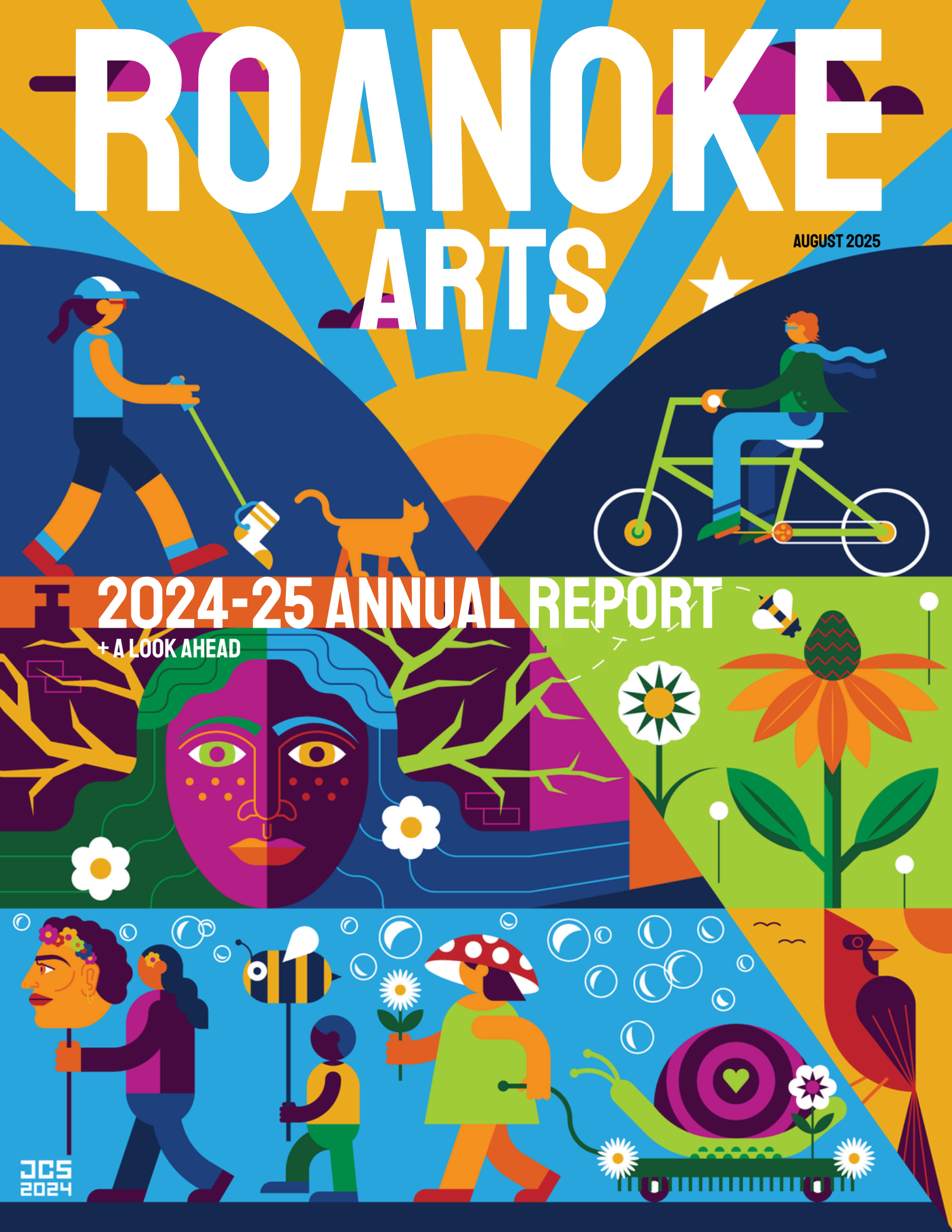


# ROANOKE ARTS

AUGUST 2025

## 2024-25 ANNUAL REPORT

+ A LOOK AHEAD



# ROANOKE ARTS

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**2024-2025**

Chair **William Penn**  
Vice Chair **Donna Davis**  
Treasurer **John Hitchins**  
Recording Secretary **Emily Clark / Melissa Murray**  
Placemaking Chair **Ben Bazak**  
Planning Chair **John Cornthwait, Jr.**  
Collections Chair **Lauren Woodson**  
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Commissioner **Becky Carr**  
Commissioner **Dr. Elizabeth “e” Dulemba**  
Commissioner **Charlene Graves**  
Commissioner **John Hitchins, Jr.**  
Commissioner **MaryJean Levin**  
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Councilmember **Peter Volosin**

City Manager **Valmarie H. Turner**  
Deputy City Manager **Angie O’Brien**  
Deputy City Manager **Sam Roman**  
Economic Development Director **Marc Nelson**

Arts & Culture Coordinator **Douglas Jackson**





## A NOTE FROM THE CHAIR



The arts and humanities are more important than ever. With attacks on education, culture, libraries, federal agencies, grant programs and even our neighbors, we must ask what kind of society, what kind of community we want to be.

At the Roanoke Arts Commission, we believe that the arts are integral to our explorations of what it means to be human on this planet, how we want to live with and care for each other, and what our role is individually and collectively as we go about our lives, seeking, being, and loving. It may look like art, but it feels like life.

We've grown quite a bit in the decade that I've served on this body. We've seen strong community support as we've strategically positioned resources to help look at these questions.



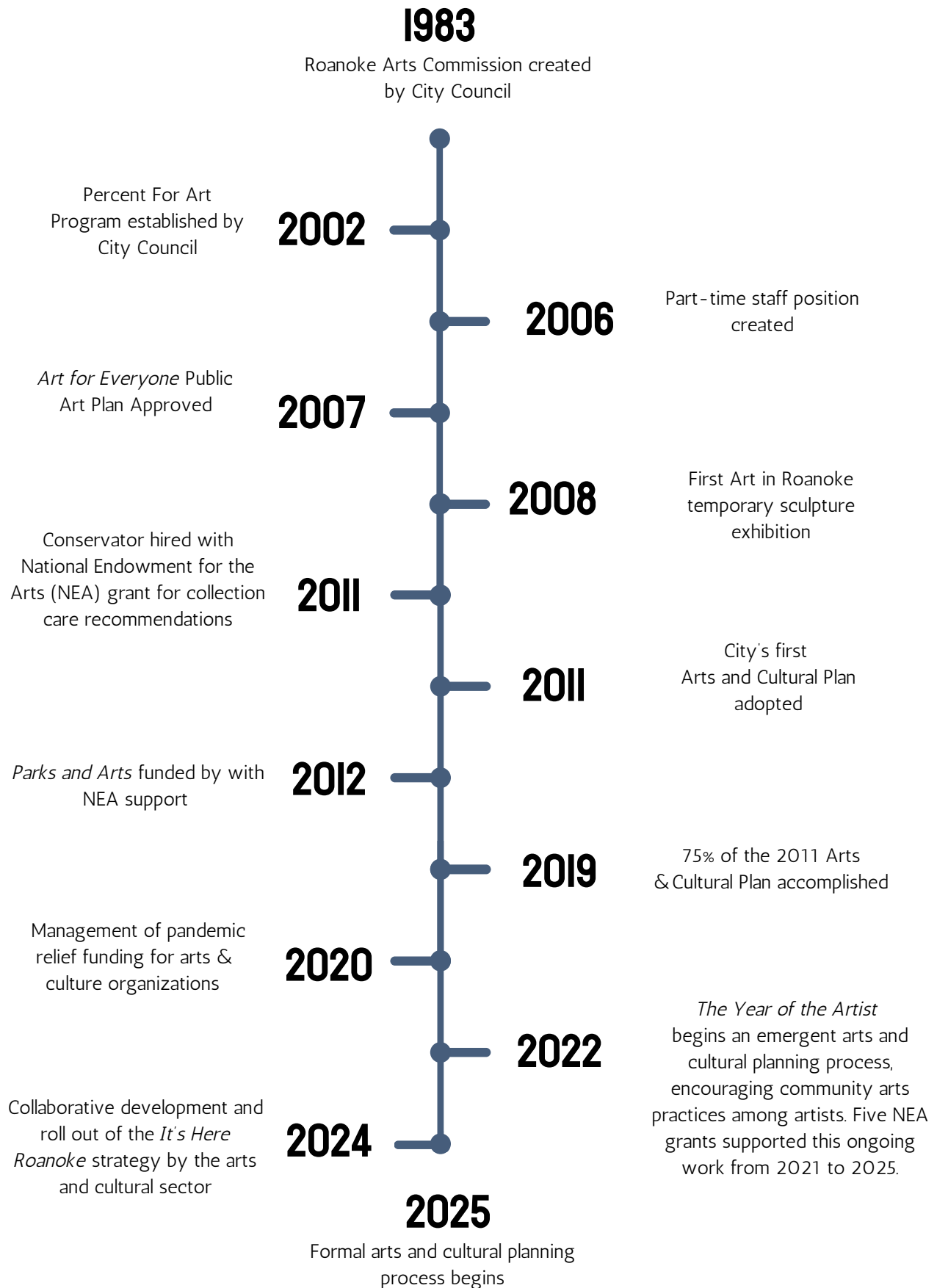
That growth, however, is not measured in budget dollars. Instead it's clearest in the number of strong relationships that we can foster, the ability of neighbors to work with each other to co-create their place, and in the number of residents who feel that they belong to that place and to each other.

We're a small group of volunteers who care about our home. We thank you for growing with us.

Sincerely,

*William Penn*  
William Penn  
Chair

# RAC AT A GLANCE



# CONTENTS

PROGRESS ★ ART ★ FUN

## 3 IT'S HERE ROANOKE

Roanoke Arts Commission Chair William Penn shares the importance of the arts and humanities today.

## 10 STORY WORKS

A 60-year-old theatre technique gets us building relationships and planning together.

## 14 CITY FUNDING FOR ARTS & CULTURE

More than \$300,000 in programs fueled nonprofit arts engagements throughout the city in FY2025.

## 18 ART BY BUS

Catch up with our eighth transit residency. Plus: new shelters!

## 28 LOOKING FORWARD

## EXPLORE THE FY 2026 BUDGET

## 20 GIANT DRAGONFLY LANDS IN ELMWOOD

The Larger than Life exhibition welcomes oversized sculpture to the Art Walk.

## 24 BIG ART, BIGGER JOY

The third parade was the largest yet, filled with giant puppets, community-created art, and a whole lot of joy.

## ON THE COVER

### Joseph "Cody" Statler

Radical Welcome, 2024  
Digital Art

From the exhibition *Cover Story*, Roanokers Celebrate the Region, this tribute to Roanoke is inspired by the many artists, clubs, and organizations creating our city every day.



## 6 IT'S HERE ROANOKE COLLECTIVE ARTS MARKETING



## ARTS CONNECT NEIGHBORS

Roanoke neighbors have gathered around more than 100 activities from an innovative arts and culture catalog.



## MURALS: AN INVITATION TO ART

Roanoke's mural effort have helped emerging artists grow to larger canvases and engaged more of the community in the love of public art.



# CONNECTIONS

Outreach is a fundamental aspect of the Arts Commission's work. You'll see us this communication in many different ways, from social media to one on one conversations in the corner of the room. Let us know how we can help your neighborhood, your organization, or your family be in the know about arts and culture in Roanoke.

## NEWSLETTER

Art Mouse and Hoppy are still at it. Chief Communicator and Artist in Residence Cory Greer offered a new scene at the top of each Monday morning newsletter, helping to drive the impressive 25% growth in subscribers. Sign up at [www.roanokearts.org/contact](http://www.roanokearts.org/contact).

2026 Subscribers:  
52 Issues  
Average open rate: 36%



## IT'S HERE ROANOKE EVENTS & PRESENTATIONS

We're out there connecting at events and giving presentations, and it's not just the Roanoke Arts Commission, but artists and partners from across the arts and cultural sector. We're all ambassadors in the work of the arts in the community, and our community is wonderfully represented.

With staff support from the Roanoke Arts Commission, the Roanoke Cultural Endowment, the Taubman Museum of Art, and Jefferson Center, this year, the city's arts and cultural leaders rolled out the *It's Here Roanoke* strategy. It's the culmination of two years of conversations, explorations and planning. Learn more at [www.itshereroanoke.org](http://www.itshereroanoke.org).

Here are some of the events and presentations we've been a part of. the following community events:

- GO Fest
- Daisy Art Parade
- Roanoke Arts Pop
- Symphony Under the Stars
- Local Colors
- Association of Fundraising Professionals VA, Blue Ridge Chapter
- Roanoke Women's Foundation
- Virginia Tech Arts Leadership Graduate Program





# OUR COMMITTEES

advance core components of the City's *Arts and Cultural Plan*. Participation in these hard-working teams is open to city residents without appointment to the Arts Commission, with the exception of the funding committee, which requires City appointment or approval.

The Collections Committee advises the Commission on temporary exhibitions and the permanent work in the public art collection. It emphasizes the work of regional artists and oversees all aspects of acquisition and maintenance.

The Funding Committee reviews funding applications from nonprofit arts and cultural organizations and individual artists for City grant opportunities. They participate in grantee monitoring and program development.

2026 Chair: Catherine Koebel Stromberg.



The Placemaking Committee advances our community and its places through—community-driven and artist-led projects that amplify the voices and creative energy of Roanoke residents, neighborhoods, and partners.

2026 Chair: Ben Bazak.

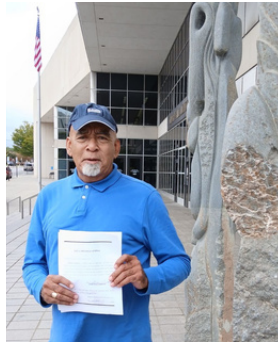
The Planning Committee will oversee the development and monitoring of the next *City of Roanoke Arts and Cultural Plan*. The committee has undertaken the discovery and the initial listening phase and this fall will begin the planning and writing phases. In early 2026, the committee will roll out a plan for the coming 5-10 years.

2026 Chair: John Cornthwait

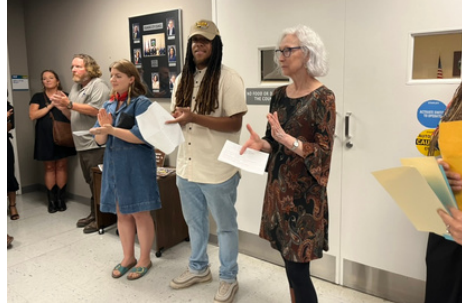


# CREATING EVERY DAY... TOGETHER

We're busy creating every day the place we want to be, and our community team reaches far beyond the 15 members of our Council-appointed commission, four committees and selection panels. Our **ambassadors for building a welcoming, just and inclusive community** through the arts include artists and organizational partners, neighborhood leaders and residents, volunteers and professionals, and a whole lot of paper-mâché critters.









# INTENTIONALLY LISTENING WITH STORY CIRCLES



This year a primary theme for the Roanoke Arts Commission has been **listening**.

Through the Arts Connect Neighbors program, more than 70 artists in residence, neighborhood artists, neighbors, and volunteers have been trained in a story circle practice. Virginia Tech Theatre Professor Bob Leonard and Artist in Residence Katie Trozzo led training and implementation efforts in Roanoke from October 2024 through June 2025.

Story Circles were conceived during the civil rights movement in Mississippi in 1964, when theatre artist John O'Neal came to understand that as an outsider, there was no reason for him to be trusted by residents in his efforts to register voters.

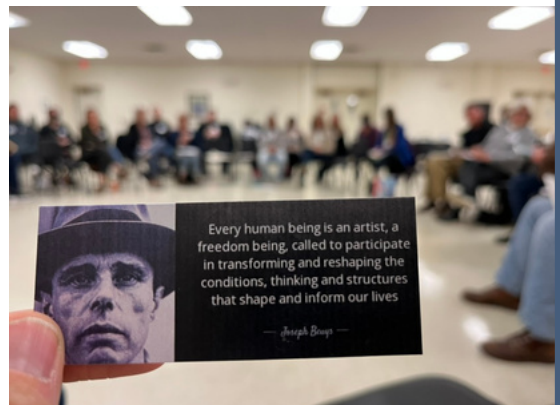
A story circle is a group of five to eight people led by a facilitator. With a prompting question in mind, each participant tells a story in just a few minutes. Everyone else listens, without interrupting, until it is their turn to share their story. At the end, participants share in a cross-talk in which they identify patterns and story similarities.

By setting up welcoming spaces for intentional listening, the Roanoke Arts Commission hopes to foster a greater sense of belonging, strengthen relationships, and build trust.

Now we're connecting neighbors and celebrating neighborhoods in order to develop arts-based community benefit projects and create long-term neighborhood plans. We're merging story circles into the arts and cultural planning process, the work of neighborhood artists in residence, and specific community interests such as addressing homelessness and organizing renters around tenants rights.

Story circles will help shape art projects, and a whole lot more! We're just getting started. Doesn't it make sense to start by listening?

Learn more at [www.roanokearts.org/story](http://www.roanokearts.org/story)



# Still Connecting Us

Roanoke's new edition of the *Arts Connect Neighbors* catalog has just what we need to reconnect.



Building and maintaining neighborhood connections requires intention. We're distracted, over-worked, sometimes overwhelmed by the world, and we're trying to fit it all in. But what if we could hit the pause button and use the arts to simply bring us together? What would happen next? Could we envision an even stronger neighborhood through stronger relationships with those in the closest proximity to us?

These were the questions behind *Arts Connect Neighbors*, an experiment of the Roanoke Arts Commission, the Roanoke Cultural Endowment, and Roanoke Neighborhood Advocates.

With more than 100 activities hosted by nearly 50 neighborhood and neighborhood partners, we decided that the experiment worked, putting more than \$150,000 into the hands of artists running the program, performing, coaching, teaching, and creating art with neighbors.



With two NEA grants now closed out, we have augmented City funds with more than \$95,000 in federal dollars. While termination of the second NEA grant by the Trump administration was a blow, we are committed to continuing the effort. The word on the street was very positive, we had emerging artists asking how to participate, and neighborhood requests were still coming in. So we're keeping it going.

We've added 26 new activities to many returning ones for a total of 60 neighbor-connecting activities in volume two of the catalog, launched on July 29, 2025 on the Elmwood Art Walk. So what are you waiting for? Join the fun!

## NEIGHBORHOODS AND PARTNERS TO DATE

- 11th Street NW
- American Red Cross
- Apple Ridge Farm
- Belmont / Southeast
- Bethlehem Bible College
- Bus Riders of Roanoke Advocacy Group (BRAAG)
- Chainges, Inc.
- Community Arts Reach
- Fairington Apartments
- FEDUP
- Friends of Washington Park
- Gainsboro Southwest Neighborhood
- Gainsboro Branch Library
- Grandin Court Neighborhood Association
- Greater Deyerle
- The Hope Center
- Humble Hustle
- I Heart SE
- Indian Rock Village
- Latinas Network
- Lick Run Community Farm
- Main Branch Library
- Melrose Branch Library
- Melrose Plaza
- Melrose-Rugby Neighborhood Forum
- Melrose Towers
- Mountain View
- Noble Neighborhood Watch
- Norwich
- Northwest Roanoke Partners
- Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority
- Old Lick Cemetery
- Old Southwest, Inc.
- Old Mountain Road Neighborhood Watch
- Perry Park
- Price Memorial AME Zion Church
- Grandin Place / Raleigh Court
- Raleigh Court Branch Library
- Riverdale / Southeast
- Rosalind Hills Baptist Church / Raleigh Court
- Screaming Vegan
- Second Helpings - Roanoke Rescue Mission
- Shenandoah West Neighborhood
- South Roanoke
- Summit Hills Neighborhood Group
- Villa Heights
- The Villages at Lincoln Terrace
- Wasena Neighborhood Forum
- West End / Hurt Park
- Wildwood
- Williamson Road



## PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

There's nothing the Arts Commission does alone. For *Arts Connect Neighbors*, two lead partner organizations stepped up to help lead the way in this important neighborhood building strategy because they saw it as a path to a stronger community and a stronger arts sector.



## ROANOKE CULTURAL ENDOWMENT

As part of the 2011 *Arts and Cultural Plan*, the community identified the need to provide ongoing, sustainable support for Roanoke's arts and culture organizations as a critical element of our community's prosperity and quality of life. They are well on their way toward building a \$20 million endowment to support our arts and cultural community.



## ROANOKE NEIGHBORHOOD ADVOCATES

With the support of the City of Roanoke's Office of Neighborhood Services, Roanoke Neighborhood Advocates (RNA) supports neighborhood-based organizations in establishing, developing, and expanding their capacities in the promotion of Roanoke neighborhoods.



# SEEN AND HEARD

## Arts Connect Neighbors

"How important it is in life to be a part of something bigger than ourselves and enjoy the rewards of laughter and fun with others."

"It was an incredible night highlighting the talent available in the Arts Connect Neighbors and the remarkable partnership of the city with our neighborhoods."

"I'm really proud of this newer neighborhood association having such a successful event."

"Such a lovely event where people got to meet their police officers and eat good food and celebrate the end of the summer."

"This allowed us to make a bigger impact in bringing people together."

"I loved how happy, proud, and supportive everyone was of one another."

"There was just an air of overwhelming positivity."

"My favorite part was hearing the stories and laughs people shared."

"This, in particular, showed us just how much we can achieve together with strong neighborhood buy-in."







## ARTS & CULTURE FUNDING

# A VIBRANT CULTURAL SCENE ATTRACTS TALENT, INVESTMENT, & VISITORS

**\$336,500**  
**GRANTED TO LOCAL**  
**ARTS & CULTURAL NONPROFITS**

Funding for arts and cultural programming is an important investment in the region's economy. In addition to creating jobs and tax revenue, these organizations are key in building the quality of life that attracts talented residents, new visitors, and capital investment.

Roanoke residents—volunteers appointed by City Council to the Roanoke Arts Commission—oversee annual funding for programs by local arts and cultural organizations. Every year, members closely review the plans and operations of applicant organizations for programs worthy of public investment.

The funded projects provide our community with opportunities for education, enlightenment, world class exhibitions, festivals, and performances that they don't have to leave town for.

Throughout the year, each organization submits quarterly reports and has a monitoring visit from staff and members of the funding committee.

*Pictured above (left to right)*

*Science Museum of Western Virginia included arts and humanities based programming in The Eye, their state of the art planetarium space. Seen here is one of the artists from the arts and film festival series.*

*Educational programming at Jefferson Center connects young musicians with top-notch training and experiences with talented musicians. Here, members of the Bluegrass Workshop play with PJ George from Old Crow Medicine Show.*

*The Spot on Kirk highlights local talent and partners with a broad swath of the community for special events. Seen here is their first ever Latin Zumba night in partnership with the Latinas Network.*

### The 2024-25 Funding Committee

- Catherine Koebel Stromberg, Chair
- Becky Carr
- MaryJean Levin
- William Penn
- Shaleen Powell

Roanoke Cultural Endowment, *Ex Officio*



Pictured above (left to right)

**Roanoke Ballet Theatre** expanded roles in this year's performance of *Snow White* to give even more dancers the opportunity to shine on stage.

Arts education is a natural on campus. Here a French class visits the **Eleanor D. Wilson Museum's** exhibition of Jean Helion: *Painting is a Language: Paris, New York, Rockbridge Baths*.

**Artemis Journal** began in 1977 and has produced 27 journals to date, celebrating art and poetry of the Blue Ridge and beyond. Local poets are seen in *Artemis* alongside major American poets such as Pulitzer Prize winner Natasha Trethewey, who participated in the 2025 Launch at the Taubman Museum of Art.



*Finding Nemo, Jr.* was performed at **Mill Mountain Theatre** from July 31 through August 11, 2024, featuring a cast of local youth. Photo courtesy of Richard Clompus.

## PROGRAMMING FUNDED IN 2024-25

**Alma Ensemble** Alma del Core

**Artemis Journal** 2025 Journal

**Blue Ridge Literacy** Arts & Culture Curriculum

**The Spot On Kirk** Local Talent Spotlight

**Eleanor D. Wilson Museum** 2025 Exhibitions

**Grandin Theatre** Grandin Theatre Film Lab

**Harrison Museum Of African American Culture**

Henry Street Heritage Festival Performances

**Historical Society Of Western Virginia a**

Roanoke History Trunks in Schools

**Jefferson Center** Performing Arts And Education

**Local Colors** Festivals And Cultural Events

**Local Environmental Agriculture Project (LEAP)**

Arts & Culture-Based Community Building

**Mill Mountain Theatre** Young Audiences Reading Series

**Mill Mountain Zoo** Art To Rescue The River

**Mish Moves Dance Company** 2025 Showcase

**Opera Roanoke** Opera performances

**Roanoke Arts Commission**

Collective Marketing Strategies

**Roanoke Ballet Theatre** *Snow White*

**Roanoke Festival In The Park**

**Roanoke Symphony Orchestra**

*Symphony Under the Stars*

**Roanoke Valley Children's Choir** Choral Workshop

**Science Museum Of Western VA** STEAM Program

**Southwest Virginia Ballet** Collaborative Performances

**Taubman Museum Of Art** Eternally New Mucha Exhibition

**Total Action for Progress:** Talent in the Star

**Virginia Children's Theatre** In-School Residencies

**Virginia Museum Of Transportation** Education Programs

**Winds Of The Blue Ridge** 2024 Series



1



## PUBLIC INVESTMENT HELPS FUEL ROANOKE'S MURAL MOVEMENT

Readily available on city streets and alleys, murals have brought new appreciation for public art in Roanoke. Neighborhood leaders and artists are identifying long-overlooked canvases in their backyard. Stewards of public infrastructure see value in using art to get out of the tag-and-cover up cycle. Revitalization specialists understand the value in murals as part of visible signs of community care worthy of attracting additional investment.

Roanoke is right there with this national trend, and the Roanoke Arts Commission (RAC) has used small public investments to strategically invest in neighborhoods, leverage private dollars, and highlight key community assets.

In 2022, the RAC's Placemaking Committee developed Art in Place, a flexible and responsive tool to invest in murals and other public facing art on both public infrastructure and private property. After piloting the program to better understand potential and best practices, the Commission used the Resident Artist program to hire muralists-in-residence Jon Murrill and Katrina Legans to help speed up the process. And it's worked: watch for five new murals coming in the next fiscal year!

### ART IN PLACE FUNDING SUPPORT

#### COMPLETED MURALS

- Barrows on Roanoke River Greenway
- City Market Building neon signs
- Campbell Ave & 4th Street, SW
- The Collective, 11th & Moorman Ave., NW
- River's Edge Park and South Jefferson Street. Wall
- SE LOVE Sign, 13th St., SE
- 9th Street Bridge & Roanoke River Greenway, SE
- 13th Street Bridge & Roanoke River Greenway, SE
- Arches, Memorial Bridge & Roanoke River Greenway
- Dorothy Gillespie Mural Rehabilitation, 2nd St., SW
- Gainsboro YMCA, Orange Ave., NW
- Lab Sports on 9th St., SE
- Hunton Lifesaving Crew, Moorman Ave., NW
- Walnut Bridge & Roanoke River Greenway, SE
- 10th Street NW & Lick Run Greenway, NW
- West End Center, Patterson Ave., SW
- Alcova Building at Church and Market streets, SE

#### UPCOMING MURALS

- Washington Park, Gainsboro, NW
- Pearl Fu Plaza, Downtown



## MURALS! continued

Each mural supported has its own goals ranging from artist development to celebration of youth and community serving organizations. Similarly, each has its own funding structure ranging from a three-way partnership between property owner, business district and the city, to leveraged private fundraising as in the case of the newly regional greenway art and amenities fund, or public invest with the requirement of the property owner preparing the property for the art.

### The 2023-24 Placemaking Committee

- Ben Bazak, Chair
- John Black
- Becky Carr
- Mandy Cribb
- Donna Davis
- Charlene Graves
- Molly Hunter
- Cindy McFall
- Jon Murrill

## MURALS COMPLETED IN FY 2025

1. West End Center on Patterson Ave., SW by Rachel Anne Morris
2. Alcova Mural on Church Ave. Downtown by Jon Murrill
3. 10th St., NW on the Lick Run Greenway by Katrina Legans.
4. Lab Sports on 9th St., SE at Riverdale by Nicole Gray and Steven Paul.
5. The Gainsboro YMCA on Orange Ave. NW by Bryce Cobbs and JC Stallings.
6. Moorman Ave. at 8th Street, a former site of the Hunton Life Saving Crew, by James Divers.
7. Walnut St. Bridge, SE by Jon Murrill



Explore Roanoke's murals  
on our online collection  
[www.roanokearts.org/murals](http://www.roanokearts.org/murals)



# ART BY BUS

## ANNUAL PARTNERSHIP PROMOTES TRANSIT



A partnership between Ride Solutions, a program of Roanoke Valley Alleghany Regional Commission; Valley Metro; the Bus Riders of Roanoke Advocacy Group; and the Roanoke Arts Commission, *Art by Bus* celebrated its seventh chapbook and visual celebration of Roanoke's public art program in September.

Lindsey Hull (below, center) wrote *The Mountains Rumble* during a two-month transit residency. The work explores the variety of transit users and the changing landscape beyond bus windows. The art she selected for the cover is a work by renowned artist Ray Kass (pictured below at left).

Partners celebrated the project with the community with a bus ride and a reading at Third Street Station. This year, illustrator Joe Lee is riding the routes to create a chapbook to be launched in September.





# ART BY BUS

# SOUTHEAST ROANOKE'S NEW BUS SHELTERS CELEBRATE POLLINATORS

## ARTIST IN RESIDENCE MOLLY KERNAN WORKED WITH NEIGHBORS TO DEVELOP DESIGNS FOR THREE SHELTERS—WITH MORE COMING!

A real benefit of recent changes in the Percent for Art Policy is that we can work alongside neighborhood artists in residence to develop projects in an organic fashion. In the past, projects all went out in a bidding process across the country, and many times our local artists weren't selected because they didn't have the public art experience.

With a focus on local artists, talented folks like Southeast resident Molly Kernan can try their hand, building experience and a resume to compete for projects in other communities. And we get fantastic outcomes in the form of art projects developed by the community.

Take Molly's pollinator bus shelters. This project, led by Roanoke Valley Alleghany Regional Commission, Valley Metro, and I Heart SE, just needed an artist. Fortunately we already had a neighborhood artist in place.

As a neighborhood artist in residence, Molly worked closely with I Heart SE in preparing for the Daisy Art Parade and activating the neighborhood through art. (By the way, I Heart SE is now a nonprofit organization and Molly has stepped up to serve on their board of directors.)



The shelters were manufactured locally at Renaissance Contract Lighting and Furnishings. Molly (below in green) was able to tour the facility and pick out colors for the shelters. She hopes that while protecting transit riders from the elements, the shelters add some whimsy and invite the community to learn more about pollinators.

The designs include butterflies, bees, bats, coneflowers and honey combs. Look for three shelters around southeast neighborhoods, and watch for more coming soon!



# LARGER THAN LIFE

THE EVERYDAY MADE BIG



## ELMWOOD & BEYOND

*The latest on sculpture*

The Roanoke Arts Commission's Collections Committee was busy this spring lining up the new show in Elmwood Park. Pictured (1) are members of the committee with interns Sierra Siv (third from left) and Elani Spencer. Of course, we couldn't do any of this work without our partners at Parks and Recreation pictured (2) installing Karen Pannebaker's *Painting the Piliated Woodpecker* (8).

The theme for the *Larger than Life* call for over-scaled works was inspired by George, our *Trojan Dog*, who is celebrating 15 years since he first appeared in temporary form in Grandin Village. Happy Birthday, George!

The whimsy of oversize sculpture inspired seven new works that were created for this show. We love it when the calls spark artists to create! Six of the seven are in place, but a customs issue with a component for the seventh has caused a delay as of press time.



### The 2024-25 Collections Committee

- Lauren Woodson, Chair
- Aila Boyd
- e Dulemba
- John Hitchins
- Demetrius Johnson
- William Penn



## SCULPTURE



We're very happy with the work that has been installed. It's a great deal of fun for committee members to meet artists such as Richmond's Rob Readfearn (3), seen at the left of his *Toothbrush* with committee member John Hitchins.

Jonathan Chandler of Halifax (4) kept his same pad this year with a big red *Stiletto*, a fun entry from this former shop and agriculture teacher.

Local teacher and art walk veteran Dan Kuehl brought us a giant cord and electrical plug and outlet *In a Tangle* (5).

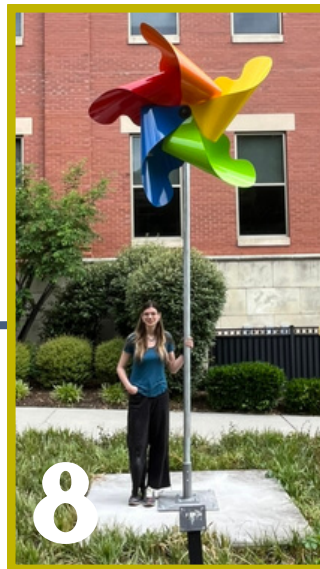
Maryland's Kirk Seese of Alien Artifacts Studio kept his pad as well, replacing *The Feathers Three* with a giant *Dragonfly* (6).

New to the art walk and new to public sculpture is New Jersey's Maya Sorhage (8) with her *Pinwheel*.

We had one holdover from the *Artist at Work* show. Arts Commissioner Ben Bazak (9) celebrates Dylan Collins' *Mind Started Rambling* at its new home in front of Raleigh Court Library.

## The 2025-27 Art Walk Selection Panel

- Molly Hagan, Play Roanoke
- Demetrius Johnson, Roanoke Arts Commission
- Laura Reilly, Play Roanoke
- Annie Schultz, Art on 1st
- Tina Workman, Downtown Roanoke, Inc



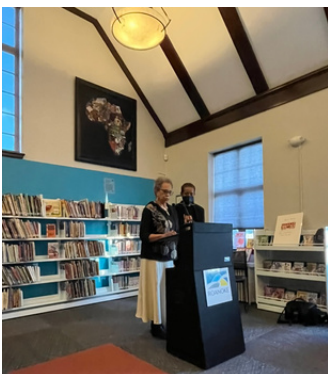
# RECENT GIFTS

## BOOST THE CITY'S PUBLIC ART COLLECTION

Recent gifts to the City of Roanoke have added five new works to the collection.

The Collections Committee of the Roanoke Arts Commission carefully considers potential donations, weighing the City's ability to display and care for the work, the significance of the work, and the role it might play in a municipal collection.

Adding a work to the collection is a long-term commitment, requiring the discernment of a thoughtful body. The committee makes a recommendation to the full Commission. And if the work is valued at more than \$5,000 City Council must approve the gift.



This year, Arts Commissioner Charlene Graves donated her work *African Mosaic*, which now hangs in the Gainsboro Library. At left (from left to right) is Gayle Graves, the artist's sister, and the artist. A crowd of about 50 people joined members of the Roanoke Arts Commission, library staff and city officials for the celebration of the work in February. Above are a few of the Arts Commissioners with the artist on the day of their vote accepting the work into the collection. Thank you Charlene!

### RECENT GIFTS

#### CHARLENE GRAVES

*African Mosaic*, 1991-93

Acrylic on canvas

Gift of the artist

#### BRETT LAGUE

*Book Spot*, 2018

Watercolor

Gift of Jim and Lucy Lee

#### MARY BOXLEY BULLINGTON

*Flowers and Pods*, 2007

Oil over gesso on paper

Gift of Jim and Lucy Lee

#### HAROLD LITTLE

*Gazebo*, 1971

Etching

Gift of Jim and Lucy Lee

#### PATRICK BRANCH

*Sunflowers*, 1990

Oil on Canvas

Gift of Betty Branch

The Roanoke Arts Commission expresses gratitude to the donors for the generosity of their gifts.

Find images and locations of the works at the City's online art collection at [www.roanokearts.org/public-art](http://www.roanokearts.org/public-art)



# ARTISTS IN RESIDENCE

**BUILD COMMUNITY,  
SHAPE PROJECTS, AND  
LEAD THE WAY**

The 2024-25

**Artists in Residence**

**Lead Artist, Daisy Art Parade**

Brian Counihan

**Neighborhood Artists**

Jane Gabrielle

Molly Kernan

Robyn Mitchell

Hannah Patrick

Tahitia Woods

**Teaching Artists**

Jasmine Beane

Lauren Gault

Jennifer Hayward

Byron "Poe" Mack

Mike Moran

Katie Stueckle

**Facilitators**

Joy Truskowski, Lead

Ryan Balbach

Karina Martinez

**Muralists**

Jon Murrill, Lead

Katrina Legans

**Placemaking**

Carrie Gault

Natalia Michel

Brandon Underwood

**Trainers**

Bob Leonard

Katie Trozzo

**Chief Communicator**

Cory Greer

Our artists in residence spend meaningful time working on community projects aligned with larger strategies that center arts and culture in community improvement and change efforts.

This year, artists advanced *Arts Connect Neighbors*, the Daisy Art Parade, the Art in Place Mural Strategy, and Percent-for-Art-funded placemaking projects, largely in partnership with Play Roanoke.

We learn from the artists and we hope in turn they learn how to work with the City of Roanoke, submit proposals for public art calls, build stronger relationships between neighborhood leaders and the City, and apply their creative process in the community around them.

We work with artists because of their thoughtful understanding of their unique creative process, artists' seemingly natural alignment of their personal goals with social impact, and their willingness to take risks. We think they can model the way for all of us as we each apply our own creativity, making this place we call home.





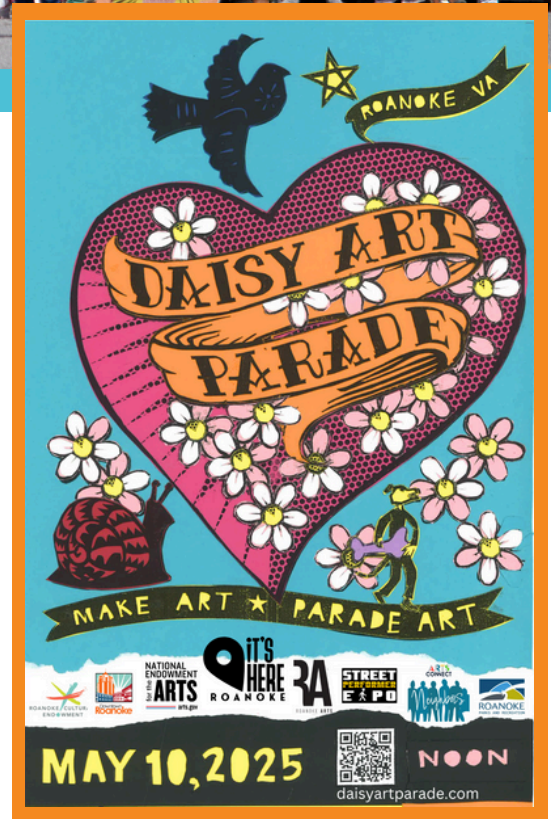


# DAISY ART PARADE

**FORTY COMMUNITY GROUPS BUILD COMMUNITY & CELEBRATE ACROSS GENERATIONS**

An estimated **800 local art makers** converged on Downtown Roanoke on Saturday, May 10. The parade is the culmination of months of preparation, and that's the real heart of Brian Counihan's community-building strategy. "Get together to make art with people you think you know or maybe don't know at all, and see what **new relationships** you build. It's really powerful. Conversations move from the practiced elevator pitch to deeper and more relaxed conversations. That's relationship building that we draw on in **building community**."

This third year saw parade participation double again with greater inclusion of neighborhood 'krewes' (collections of individuals who may not regularly work together on projects) across many generations. The parade is also growing into a real **giant puppet parade**, as we learn as a community how to build and mobilize large interpretations of important figures in our lives in the Star City.







All photos by Renee Spaar

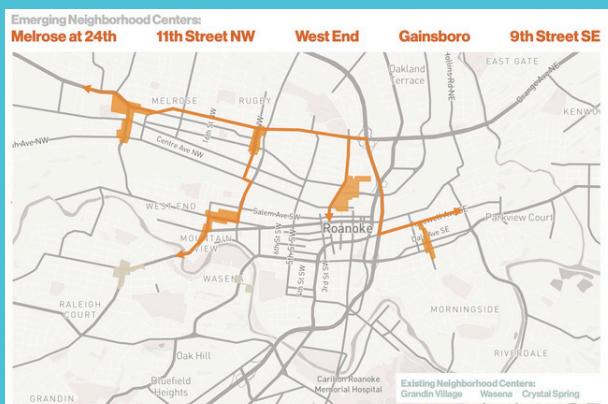
# DAISY ART NEIGHBORHOOD ACTIVATIONS

## HOW CAN THE ARTS HELP NEIGHBORS ENERGIZE THEIR CORNER OF ROANOKE?

With the Emerging Neighborhoods Vision Report, we have a playbook for how to help neighbors attract investment to historic neighborhood centers. It calls out the power of the arts, and we're beginning to organize around them. A group of stakeholders are participating in the state's Mobilizing Main Street effort. Neighborhood artists in residence are doing the slow and steady work of relationship building. We might just be on the cusp of a new era for neighborhood investment.

The Daisy Art activation strategy is a way to transfer the relationships and energy of the parade into making the corner an active place where neighbors can gather and where public and private investment may help residents achieve their goals. What would it look like to have the joy and collective energy of the parade in the neighborhood every day?

Let's find out, together.





# ELANI SPENCER

## ROANOKE YOUTH POET LAUREATE



Roanoke's inaugural Youth Poet Laureate Elani Spencer, extended her FY24 term to lead additional poetry and civics projects.

Elani developed a bilingual (Spanish and English) poetry workshop called "Threads of Truth" as part of the *Every Tongue Poetry and Civics Project* sponsored by the White House Youth Policy Summit. Melrose Branch Library hosted the event which featured guest poets: Eva Lynch-Comer, former Writer by Bus recipient and Puerto Rican poet Nelimar Brül. Participants discussed and wrote poetry within the theme of "Sense of Belonging" in relation to bilingual Spanish speakers and the Roanoke community.



The Virginia Association of School Librarians' regional chapter invited Elani to give an address at their annual conference. She spent two months interviewing librarians at local schools and branch libraries, gathering photos and video footage that captured their day-to-day responsibilities. Her dedication poems honored the librarians' hard work and she presented how poetry can be used as a tool to encourage students to read and write.

Elani also helped market the Youth Poet Laureate opportunity through workshops, including "Sculpture Comes Alive" inspired by the "Larger than Life: The Everyday Made Big" sculpture exhibition. She also read poems at public events, including the dedication of the 10<sup>th</sup> Street Lick Run mural, where she got to help plant a new tree (pictured at left.)



The official Youth Poet Laureate competition will take place this fall in partnership with Roanoke Public Libraries, with a return to the Melrose Fall Festival, the same event at which Elani was named in 2023. Elani interned for the Roanoke Arts Commission Planning Committee this summer and will return to Hollins University as a third year student this fall.

Learn more about the program at [www.roanokearts.org/ypl](http://www.roanokearts.org/ypl)

# Building the next ARTS & CULTURAL PLAN

Throughout 2025, arts and cultural partners across Roanoke will create the next Arts and Cultural Plan. This work will pull together the community's learning and progress since the 2011 Arts and Cultural Plan, and set a path for the next decade.

The discovery and listening phases of winter and spring 2025 continued into summer. The listening has been an especially rewarding process with the inclusion of story circles. (See page 10.)



## Steering Committee

John Cornthwait, Committee Chair  
 Lena Ayuk  
 Michelle Bennett  
 Ingrid Chase  
 Mandy Cribb  
 Susan Egbert  
 Huong Fralin  
 Katharine Gray  
 Lee Hunker  
 Whitney Johnson  
 Lena Loshonkohl  
 Kathryn Lucas  
 Robyn Mitchell  
 Becky Parsons  
 William Penn  
 Douglas Pitzer  
 Shaleen Powell  
 John Reburn  
 Meighan Sharp  
 Elani Spencer  
 Katie Wallace

In the first rounds of input, the Steering Committee has created the guiding language and framework for the plan.

**The Roanoke Arts & Cultural Plan envisions a vibrant and connected future for Roanoke—where creativity thrives, participation runs deep, and the arts strengthen our sense of community while supporting personal and economic growth.**

**We're committed to creating a plan that reflects the *spirit, stories, and aspirations* of the people who call this city home and to ensuring that arts and culture remain central to shaping our region's next decade.**

They placed an emphasis on how the community in advancing arts and culture can act on established values. Those include the following:

- Bring people together
- Make space for everyone
- Imagine what's possible
- Celebrate along the way
- Nurture what's next

The team, with the support of Bob Leonard and Katie Trozzo, developed focus questions exploring these values in the lives of stakeholders. Those are the basis of study circles developed to intentionally listen to the community in the development of the plan.

Input sessions and engagement activities will continue through the fall and into the winter. The team is planning to have a draft ready in December 2025.



Learn more , sign up to host a story circle, and track progress at [www.roanokearts.org/plan](http://www.roanokearts.org/plan)



# ARTS CONNECT TUESDAYS

Now  
with



## WEEKLY ARTIST SESSIONS BUILD A LEARNING COMMUNITY

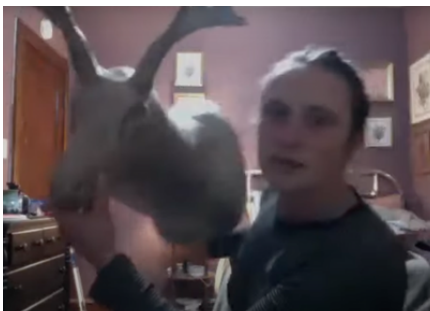
Most Tuesday evenings, artists, special guests, and anyone interested in shaping stronger neighborhoods and our community through the arts, hop on a video call or drop by the office for an hour-long conversation on a focused topic.

Each session includes some kind of check-in and celebration, and sessions are recorded when possible and posted online at [roanokearts.org/tuesdays](http://roanokearts.org/tuesdays).

In 2024-25, artists held 40 weekly sessions including attendance at related community events.

### KEY TOPICS THIS YEAR

- Daisy Art Parade Preparations
- Roanoke Public Libraries as Community Spaces
- Arts and Cultural Planning Process
- Arts Business Support Strategies from Katherine Devine's Roundtables
- Building a Learning Community
- Reflections on 2024
- Story Circles
- Mill Mountain Artist Potluck
- Busk Roanoke with Jefferson Rose
- Southeast Roanoke Art Projects with Molly Kernan
- Artists in Residence
- Visit Virginia's Blue Ridge with Cheryl Morales
- Melrose Plaza Tour
- Domestic Violence Embroidery Session
- Public Sculpture Calls
- The Tinker Creek Project
- Collective Marketing
- Mural Update



# MISSION



The mission of the Roanoke Arts Commission (RAC), as established by ordinance in 1983, is to advise and assist the city council on matters relating to the advancement of the arts and humanities within the city to establish Roanoke as a vibrant, prosperous community where arts and culture engage people in all aspects of life. The RAC increases the collective impact of the arts and cultural community by:

- Advocating for arts and cultural initiatives and investment.
- Managing and informing the City's Public Art Plan.
- Advancing the City's Arts and Cultural Plan.
- Guiding City investments in arts and culture.



## FY 2025 BUDGET REVIEW

FY 2025	Budgeted	Actual
<b>PERCENT FOR ART TOTAL</b>	<b>\$320,000</b>	<b>\$157,700</b>
<b>Collections Committee</b>	<b>\$132,000</b>	<b>\$55,700</b>
Elmwood Art Walk and Neighborhood Sculpture	\$45,000	\$42,500
Municipal Art Shows	\$25,000	\$8,200
2-D Acquisitions	\$12,000	\$0
Intern Stipend for online exhibitions	\$0	\$2,000
Maintenance	\$50,000	\$3,000
<b>Placemaking Committee</b>	<b>\$163,000</b>	<b>\$96,500</b>
Parks & Recreation Residencies	\$18,000	\$16,000
Public Art Residencies	\$18,000	\$18,000
Neighborhood Artists	\$0	\$0
Placemaking Fund	\$10,000	\$5,000
Eureka Park Center	\$25,000	\$0
Art in Place / Murals	\$87,000	\$53,500
Performance Activation Strategy	\$5,000	\$4,000
<b>Executive and Literary</b>	<b>\$10,000</b>	<b>\$4,500</b>
Youth Poet Laureate	\$5,000	\$2,500
Art by Bus	\$5,000	\$2,000
<b>AFAC (Funding)</b>	<b>\$15,000</b>	<b>\$0</b>
Artist Action Grants	\$15,000	\$0
<b>Planning</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$1,000</b>
Public Art Planning Intern	\$0	\$0
Public Art Planning Activities	\$0	\$0
Public Art and Annual Report Printing	\$0	\$1,000

FY 2025	Budgeted	Actual
<b>GRANT + MATCH TOTALS</b>	<b>\$303,000</b>	<b>\$221,132</b>
<b>Daisy Art Activations Grant (NEA GAP 24)</b>	<b>\$142,000</b>	<b>\$120,000</b>
2025 Daisy Art Parade production	\$10,000	\$10,000
Lead artist	\$20,000	\$20,000
5 Neighborhood based artists	\$50,000	\$50,000
Lead communicator and documenter	\$12,000	\$12,000
5 Facilitating artists	\$30,000	\$28,000
Neighborhood activations	\$20,000	\$0
<b>Arts Connect Neighbors (NEA Our Town 23)</b>	<b>\$61,000</b>	<b>\$61,000</b>
Arts Engagements	\$18,000	\$38,000
Neighborhood Facilitators	\$13,000	\$13,000
Chief Communicator	\$4,000	\$4,000
Training	\$4,000	\$6,000
Project Fund	\$20,000	
Catalog, marketing, & documentation	\$2,000	
<b>Arts Connect Neighbors II (NEA Our Town 24)</b>	<b>\$100,000</b>	<b>\$40,132</b>
Arts Engagements	\$35,000	\$17,134
Neighborhood Facilitators	\$45,000	\$3,000
Chief Communicator		\$4,000
Training	\$5,000	\$998
Catalog, marketing, & documentation	\$15,000	\$15,000
<b>COMBINED TOTAL FROM ALL SOURCES</b>	<b>\$623,000</b>	<b>\$378,832</b>

Budget note: Budgeted funds and projects, encumbered and non-encumbered, are carried forward into the FY 2026 budget and plan.

# FY 2026 BUDGET

	FY 2026	Notes & Subtotal
<b>PERCENT FOR ART EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>\$313,000</b>	
<b>Collections Committee</b>	<b>\$100,000</b>	
Elmwood Art Walk and Neighborhood Sculpture	\$12,000	Main Street Bridge Projects
Municipal Art Shows	\$30,000	Courthouse Project, Tinker Project + Quilt Shows
2-D Acquisitions	\$6,000	Treasurer's Office local artist award purchase
Intern Stipend for online exhibitions	\$2,000	
Maintenance	\$50,000	
<b>Placemaking Committee</b>	<b>\$184,000</b>	
Parks & Recreation Residencies	\$16,000	2 Artists
Public Art Residencies	\$10,000	Muralist in Residence
Neighborhood Artists	\$30,000	Spring extension of 5 neighborhood artists
Eureka Park Center	\$25,000	Local artists - mural + panels
Art in Place / Murals	\$40,000	Pearl Fu Plaza, signal box murals, strategic walls, H&C coffee sign
Performance Activation Strategy	\$3,000	Strategy continuation resources
Washington Park Poolhouse	\$10,000	
Tinker Creek Project	\$15,000	
Mill Mountain Project	\$10,000	
Arts Connect Neighbors	\$15,000	Set aside if demand exists
Daisy Arts - Culminating Activation	\$10,000	
<b>Executive and Literary</b>	<b>\$10,000</b>	
Youth Poet Laureate	\$5,000	Emerging Library partnership. Stipend, event funds, publication, etc...
Art by Bus	\$5,000	Transit Residency and Bus Shelters
<b>AFAC (Funding)</b>	<b>\$15,000</b>	
Artist Action Grants	\$15,000	Announce with the arts and cultural plan release
<b>Planning</b>	<b>\$4,000</b>	
Public Art Planning Intern	\$1,000	
Public Art Planning Activities	\$500	
Public Art and Annual Report Printing	\$2,500	
<b>GRANT TOTAL</b>	<b>\$87,000</b>	
<b>Daisy Art Activations Grant (NEA GAP 24)</b>	<b>\$40,000</b>	
2025 Daisy Art Parade production		
Lead artist		
5 Neighborhood based artists	\$20000	
Lead communicator and documenter		
5 Facilitating artists		
Neighborhood activations	\$20000	
<b>Arts Connect Neighbors Strategy</b>	<b>\$47,000</b>	
Arts Engagements	\$19,000	
Neighborhood Facilitators	\$18,000	
Chief Communicator	\$9,000	
Training		
Catalog, marketing, & documentation	\$1,000	
<b>COMBINED TOTAL FROM ALL SOURCES</b>	<b>\$400,000</b>	



# FY2026

## THE YEAR AHEAD

**ARTS CONNECT NEIGHBORS ACTIVITIES**

**DAISY ART PARADE**

**DAISY ART NEIGHBORHOOD ACTIVATIONS**

**PILGRIMS AT THE CREEK EXHIBITION**

**LARGER THAN LIFE SCULPTURE EXHIBITION**

**IT'S HERE COLLECTIVE MARKETING OUTREACH**

**ARTS & CULTURAL PLAN DEVELOPMENT**

**RESIDENT ARTISTS PROGRAM**

**ART BY BUS SHELTERS, RESIDENCY, AND DISPLAY**

**YOUTH POET LAUREATE ACTIVITIES**

**COLLECTIONS COMMITTEE TRAINING**

**GRANTS FOR ARTS AND CULTURAL NONPROFITS**

**MINI-GRANTS FOR ARTS & CULTURAL PLAN IMPLEMENTATION**

**WASHINGTON PARK POOL HOUSE MURAL**

**PEARL FU PLAZA MURAL**

**EUREKA PARK COMMUNITY CENTER ART**

**AND MUCH MORE!**

**ROANOKEARTS.ORG**

**ART BINDS.**

**CULTURE GENERATES SOCIAL CAPITAL AND  
STRENGTHENS A COMMUNITY'S CHARACTER.**

Alberto Ibargüen  
Publisher and Philanthropist  
CEO of the Knight Foundation, 2005-24



ROANOKE ARTS

**ROANOKEARTS.ORG**