directed to The Artists Recovery Fund, c/o Community Foundation of Johnson County, 325 E. Washington St., Iowa City, IA 52240. For further information go to www.communityfoundationofjohnsoncounty.org or call (319) 337-0483.

Ticket information for both shows is available by calling 337-5074 or by going to the COGS web site at www.cogs.org.

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