



DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SERVICES
Economic Development Division
Urbana Arts & Culture Program Monthly Progress Report
2nd Tuesday of the Month– May 12th, 2020

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Introduction

The following Urbana Arts & Culture Program Monthly Progress Report describes activities of the Arts & Culture Program for the Urbana Arts & Culture Commission. The report includes information regarding projects that are in progress, recent requests and recommendations from the public, staff activities, and upcoming events.

COVID-19 Crisis Impact

- **Suspension of Programs/Events:** The Urbana Arts and Culture Program suspended all in-person events and programs in response to the COVID-19 crisis when Illinois first went under the Governor's order in mid-March. Staff are following guidelines set forth in the Illinois Five-Phase Reopening Plan and consulting public health guidance. Some events are being held virtually and Urbana Arts and Culture staff are working to share relief program information, resources for local artists, and continue various initiatives.
- **Staffing Changes & Accommodations:** The Urbana Arts and Culture Program staff continue to work from home with minor visits to the office as needed. City of Urbana offices remain closed to the public. Essential services are still in operation. The Summer Youth Employment Grant received by the Urbana Arts and Culture Program in the amount of \$3,150 to fund two high school summer interns was approved by Urbana City Council and hiring efforts are underway. Interns will work virtually until further notice.

Updates on Current Projects

- **Urbana Arts Grants:** The Urbana Arts and Culture Program awarded \$88,000 to artists, arts organizations, and festival presenters for 38 creative projects that enrich the lives of Urbana residents and visitors in the 2020 cycle. Nearly all grantees have completed contracts and many have already received initial grant payments.
- **Art in the Time of Quarantine Youth Exhibition:** The Urbana Arts and Culture Program is working with (listed alphabetically): Chambanamoms, Krannert Art Museum, KOOP Adventure Play, and Museum of the Grand Prairie to organize a youth arts exhibition collaboratively with local art teachers and the greater public. Students are invited to submit digital images of work in any medium interpreting their time in quarantine. Pieces gathered from this project will be compiled and displayed in a video airing on Urbana Public Television and archived by the Museum of the Grand Prairie for potential use as future historical documents. Students of all ages around Champaign County are encouraged to submit their artwork.

- **Virtual Events:** In collaboration with Chambanamoms, KOOP Adventure Play, and Museum of the Grand Prairie, Urbana Arts and Culture Program has helped spearhead virtual events designed to keep the community feeling together during times of separation. These include:

 - #ChalkYourWalk, *weekly on Fridays*
 - Hearts for Healthcare on National Doctor Day, *March 30th*
 - Haiku from Home, *April 2020 in honor of National Poetry Month*

- **Urbana's Inaugural Poet Laureate, Will Reger:** The City of Urbana's inaugural Poet Laureate, Will Reger, had to cancel a number of in-person events, appearances, and initiatives due to the COVID-19 crisis. The following initiatives were held virtually with much success:

 - Poets on a Park Bench (potentially converting to a video interview)
 - Postcard Poetry Project (becoming a digital archive rather than exhibition)
 - Poems on Glass (continuing normally without unveiling events)
 - Request-A-Poem from Poet Laureate, Will Reger

- **Young Artist's Studio:** In collaboration with The Urbana Free Library, the Urbana Arts and Culture Program will now be offering Young Artist's Studio workshops virtually using Zoom. Participants are asked to register on The Urbana Free Library's website to obtain the link and password. The first in this virtual series of workshops will feature *Kids Learn Filmmaking!* with Thomas Nicol, one of the Founders of Pens to Lens. This event will be held on May 17th, 2020 at 3pm. All upcoming Young Artist's Studio workshops will take place virtually until further notice.

- **Urbana's Downtown Get Down:** The City of Urbana Arts & Culture Program, Urbana Park District, 40 North Champaign County Arts Council, The Urbana Free Library, and the Urbana Business Association collaborate to present the Downtown Get Down, a downtown events series that takes place on the 4th Saturday of the month May-August on Main Street in the heart of Downtown. The series features live concerts, DJs, an artist's street market, kids zone, inflatables, games, live arts demos, performances, and specials in participating downtown businesses. The committee anticipates the current COVID-19 Crisis to impact all summer Downtown Get Down events in recognition of Governor JB Pritzker's order and five-phased reopening plan. The committee is waiting for special event guidance currently being jointly drafted between Urbana, Champaign, and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The Downtown Get Down planning committee will explore alternative avenues for continuing to nurture the local arts and culture scene and bolster area businesses. Staff invite perspectives and feedback from the Urbana Arts and Culture Commission.

- **Art at the Market:** Urbana Business Association was forced to cancel the remaining indoor farmer's markets in Lincoln Square Mall. While Urbana's Market in the Square is up and running outdoors with safety precautions in place, all Art at the Market Concerts are canceled for the foreseeable future. Notice has gone out to all who had booked with our program.
- **Murals on Glass/Urbana Utility Wrap Program:** Murals on Glass selection *In the Sunshine* by BLACKMAU (Kamau Grantham and Stacey Robinson) will be installed on Cunningham Township's front windows now that spring is here.

Additionally, the jury selected 8 approved artworks for utility boxes. Installation of both Murals on Glass and the Utility Box Murals will take place come spring. In the meantime, Urbana Arts and Culture Program continues to seek sponsors for utility box murals.

- **COVID-19 Relief for Individual Artists & Arts and Cultural Organizations:** The City of Urbana Arts & Culture Coordinator has been in close communication with the local arts and culture community to promote various relief programs and upcoming grant deadlines.

In a joint effort with Illinois Humanities, the Illinois Arts Council Agency has launched emergency relief grantmaking initiatives totaling \$1.3M. Funding for the grants is made possible by Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act allocations to the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Illinois Arts Council Agency (IACA) Relief Funds are dedicated to organizations throughout Illinois with budgets of less than \$500,000. Grants of \$3,000 each will be available to organizations who have received funding from IACA since 2018. For details about IACA's guidelines visit <https://arts.illinois.gov/emergency-relief-fund>. **Both Illinois Humanities and the Illinois Arts Council will accept applications through May 15 at 5:00 PM.**

Artist Relief will provide individual artists with rapid, unrestricted \$5,000 grants and other immediate resources. **Applications are now open for Cycle II, which closes at 11:59pm ET on May 21st.** The organizations are also gathering information through a COVID-19 Impact Survey for Artists and Creative Workers as an informational resource to the field. (www.artistrelief.org)

The Americans for the Arts Relief Guide is an excellent resource detailing COVID-19 resources here: shorturl.at/iwCDP.

National Endowment for the Humanities NEH CARES: Cultural Organizations provides emergency relief grants provide up to \$300,000 to cultural nonprofits to support a range of humanities activities across the fields of education, preservation and access, public programming, digital humanities, and scholarly research through December 31, 2020. Funding may be used for short-term activities that emphasize retaining or hiring humanities staff at cultural organizations across the country to maintain or adapt critical programs during the pandemic. **Deadline: May 11.**

WESTAF: Awards of up to \$20,000. The WESTAF CARES Relief Fund provides general operating support to eligible arts and culture organizations impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Applications will be assessed on the following criteria: inclusivity, demonstrated need, artistic and cultural merit, and public and community benefit. Focus on WESTAF 13-state region with at least one grant awarded per state. **Deadline: Not Stated.**

Arts for Illinois Relief Fund: Grants up to \$30,000 based on budget size. This grant opportunity is for all arts organizations in Illinois—regardless of budget size. Organizations by, for, and about people of color will be more strongly considered for funding at this time. The majority of funds available will be for organizations located in and serving Chicago and Cook County. **Deadline: May 11.**

There is a comprehensive listing of individual artist grants nationwide on the Americans for the Arts website here. <https://www.americansforthearts.org/by-topic/disaster-preparedness/coronavirus-covid-19-resource-and-response-center>

- **Tier III Urbana Arts Grants Feedback:** The Urbana Arts and Culture Program staff are exploring the impact of COVID-19 on Tier III Grants, particularly as these represent larger festival grants, many of which have already been impacted by the Governor's order and five-phased reopening plan. Staff would like to initiate a discussion of Urbana Arts and Culture Commissioner feedback and suggestions related to Tier III grantees during this public health crisis.