

# ARTS AND HUMANITIES COUNCIL OF TUSCALOOSA COUNTY



## ANNUAL REPORT

JUNE 1, 2020-MAY 31, 2021

## FROM THE DIRECTOR

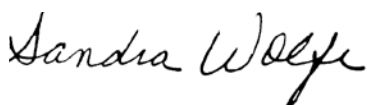
For 50 years, The Arts and Humanities Council of Tuscaloosa has worked to promote and encourage the arts in West Alabama. With your support, the Council serves as the catalyst to mobilize local efforts to infuse the arts into all segments in the community and to foster programs that enhance the quality of life in our region. Arts Council programs work to support member arts organizations, individual artists, arts education, public art, and many other creative initiatives.

Arts and culture improve quality of life and make Tuscaloosa a great place to live. However, this has been a challenging year for the arts community. The arts industry suffered as venues closed, education became remote, and events were cancelled across the country. The Bama Theatre and Cultural Arts Center have suffered with the loss of annual programs and recurring events that each of the venues are proud to host. We shifted focus to virtual programming, hosting events within the capacity requirements, and have been able to do renovations in the Bama during this time. Your support provides critical funding to make the arts an important and accessible facet of daily life in our community and a vital element in economic development and workforce recruitment.

The Arts Council recently received a \$100,000 grant award from the National Endowment for the Arts to support the The pARTners Project, a multi-phase collective impact initiative spearheaded by the Greater Birmingham and West Alabama Arts Education Collaboratives. The grant was awarded for the two regional arts collaboratives to create a plan to increase access to arts education for students in the West-Central Alabama region. The project will identify and leverage key community collaborators to work on strategic planning, research, and curriculum development to ensure that access to arts education throughout the region is widespread and equitable.

The Council continues to work on the Public Art Initiative in Tuscaloosa. Residents will soon see a new piece of art on the soon to open Northern Riverwalk. As the City of Tuscaloosa Elevate projects are developed, public art will be included. This provides work for artists and adds to the quality of life in our community.

We look forward to welcoming you back to our spaces. As an organization, we are hopeful that sometime during the coming weeks and months, we will look at this difficult time in the “rearview mirror.” When we do, it will be with immense pride in how we responded. Thank you for being part of our community of support. Without you none of this work is possible!



## HISTORY & PURPOSE

Established in 1970 by a group of citizens dedicated to the arts, the mission of The Arts Council is to promote and encourage the arts and humanities in Tuscaloosa County. The Arts Council serves as the umbrella organization for 50 Member Organizations, offers educational programs, and manages the historic Bama Theatre and the Dinah Washington Cultural Arts Center.

### STAFF

Sandra Wolfe  
*Executive Director*

Jason Armit  
*Bama Theatre Manager*

Sheriah Gibson  
*Dinah Washington Cultural Arts Center Manager*

Kevin Ledgewood  
*Publicity*

Shannon McCue,  
*Education Director and West Alabama Arts Education Collaborative Director*

Benji Stockton  
*Bama Theatre Assistant Manager*

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Nini Jobson      Theresa Wellbourne

Valery Minges      Margaret Wilson

*Cover photos by Jason Armit (l) and Sheriah Gibson (r)*



# BAMA THEATRE AND RENOVATION



## BACKGROUND

Established in 1938 through funds from the Public Works Administration (PWA), the historic Bama Theatre continues to captivate audiences with its twinkling lights and exciting year-round performance calendar. Managed by The Arts Council and occupied almost 300 days per year, the theatre is a cornerstone of cultural activity and community events in Tuscaloosa and West Alabama. The venue provides a rental location for productions presented by non-profit member organizations and community groups as well as concerts presented by outside promoters. Programming presented by The Arts Council includes the Bama Art House Film Series, educational programs, and art exhibits.

## RENTAL INCOME

Rental: \$57,545.60  
Restoration Fund: \$6,772

***Income in 2018-19 without impact of COVID-19:***  
***\$127,200***

## BAMA ART HOUSE FILM SERIES

Summer and Fall Film Series were cancelled due to COVID-19.

## STREAMING FILMS

Distribution companies offered streaming opportunities to the public during the pandemic with a portion of proceeds benefitting theatres:

*Once Were Brothers: Robbie Robertson and The Band*  
*The Whistlers*  
*Slay the Dragon*  
*The Painter and the Thief*  
*Chuck Leavell: The Tree Man*  
*Good Trouble*



# BAMA THEATRE RENOVATION

## COMPLETED RENOVATION

The staff of the Bama Theatre took advantage of the temporary closure of the facility in 2020 and completed the following painting and upgrading projects:

- Painted exterior of Box Office
- Painted walls, ceiling and trim in front of house, lobby, Greensboro Room, restrooms, and vestibule
- Outdated lighting removed from Greensboro Room
- Painted walls, ceiling, and trim in Junior League Gallery
- New spot lighting installed in Junior League Gallery
- Painted walls, ceiling, and trim backstage: Green Room, dressing rooms, restrooms
- Designed, constructed, painted, and installed storage shelving for performers in both backstage dressing rooms

**Restoration Total:** \$27, 278.78







# DINAH WASHINGTON CULTURAL ARTS CENTER

## BACKGROUND

The Dinah Washington Cultural Arts Center (CAC) is a hub for the arts in Tuscaloosa, managed and maintained by The Arts Council. The CAC houses the Alabama Power Grand Hall, perfect for weddings and private event rentals, and The Rotary Club of Tuscaloosa Black Box Theatre which provides a location for performances in an intimate setting for family programming and educational opportunities. The University of Alabama rents a gallery space and The Arts Council maintains a gallery within the CAC. The facility also houses offices for the Tuscaloosa Symphony Orchestra, the Alabama Blues Project, and the West Alabama Arts Education Collaborative.

## RENTAL INCOME

- \$49,620

***Income in 2018-19 without impact of COVID-19: \$62,234***



# BAMA THEATRE & DWCAC COVID-19 TIMELINE



**March 12, 2020:**  
Bama Theatre and Dinah Washington Cultural Arts Center close to the public and cancelled events indefinitely

**March 16, 2020:**  
Bama Theatre staff began painting projects in the Greensboro Room then continued with Phase II in the lobby and vestibule, and Phase III in the Box Office in May



**April 15, 2020:**  
Film streaming opportunities began and continued throughout 2020



**May 1, 2020:**  
Painting began in the DWCAC Black Box Theatre and catering/vendor policies were updated at the venue

**May 20, 2020:**  
Awarded \$26,122.50 PPP by the Small Business Administration



**June 1, 2020:**  
708 seats removed from Bama to allow for social distancing leaving 352 remaining

Hospital grade surface cleaners and hand sanitizer stations; Signage and floor ("stand here") appliques for social distance rules; Signage regarding facemask requirements and State of AL/City of Tuscaloosa ordinances placed on front doors and throughout the theatre; Plexiglas barriers for staff and customers; Pre-sale tickets only, no Box Office

**June 1, 2020:**  
DWACAC reopens with decrease in capacity



**June 4, 2020:**  
Awarded \$10,000 by the ASCA CARES Grant

**June 5-July 24, 2020:**  
DWACAC moved to hosting virtual exhibits from those open to the public with the Permanent Collection and Amber Quinn



**June 17, 2020:**  
Bama reopens for the first event since the March 12 shutdown with the McCalla Academy of Dance Recital

**July 28, 2020:**  
Phase IV painting begins in balcony and JLG in Bama



### August 1, 2020:

Painting began on the DWCAC walls, grand hall, and gallery spaces in addition to Bama Theatre Box Office



### August 7, 2020:

DWCAC galleries reopened with joint exhibit with social distancing, facemasks, and limited hours

### September 1, 2020:

#redalertrestart campaign on social media and exterior/interior of Bama



### September 3, 2020:

DWCAC and Bama Theatre seating reduced to app. 35%

### September 22, 2020:

Phase V painting begins backstage and in dressing rooms



### September 25, 2020:

Live music returns to the Bama with "Live from the Bama" concert benefitting the theatre hosted by Tuscaloosa Tourism and Sports

### November 9, 2020:

New custom shelving units installed in backstage dressing rooms and mirrors installed



### February 8, 2021:

Awarded \$26,122.50 PPP by the Small Business Administration



### April 12, 2021:

Theatre seating raised from 272 to 502 seats

### April 12, 2021:

Masks and social distancing continue to be required while attending events at venues with reduced Gallery Hours at DWCAC



### Pending:

Shuttered Venue Operators Grant: \$141,608.15

### March 4, 2021:

Awarded \$10,000 by the Tuscaloosa Alternative Sentencing Resiliency Fund



# GALLERIES

## EXHIBITS

The Arts Council provides local visual artists two venues to display their art as well as competitions that provide advancement and connection with other artists. In both The Arts Council Gallery in the Dinah Washington Cultural Arts Center and the Junior League Gallery in the Bama Theatre, exhibit space is made available to individuals and groups through an application process.

***The annual Double Exposure Photography Competition and the West Alabama Juried Show were both cancelled due to COVID-19.***



Artist credit: Sara Garden Armstrong

<b>June</b>	The Arts Council's Permanent Collection-Virtual due to COVID-19
<b>July</b>	Amber Quinn-Virtual due to COVID-19
<b>August-September</b>	Sara Garden Armstrong-Joint Exhibit with UA and first open to public after closing in March
<b>October</b>	Stephanie Kirkland
<b>November-Dec</b>	Robin Metz
<b>February</b>	Winfred Hawkins
<b>March</b>	Elizabeth Rand
<b>March</b>	Visual Art Achievement Awards
<b>April</b>	Sydney Gruber
<b>May</b>	Tuscaloosa County School System Students

Artist credits below, clockwise: Tuscaloosa County School System students, Robin Metz, Sydney Gruber, Elizabeth Rand, Winfred Hawkins





# EDUCATION

## BACKGROUND

The Arts Council provides arts education opportunities to students at the Bama Theatre, the Dinah Washington Cultural Arts Center, and on site at West Alabama schools. Disciplines include theatre, music, dance, visual art, and literary arts. The Arts Council's programming exposes students to a wide range of activities conducive to academic and social development. Students also benefit from curriculum-based activities that complement their work in the classroom.

## POETRY OUT LOUD



The Arts Council serves as District 3 regional coordinator for Poetry Out Loud, which is sponsored by the Alabama State Council on the Arts. The National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation partner with state arts agencies to support this contest which encourages youth to learn about poetry through memorization and recitation. The program helps students master public speaking skills, build self-confidence, and learn about their literary heritages. The Education Director administrates the competition on the

local level (District 3) by providing information to teachers and students, and The Arts Council hosts the District 3 final competition and student workshops.

***This year, 10 students from District 3 participated in the competition, and 9 advanced to the state competition in Montgomery. The 2020-21 competitions and workshops were virtual due to COVID-19.***

## VISUAL ARTS ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM

As district coordinator for the Alabama State Council on the Arts Visual Arts Achievement Program, The Arts Council provides gallery space for local students who are accepted to the competition on the local level. Winners from the district advance to the statewide competition where they are exposed to work by their peers from across the state.



The VAA saw a record 107 entries from 11 schools throughout the region. Roughly 60% of these entries were featured in a show in the Junior League Gallery, and seventeen advanced to the state competition. At the state awards ceremony held on April 30, 2021, *Tricia Schuster of Holy Spirit Catholic School* received the Teacher Award, and the *Tuscaloosa County School System* received the School System Award. Winners at the state level in Montgomery are pictured below from left to right: "Cardboard Cottage" by Mindy Mitchell-Best of District III H.S.; "Farmall" by Blakeney Rice-Best of District III Middle School; "Greek Mosaic" by Arnav Gupta-Best of Computer Images H.S.; "M-Geezy" by Bella Guynes- Best of Painting H.S.



# EDUCATION

## STATE DEPARTMENT GRANT

The Arts Council of Tuscaloosa was awarded a \$20,000 **Alabama Arts Education Initiative (AAEI)** grant for the 2020-2021 school year, and partnered with the Tuscaloosa County Schools at Cottondale Elementary School. The second grade students at Cottondale participated in a full unit that taught cursive writing through drawing and visual art. Although the grant funding will not continue into 2021-2022, the program has been so successful that the West Alabama Arts Education Collaborative plans to continue it into the summer and the next academic year.



## MECHANICAL STEAM KITS

In the fall of 2020, local teaching artist **Tricia Schuster** connected The Arts Council with South Carolina artist Mel Davis, who creates “mechanical kits” for people of all ages to build. This fits in with the **STEAM-centered curriculum** desired by many schools. The Arts Council was able to deliver over 800 STEAM kits to Title I Elementary Schools throughout Tuscaloosa County. Schuster recorded videos on how to assemble the kits so teachers could lead their students in the building activity.





# WEST ALABAMA ARTS EDUCATION COLLABORATIVE

## ALBERTA SCHOOL OF PERFORMING ARTS

**The West Alabama Arts Education Collaborative (WAAEC)** - part of the statewide Artistic Literacy Consortium initiative - has been hard at work adapting its 2020-2021 programs to the virtual learning space. The collaborative worked at The Alberta School of Performing Arts in Tuscaloosa to pilot a program aimed at classroom teachers and designed by teaching artist Ruth O'Connor. Throughout the fall semester, teachers met virtually with O'Connor for a "boot camp" in arts integration strategies then had a chance to practice what they learned in the classroom with virtual coaching. The pandemic offered the opportunity to work directly with teachers to hone their craft in integrating the arts into their school day.



## TUSCALOOSA SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA PROJECT

The WAAEC worked in conjunction with the Education Department and the **Tuscaloosa Symphony Orchestra** to design a **virtual arts integration music project** for teachers all around the city and county to use in the fall of 2022. This is a project composed and designed by oboist, composer, and educator **Joey Salvaggio** and features musicians of the Tuscaloosa Symphony. The final product is a set of musical virtual modules that teach literacy concepts through fun, interactive activities. This program will be piloted at The Arts Council's Adopt-A-School partner, **Westwood Elementary**, in Coker.



*Arts and Humanities Council of Tuscaloosa to Receive \$100,000 Grant from the National Endowment for the Arts for Regional Arts Education Project*

**The Grant**

The Arts and Humanities Council of Tuscaloosa has been approved for a \$100,000 Grants for Arts Projects award to support the The pARTners Project, a multi-phase collective impact initiative spearheaded by the Greater Birmingham and West Alabama Arts Education Collaboratives. The grant was awarded for the two regional arts collaboratives to create a plan to increase access to arts education for students in the West-Central Alabama region, which includes the Greater Birmingham area and rural areas in western Alabama, especially those still facing the lasting effects of segregation and white flight.

**Background**

The pARTners Project is among 1,073 projects across America totaling nearly \$25 million that were selected during this first round of fiscal year 2021 funding in the Grants for Arts Projects funding category. The Arts and Humanities Council of Tuscaloosa was awarded the highest funding amount possible from the NEA to support the pARTners Project.

**Goals**

The pARTners Project will identify and leverage key community collaborators to work on strategic planning, research, and curriculum development to ensure that access to arts education throughout the region is widespread and equitable. The initiative will be deeply rooted in the communities it serves, and will empower its members to sustain and build on the goals well after the grant period concludes.

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*The programming represented in this report is made possible in part by funding from:*

