

ArtSTART: General Project Support for Organizations



Emily Funmilayo Ajamufua | *Cincinnati, Ohio*

Emily Funmilayo Ajamufua is the programs director of Bi-Okoto Drum and Dance Theatre, a Cincinnati-based nonprofit dedicated to celebrating and sharing African arts and culture through performance, education, and community engagement. With more than 35 years of experience in arts administration and youth programming, Ajamufua has successfully led Bi-Okoto's programs for over seven years, earning recognition for excellence and impact. Her dedication to building strong connections between arts and community was recognized with the African Professionals (APNET) 2021 Community Engagement Award, and she was one of three finalists in the 2024 Creative Ohio Champions Award in the Arts Educators category. She holds a BA in theatre arts, a certificate in drama/music, and a national certification in English/social studies education.



Rachel Bernstein | *Cleveland Heights, Ohio*

Rachel Bernstein is a professional musician, educator, and administrator with more than 35 years of experience in the arts. She served 15 years in various administrative positions at The Music Settlement in Cleveland's University Circle, where she continues to teach as an instructor in the Suzuki cello method. In 2013, Bernstein became executive director of Heights Arts, a multi-disciplinary community arts organization. Since joining Heights Arts, she has focused her passion for the arts on fostering internal collaborations that connect the organization's literary, musical, and visual arts programs. She also partners with regional arts organizations, businesses, and community members who share her belief in the power of the arts.



Stephanie Bridwell | *Chandlersville, Ohio*

Stephanie Bridwell is an arts advocate based in Appalachian Ohio. She is a partner in the Elk's Eye Art Market in Zanesville, which features more than 30 artists from the Appalachian region. Bridwell is the current president of the Board of Trustees of the Ohio Arts and Crafts Foundation in Cambridge and serves as the student art chair of the Salt Fork Arts and Crafts Festival. She has also served as a state, regional, and local officer of the Ohio Federation of Business and Professional Women's Club. She holds an MPA from The Ohio State University and a graduate certificate in arts management from Bemidji State University. Bridwell is also a graduate of the inaugural cohort of Creative Ohio's Advocacy Leadership Institute.

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Nikki D Brown | *Sylvania, Ohio*

Nikki D Brown, of The Sisters of Thunder, is a Cleveland-based, multi-talented gospel singer and sacred steel musician who has traveled the world. Collaborations with international artists like Canadian musicians Jane Bunnet and Shakura S'Adia, multi-instrumentalist Ken Whiteley, and Australian guitarist Dom Turner have given her a broader outlook on music culture. This has afforded her the opportunity to open for various artists, like the rock band The Raconteurs and Grammy Award-winner Ceelo Green. Brown has also traveled internationally to appear on the same festival stage as Sarah McLachlan.



Kathy Brown | *New Concord, Ohio*

Kathy Brown has been involved with music throughout her life, playing clarinet and cello in high school and college bands and orchestras and attending numerous concerts. She holds a minor in music and contributes annually to various performing arts organizations. Brown's professional career in Michigan included teaching elementary school, serving as an elementary reading and curriculum consultant, local grant writing, and working as a principal. Most recently, through Muskingum University, she coordinated graduate and continuing studies faculty. Since 2003, Brown has been actively involved with Muskingum Valley Symphonic Winds as a musician and board member/manager. Her responsibilities have included writing successful grants and supporting the organization in other leadership and administrative capacities.



Tom Burske | *Sharonville, Ohio*

Tom Burske is the retired deputy auditor and finance director for the City of Sharonville, Ohio, with 23 years of experience in local government financial management. He earned a Certified Public Funds Manager certification through Kent State University. After retiring from public service, Burske became the business manager for his wife's interior design company. He is currently treasurer of the Ohio Appalachian Artisans Guild. Through his wife's decorating business and her hobby business, The Ohio Bag Lady, he has gained extensive knowledge of the arts. She creates and sews handmade tote bags, and together they chair the Cabin Fever Arts Festival, a juried craft show. Burske's professional expertise in finance, combined with his involvement in regional arts and crafts, allows him to support and advance arts organizations across the Ohio Appalachian region.

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Roberto Di Donato | *New Haven, Connecticut*

Roberto Di Donato is a Venezuelan-Italian theater maker. Currently, he is a theater management candidate at Yale University's David Geffen School of Drama and also serves as a producer for Shakespeare in the Woods. Previously, Di Donato was the producing director for Tantrum Theater and was co-producer and associate artistic director of the Frank Wo/Men Collective—an organization that received recognitions for “Best of Austin” and “Top Arts Related Things to Do” in the Austin Chronicle. His productions were regarded as “a daring, experimental masterstroke,” in the “Austin Arts Watch.” He has created pieces that have been seen across Cleveland, New York City, and Austin. Roberto is a University of Texas at Austin alum and received an MFA in directing as well as a master's of arts administration with a specialization in theater and production management from Ohio University.



Trevellya “Tee” Ford | *Athens, Ohio*

Trevellya “Tee” Ford, Ph.D., is a storyteller, performer, author, workshop presenter, advocate, and mentor from Athens, Ohio. She has had a long career using storytelling as advocacy. Now retired from academia, Ford has embraced philanthropy, focusing on sharing the little-known and nearly forgotten history of Athens, a southeastern Ohio River town along the Underground Railroad. She researched this history and developed Heritage Square Tours, hour-long walks in which she shares stories of a once-thriving Black Appalachian business district, now marked by plaques and monuments. Ford also began producing and narrating a three-part docuseries titled “Black Wall Street Athens,” documenting the history of the 120-year-old Mount Zion Baptist Church building when it faced demolition. (Photo credit: Athens Photographic Project)



LaMonte Glover | *Reynoldsburg, Ohio*

LaMonte Glover, an experienced information technology professional with more than 30 years in the field, served as the CEO of the Columbus GospelFest, a community event, for 40 years. Since its inception in 1984, the Columbus GospelFest has fostered community engagement among thousands of Central Ohio residents. The festival features a variety of events, including a community gospel and arts festival, wellness fair, Disabilities-Fest, Merchant Fair, and family-oriented Edu-Fun Fest activities. These events showcase both national and local artists, offering musical and artistic expressions that engage the entire family.

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Krissy Hartman | *Springfield, Ohio*

Krissy Hartman—named Arts Educator of the Decade for the Dayton region by Broadway.com—has been overjoyed to teach and direct all ages throughout the Miami Valley area for the last ten years. After 12 years in various roles, Hartman was named executive director of the Springfield Arts Council in the fall of 2024. In her other roles, she developed the Youth Arts Ambassadors program, which is now a five-time international award-winning youth theater program. Hartman was honored to receive the Freddie G Fellowship Award at the 2020 Junior Theater Festival in Atlanta, Georgia. She holds a BA in theatre from Wittenberg

University, where she was awarded Outstanding Young Alumnus in the fall of 2021.

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Lilly Hinckley | *Cincinnati, Ohio*

Lilly Hinckley is the biennial participating venue coordinator at FotoFocus, a Cincinnati-based nonprofit that celebrates and champions photography as the medium of our time. In this role, she initiates relationships with local and regional venue partners, oversees the biennial application solicitation and review process, and assists venue partners with related questions throughout the grant cycle. The 2024 FotoFocus Biennial encompassed 107 projects at 86 venues across multiple Ohio and Kentucky cities. Since its founding, FotoFocus has awarded more than 550 grants to support partners presenting projects and

educational programs that are accessible and engaging to the public. Hinckley received her BA in English literature with a minor in critical communication and media studies from Butler University and her MA in anthropology with a certificate in museum studies from the University of Cincinnati.



Emma Hinkle | *Dover, Ohio*

Emma Hinkle has served as the executive director of the Tuscarawas Philharmonic since March 2025. A proud Tuscarawas County resident and passionate advocate for the arts, she is dedicated to sharing music and fostering cultural growth within her community. Hinkle earned an MM in horn performance from Northern Illinois University and has performed professionally with ensembles across the Midwest. In 2024, she furthered her artistic training through the Chicago Summer Opera program. As a private instructor, she also taught horn, trumpet, and piano lessons at the American Music Institute, inspiring students

of all ages through personalized music education. Hinkle is honored to be part of the region's thriving arts community and to serve the Tuscarawas Philharmonic in its mission to bring exceptional musical experiences to the community.

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Kathleen Jackson | *Oberlin, Ohio*

Kathleen Jackson is an experienced nonprofit executive director, writer, and arts advocate with more than 15 years of leadership experience in mission-driven organizations. She holds an MFA in writing popular fiction from Seton Hill University and an MA from Kent State University, grounding her work in both creativity and critical inquiry. Jackson currently serves as executive director of the Firelands Association for the Visual Arts (FAVA) in Oberlin, where she oversees exhibitions, public art initiatives, community partnerships, and a robust education program for learners of all ages. A practicing writer and woodturning artist, she is passionate about supporting emerging and established creatives. Jackson brings a collaborative spirit, a deep respect for diverse artistic voices, and a belief in the power of small projects to make meaningful community impact.



David Jones | *Conneaut, Ohio*

David Jones is the executive director of the Conneaut Arts Center in Northeast Ohio. There, Jones is responsible for the overall administration of the organization, including business operations, fiscal management, community relations, and long-term strategy. With more than ten years of experience as a professional actor, Jones has appeared in various theatrical and commercial roles for both the stage and screen. He is currently represented in the tri-state area by Docherty Talent in film, television, and commercial markets. Jones previously studied English and writing and holds a degree in information technology with a focus on computer networking and cybersecurity from Kent State University, where he is currently pursuing his MBA.



Jeffrey Maxie | *Toledo, Ohio*

Jeffrey Maxie is a highly accomplished music director, creative director, singer, musician, composer, and songwriter. With a career spanning more than 30 years, he has demonstrated his exceptional talent and passion for music. As a music director, Maxie has led projects and productions across the country, bringing out the best in performers and creating memorable musical experiences. His attention to detail and understanding of music theory and composition allow him to craft arrangements that resonate with audiences of many genres. He is also a creative director, merging musical expertise with visual design to create immersive experiences. As a singer and pianist, Maxie's versatile range and expressive delivery have earned him enthusiastic reviews. He continues to perform, compose, and direct, creating musical experiences that leave a lasting impression on audiences.

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Shannon Olsen | *Millersburg, Ohio*

Shannon Olsen has dedicated her life and career to education and the arts. Currently, she is the executive director of the Holmes Center for the Arts. She founded Take a Bow Dance Studio in Lawrenceville, Georgia, in 2003 and has taught a wide range of dance styles and levels for more than 30 years, including a decade of instruction at the Holmes Center for the Arts. In addition to her extensive arts experience, she has served as a professional educator in both private and public schools for more than 25 years, bringing a strong pedagogical foundation to her work in arts education. Olsen holds a bachelor's degree in early childhood education from Milligan College and a master's in literacy from the American College of Education.



Shannon Peck-Bartle | *Germantown, Ohio*

Shannon Peck-Bartle has more than five years of progressive leadership experience guiding mission-driven organizations through strategic growth, operational execution, and financial sustainability. Currently, she is director of education and community engagement at the Dayton Art Institute (DAI). In her role at the DAI, Peck-Bartle works to recenter the community in education programming, expand accessibility, and create diverse pathways for museum engagement. Her background includes extensive experience as a K-12 educator, university faculty member, curriculum designer, non-profit leader, and published scholar, offering a systems-level understanding of education and learning organizations. She holds a Ph.D. in curriculum and instructional design and a master's in applied anthropology.



Cynthia Snider | *Kent, Ohio*

Cynthia Snider is executive director of Tuesday Musical Association, a position she has held since March 2020. She joined the organization in 2015. Snider previously spent 31 years at The University of Akron (UA), directing communications, community engagement, development, special events, and other initiatives for UA's visual and performing arts programs. She has been active on boards, including Neos Dance Theatre, the Autism Society of Greater Akron, the Akron Area Arts Alliance, the Greater Akron Musical Association, Friends of Fashion at Kent State University, the City of Norton Charter Review Commission, Friends of the Norton Library Board, TV 45/49 Production Capacities Action Team, and Imagine Downtown Akron.

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Erin Spring | *Circleville, Ohio*

Erin Spring has practiced music therapy in Central and Southeast Ohio since 2007. She holds bachelor's and master's degrees in music therapy from Ohio University, where she also served as an adjunct professor and supervisor. Spring completed her internship with the Music School Settlement and Cleveland Clinic. In 2010, she founded Central Ohio Music Therapy (COMT), growing it from a solo practice into a multi-therapist team serving communities across Central, Northeast, and Southeast Ohio. She serves as executive director, leading clinical services, community music programs, and administrative support for arts-based nonprofits, including the REID Foundation. Spring is a dedicated advocate, having served six years as co-chair of the Ohio Music Therapy Task Force, and in 2024, was appointed by Governor Mike DeWine to the state music therapy licensing board.



Alicia Joykson Troski | *Toronto, Ohio*

Alicia Joykson Troski is a fiber artist who owns and operates a screen print and embroidery shop located in Toronto, Ohio. There, her work focuses on commercial and custom machine embroidery. She additionally serves as vice president for Inspire Toronto, a nonprofit organization that focuses on strengthening the arts in her community through events and art programming for students. Troski previously served as a rehabilitation counselor in the Pittsburgh Public Schools and at Cigna, and she holds an MS from the University of Pittsburgh and a BS from Bowling Green State University.



Melissa Waddell | *Cleveland, Ohio*

Melissa Waddell joined Cleveland Public Theatre as associate development director in January 2023 and became director of development in December that same year. A Pittsburgh native, she has lived in Cleveland for the last five years. Waddell earned a bachelor's in arts management and entrepreneurship from Baldwin Wallace University, where she worked with the director of academic grants to craft proposals supporting academic programming. After graduation, she joined the Cleveland Foundation, providing administrative support to the philanthropic services team and overseeing projects related to the online donor portal. She earned her master's in nonprofit management from Regis University in 2022.

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David Weaver | *Dublin, Ohio*

David Weaver is the author of “Black Diva of the Thirties: The Life of Ruby Elzy,” published in 2004 by University Press of Mississippi. In 2006, he produced “Ruby Elzy in Song,” a compilation of Elzy’s rare recordings, for Cambria Music. A native of Columbus, Ohio, Weaver attended The Ohio State University and the University of Cincinnati, majoring in voice and opera. He has sung professionally in more than thirty operas and musicals. Weaver retired in 2024 after serving as executive director of the Ohioana Library Association since 2013. Previous roles include those with the Columbus Symphony Orchestra; as executive director of Malabar Farm Foundation; and as managing director of Columbus Light Opera, which he co-founded.



Staci Weller | *Urbana, Ohio*

Staci Weller is a marketing and communications professional with experience in leadership, advertising, promotions, public relations, sales, event planning, contract negotiations, and business management. Since 2017, she has led the GrandWorks Foundation, a nonprofit that operates the historic Gloria Theatre and the Urbana Youth Center in Champaign County. The Gloria Theatre hosts the annual Stars on Stage Concert Series, serves as a first-run movie theatre, and offers community events and youth programs. Weller previously worked as an account executive at HMS, managing clients such as the Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA), 7-Up, The Arthur G. James Cancer Hospital, and Nationwide Insurance’s Prom Promise program. She later transitioned to Columbia Gas of Ohio, overseeing advertising, promotions, and video communications while managing a family-owned business.



Amanda Wheeler | *Columbus, Ohio*

Amanda Wheeler is the grants manager for the Columbus Association for the Performing Arts (CAPA), overseeing grants for the Drexel Theatre, the Jeanne B. McCoy Community Center for the Arts, the Lincoln Theatre Association, and The Contemporary Theatre of Ohio. From 2011 to 2021, Wheeler worked at the New York City-based Filomen M. D’Agostino Greenberg Music School, serving as program manager, and later, director of administration. Additionally, she worked as a program manager at the Mount Vernon Hotel Museum. Wheeler holds an MS in nonprofit management from Columbia University and a BFA in theatre and dance from Otterbein University.

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Cierra Wilkerson | *Cleveland, Ohio*

Cierra Wilkerson is a Cleveland-based arts administrator, curator, visual artist, and advocate. She currently serves as grants assistant at VIA Art Fund. Previous roles include associate director and program manager. Her duties have included team management, budgeting, grant administration, and running artist-focused programs while representing the organization to stakeholders and community partners. A commissioned artist, juror, and organizer, her experience spans creative production, curation, media collaboration, and community outreach with organizations regionally, nationally, and internationally. She holds a BA in studio art from Cleveland State University and a certificate in community journalism.



Linda Wintersteller | *Mentor, Ohio*

Linda Wintersteller is a cultural arts professional who has served the City of Mentor since 2016. As manager of the Wildwood Cultural Center, Wintersteller oversees a wide array of cultural events, programs, art exhibits, and musical and theatrical productions that attract more than 20,000 visitors annually. She manages the historic manor house, grounds, and more than two miles of trails; coordinates contractors, staff, and volunteers; and has expanded festivals, markets, and community events. Under her leadership, the Wildwood Fine Arts & Wine Festival and the Mentor Farmers Market saw significant growth in attendance, vendor participation, and community engagement. Wintersteller also works as an interpretive naturalist with Lake Metroparks, developing educational programs, leading nature-based activities, and promoting environmental awareness for visitors of all ages. She holds a bachelor's degree in communications, sociology, and anthropology with a minor in business.



Angela Young | *Chillicothe, Ohio*

Angela Young serves as a member of the board and the planning committee for the Pump House Center for the Arts' (PHCA). Previously, she worked in human resources for the Department of the Veterans Administration Medical Center (VAMC) system. There, she organized numerous Equal Employment Opportunity and Diversity events for veterans and employees of the VAMC and has planned and carried out ethnicity-focused events for staff and patients at several VAMC locations. Young's experiences in the private sector came to bear as she planned and carried out the PHCA's 2022 Juneteenth celebration and helped them showcase the talents of local artists of color and highlight local Black-owned businesses. Additionally, she has worked on arts-related programming through the Carver Community Center, a local entity that serves underrepresented children in Chillicothe.