



DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Economic Development Division

Urbana Arts & Culture Program Monthly Progress Report

2nd Tuesday of the Month– September 8th, 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 is continuing to suspend the majority of in-person events and programs in response to the COVID-19 crisis. 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. Arts & Culture Interns hired through the Illinois Arts Council Summer Youth Employment Grant will close out their summer internships this month. We CU interns have been offered an opportunity to extend their work into the fall. One college student is completing a James Scholar Project with the Urbana Arts and Culture Program focusing on building resources and programs for artists with disabilities.

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. Grantees continue to work with the Urbana Arts and Culture Coordinator to address planning issues arising from COVID-19. Many grant projects will be completed this month or before next commission meeting, including the following:
 - *Virtual* CU Black and African Arts Festival
 - Vibrant Public Mural (123 Main in Downtown Urbana)
 - Writers of Oya
 - *Virtual* CU Folk and Roots Festival
 - *Virtual* Pygmalion

- **The Great ARTdoors:** The Great ARTdoors, a new collaboration between the Spurlock Museum, the Urbana Park District, the Champaign Park District, the Urbana Arts and Culture Program, and 40 North, is awarding selected local artists stipends to create outdoor art installations in several Champaign and Urbana parks and community gardens. This program is guided by the belief that public art has the ability to visually and intellectually activate spaces by connecting people and sparking dialogue. This is a meaningful opportunity to create something experimental, interactive, and engaging. This project is also committed to supporting local artists, prioritizing underserved communities, and ensuring accessibility for all. The 10 selected artists will receive a \$1,000 stipend and the artwork will be featured in 1 of 10 designated locations. The committee met and selected 10 artists and a formal announcement will be made this month.

Designated Urbana locations include: Chief Shemauger Park (1001 E Kerr Ave, Victory Park (1000 E Green St), Weaver Park (2205 E Main St), South Ridge Park (3008 S Myra Ridge Dr.), and Lierman Neighborhood Community Garden (Washington & Lierman).

Another element of the Great ARTdoors is the outdoor community gallery. Community members are encouraged to be creative by transforming their windows, balconies, porches, yards, and neighborhoods into art that expresses their thoughts and feelings. This outdoor gallery inspires neighbors to further explore their neighborhoods while maintaining social distancing guidelines. Please share images of your creations on all social media platforms using hashtag #cuARTdoors

- **Art Inspired in Urbana Highlights:** The Urbana Arts and Culture Program and The Urbana Free Library are collaborating to produce weekly highlights of local artists on social media. Each post includes a digital image of their artwork, a portrait, a comment from the artist, and weblinks to purchasing the artist's work. Posts appear Mondays on social media.
- **Urbana's Inaugural Poet Laureate, Will Reger:** The City of Urbana's inaugural Poet Laureate, Will Reger, has had his tenure officially extended until the end of October due to COVID-19 disruptions.
 - Poets in a Pandemic (*formerly Poets on a Park Bench; converted to virtual format*)
 - Postcard Poetry Project (*becoming a digital archive rather than exhibition*)
 - Poems on Glass (*unveilings announced later this month*)
 - Request-A-Poem from Poet Laureate, Will Reger (*request via email*)
 - Urbana Poetry Pros(e) Summer Initiative (*Collaboration with Urbana Park District, The Urbana Free Library, and Urbana Arts and Culture*)
- **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 next workshop features Ngoma Expressions with a *African Dance for Kids!* Workshop on Sunday, September 20th, 2020. All upcoming Young Artist's Studio workshops will take place virtually until further notice.

- **Artists Reimagine the World Youth Exhibition:** The Urbana Arts and Culture Program collaborated with Chabnamoms, Krannert Art Museum, KOOP Adventure Play, and Museum of the Grand Prairie who launched Art in a Time of Quarantine earlier this summer, are joining together with community groups and youth organizations to organize another youth exhibition, inviting teen artists to lend their creative work towards visualizing a world without systemic racism and other 'isms that centers peace, justice, and unity. While this initiative is still in development, exhibition opportunities will include digital display, public access TV, and in-person gallery/museum exhibitions. Planning is still underway and dates are forthcoming.
- **Intern Projects:** Urbana Arts and Culture Interns continue to lead new initiatives to support Urbana Arts and Culture Program goals. The following is currently underway:
 - Relief Cold Calling Arts and Cultural Organizations (*relief and resource sharing*)
 - Translation Support (*translating documents into Spanish, French, Mandarin*)
 - Arts Programming for Seniors (*collaborating with senior centers*)
 - Web, Social Media, & Newsletter Updates (*inclusive of social media campaigns*)
 - Teen Artist Programs (*listening session, recommendations, research*)
 - Cultural Programming (*African dance workshop, Teens Reimagine, Outreach*)
 - Sensory-Sensitive Programming & Initiatives for Artists with Disabilities
 - Art Now! Mini-Series (*film support and editing*)
 - Film Projects for UAC Promotion (*film support and editing*)
 - Professional Development (*career inventory, mentorship, resume, etc.*)
- **Teen Poets Rising:** Urbana Arts and Culture Program is partnering with Writers of Oya to produce a 15 minute video of teen poets to premiere as part of Pygmalion's Poetry Marathon, held virtually this year due to COVID-19.
- **Urbana Sculpture Project:** The City of Urbana Arts & Culture Program collaborates with Public Art League to select sculptures for placement in the City of Urbana. Public Art League has recently unveiled their Class of 2020 Sculptures approved by the jury for placement.
- **Art for Nourishment Program:** Urbana Arts and Culture Program is partnering with local food distribution programs to present Art for Nourishment, a program to share the creative work of local artists in the spirit of cultivating community and connection. The artworks of twelve selected local artists will be featured on a 5x7 prints distributed in meal kits for 25 local families each served by volunteer food distribution programs in Urbana. A total of 300 local families will receive an art print. Art for Nourishment is organized by the Urbana Arts and Culture Program in collaboration with the following local mutual aid food distribution efforts: Bucket Brigade, Silver Hearts, and The Tiger Market of Urbana School District #116.
- **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. 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>

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