



# Cultural Alliance of York County

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2022 ANNUAL REPORT

# Letter from Our Board Chair



Get a deeper look our  
2022 year online at  
[www.culturalyork.org/  
impactreport](http://www.culturalyork.org/impactreport)

Dear Residents of York County,  
On behalf of our Cultural Alliance board and staff, we proudly share our 2022 Impact report - a collection of personal stories from partners and grantees, highlights of our advocacy work, and findings/successes in our community partnerships on tourism and our cultural economy.

Last year's key word in our work was 'pivot' – helping our creative community navigate changing landscapes and uncertainty. This year's key word is 'prism' - much like a prism refracts a single beam into multiple points of light, the Cultural Alliance connects artists and cultural groups to a constellation of resources that help them thrive.

In these pages you'll experience the myriad of ways that a connection to the Cultural Alliance in 2022 accelerated the growth and possibilities of artists and organizations in York County. As an organization we work to connect the dots, and over the



past year we;

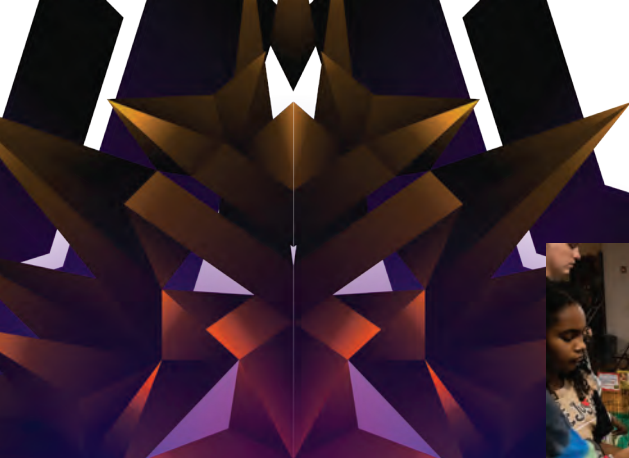
- Partnered with Downtown Inc. and YCEA to **distribute \$64,000 for Welcoming Communities events** throughout York City and County.
- **Hired 5 Navigators to help guide artists and creative entrepreneurs and distributed \$58,000** to help jumpstart their career post-pandemic.
- **Hosted 45 Arts in Education residencies** in schools and community centers throughout our region, including the first ones in the healthcare field.
- **Launched a \$95,000 Cultural Tourism Campaign to attract visitors and created the YoCo Arts & Culture Pass**, the first of its kind in York County.

As these new dollars flow into York County, the Cultural Alliance's commitment to equity has shown up in every aspect of our work. Our 2021 equity plan has been put into action with our creation of the Navigator

role which sources talent from York and Hanover, equitable distribution of funds to support arts and culture groups and community events, and building relationships with the hundreds of artists and cultural groups serving all parts of the county.

Like many organizations, we are adapting rapidly as our world shifts and turns, yet our support for the creative soul of York County remains steadfast. We are honored to amplify the work of so many impactful organizations who have offered hope and healing these past few years when we needed it the most. As we reflect on the new ventures we have taken and those yet to come, we renew our commitment to intensifying the light created by our cultural community and make York County a brighter place to live.

Jared Bean, Board Chair



# Contents

**02** Letter from Chair

**05** Mission, Vision, & Values

**06** The Prism Effect

**08** Impact Story:  
Northern Central Railway

**10** Cultural  
Tourism Grant

**11** Transformation Partner:  
York Art Association

**12** Navigating New  
Journeys: Aliyah Jones

**14** The Ultimate Navigator:  
Andrew Smith

**16** Arts in Education:  
I'm Fine Project

**18** Artist Innovator Award  
Finalists

**19** Our Team



# Mission, Vision, & Values

Strong organizations are grounded in their mission, vision, and values — and we are no exception.

Our values help guide how we do our work, but also affirm our commitment to serving our community through everything we do.

## OUR MISSION

We are a Catalyst, fueling the creative energy and vibrancy of our community through Leadership, Collaboration, and Sustainability in order to enrich the quality of life of all of our citizens.

## OUR VISION

We envision a thriving York County where the arts are an integral component of economic growth and development, tourism, education and everyday life.

We do our work of raising and distributing support each year through an annual fundraising campaign, through community partnership grants, and through our partnership with the PA Council on the Arts

**What does this look like?** Last year we distributed \$1.62 million in operational support throughout York County to 62 different cultural groups and 36 artists whose work touches the lives of over 280,000 of our community members.





# The Prism Effect:

## Leveraging re-granting to ensure equity & access to needed funding

As the United Arts Fund and PPA Partner in the region, the Cultural Alliance is a critical re-grant partner to ensure that operational funding from national, state and local sources are distributed equitably to artists and groups of all sizes.

The pandemic funding at the national and state level in 2020 and 2021 really illustrated the inequities when re-grant partners aren't leveraged. Only 14.75% of American Rescue Plan (ARP) and CARES Act funding distributed from the National Endowment of the Arts directly to nonprofit arts and culture in PA went to small organizations, and none of them were in our region. The PA Cultural and Museum Preservation grant distributed at the state-level in 2020 was distributed a little more widely, but still only funded four large arts groups in York out of 168 grants given.

By contrast, 75% of the CARES and ARP funding distributed in partnership with the Cultural Alliance by the County of York in 2020 and 2021 was given to small and mid-sized arts groups in our area. Thanks to our designation as the official Local Arts Agency of the County of York, we were also able to bring in an additional \$40,000

from the National Endowment for the Arts as a re-grant partner to be distributed through Welcoming Communities Grants in the county in 2022-2023.

Here are the 2022 highlights of our re-grant work:

- Partnered with the Encore High School Musical Showcase to re-grant \$25,000 in secondary education scholarships to York County student performers- an expansion from just \$4,000 in 2019.
- Expanded our partnership with Downtown Inc., Better York, Powder Mill Foundation, and the York County Community Foundation to distribute \$24,000 in Welcoming Communities grants in York City.
- Through re-granting partnerships with the PA Council on the Arts and the J. William Warehime Foundation, we distributed \$50,000 in creative accelerator grants and hired five artist navigators.
- Provided \$25,000 to 38 organizations in York County through our Give Local York Arts Match stretch pool.

Our work to shine a light and refract resources to our grass-roots arts and culture community does not end here. Through our advocacy work with the Citizens for the Arts in PA, we advocated for and were **successful in getting \$15 Million of American Rescue Plan funds allocated in the PA state budget** for cultural organizations and artists. We are actively working with state legislators and allocations committee members to draft equitable guidelines and utilize re-grant partners across the state like the Cultural Alliance to reach the small and mid-sized cultural groups that were missed in 2020.

Over the summer of 2022, the Cultural Alliance worked alongside the York County Economic Alliance and Fourth Economy to map over 85 cultural partners and their impact throughout the County. We have captured the pulse on the cultural community as and we continue to bring in new funds from state and federal programs, in addition to local dollars from committed York Countians, we have the unique ability to reach artists and organizations regardless of their size.



# Impact Story:

## Northern Central Railway

"We want people to enjoy the moment with their family and friends and disconnect, even if just for a bit, from the pressures of their lives." Ashley Zimmerman, the Director of Development and Sustainability for Northern Central Railway, enjoys seeing multigenerational groups ride the Railway's trains. "We try to create programming that appeals to all generations," whether its a 30-mile scenic ride through the historic Codorus Valley and Howard Tunnel, the oldest of its kind in the United States, a ride with Santa or the Easter Bunny, or a craft beer train, NCR is committed to leveraging history to connect the towns and businesses along its route in Southern York County.

A unique opportunity to enhance their mission came in the form of a donation a few years ago. The Railroad Association of Pennsylvania gifted NCR with a historic gondola car in need of significant restoration. Dan Trump, NCR's Director of Operations, had a vision for the car he just couldn't shake.

After learning about a railway bike shuttle in northeastern Pennsylvania, Dan wanted to turn the donation into a carrier car so that bikers of all ages and fitness levels can enjoy the Rail Trail at their leisure. A study by the York County Economic Alliance confirmed a drastic increase in Rail Trail use by York County residents during the pandemic, so it felt like the right time to pursue this project.

The Bike Aboard program was born shortly thereafter, thanks to funding from the York County Community Foundation, the York County Economic Alliance, and the J. William Wareheim Foundation. Passengers can now board the NCR with their bike in New Freedom and exit at either Hanover Junction or Brillhart Station to ride back to New Freedom. Or if they prefer, they can catch the train at either stop and ride in reverse (though it's important to note that your ride will be on a small incline!). Bike Aboard is an important cultural catalyst in YCEA's Trail Towns initiative that supports the



broader economic development of Southern York County. And as Zimmerman notes, it's a nod to the vision the NCR's founders, Bill Simpson and Reed Anderson,

had for the Railroad. They knew fifteen years ago that when we invest in our community's cultural and historic assets, our local businesses thrive too.



"Susquehanna National Heritage Area is greatly appreciative of the 2022 Impact Operational Grant from the Cultural Alliance of York County. The funding increases our ability to connect people to the Susquehanna River's history and environment through interpretation, programs, and outdoor experiences. Unrestricted operation funding is especially helpful because it allows us to be operate innovatively, provides momentum to our existing implementation efforts, and leverages other restricted funding. We look forward to continuing our work with the Cultural Alliance to enrich the quality of life in our region."

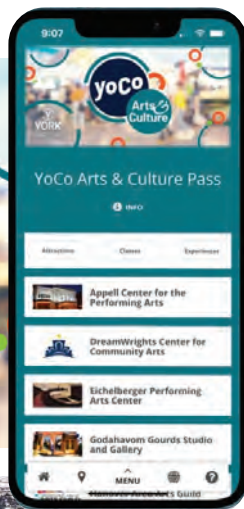
—Mark Platts, SNHA President

### Our 2022 Impact Partners are:

- Susquehanna National Heritage Area\*
- Dillsburg Arts and Revitalization Council
- DreamWrights Center for Community Arts
- Northern Central Railway of York
- Susquehanna Folk Music Society
- The Parliament Arts Organization\*
- York County Honors Choir\*

*\* Denotes organizations who are new impact partners in 2022*

# Cultural Tourism Grant



## YoCo Arts & Culture Pass [www.YoCoCulture.com](http://www.YoCoCulture.com)

As the hub of support for arts and culture in York County, it's the responsibility of the Cultural Alliance to take action on projects which will benefit the county as a whole; contributing to the economic growth of our community, as well as making it a vibrant place to live for residents.

For the first time the Cultural Alliance of York County was awarded a grant totaling \$95,000 to launch a cultural tourism campaign in York County.



*"Arts and culture are major tourism drivers for our community and the experiences across York County are at heart of the 'have it made here' destination brand."*

- Melissa Beaverson, Explore York

# Transformation Partner

## York Art Association

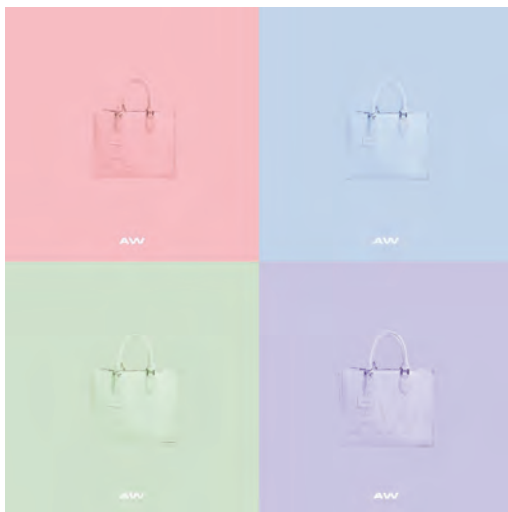


“Well, the first thing you should know is that the story’s not over yet,” says Dani Beam, Principal of Beam Consulting. When Kelley Gibson, the President of the Cultural Alliance, reached out to Dani on behalf of the York Art Association, the group was at a pivotal point in its history. A major interstate expansion meant they would lose their building in the coming year, and the all-volunteer board of the Association was nearing burn-out after steering the organization through the uncertainty of the past several years. The daily work of managing the Association through back-to-back challenges had stripped this group of artists of their own creativity. They weren’t sure how – or if – they wanted the organization to move forward.

As a Mission Partner, the York Art Association had the constellation of resources of the Cultural Alliance at its fingertips to help the group move forward with intention. Kelley Gibson connected the group with Dani Beam,

who worked with the board to articulate a vision for the group’s future as well as the resources they would need to make it a reality. Through the process of a market study that included one-on-one interviews with community leaders and Association students, it became clear that our community wants and needs the York Art Association.

Dani helped Association leaders consider what they needed to create a new iteration of the group. They are now on their way to hiring the first Executive Director, who along with Kristan Winand, their newest Board Chair, will set a course for the organization’s future that includes the important job of locating their new home. The story is certainly not over yet, but thanks to the hard work of the York Art Association and the resources of the Cultural Alliance, the group is growing creatively into its next iteration - a move for which we’ll all benefit.



## Navigating New Journeys: Resources for Artists

Aliyah Jones has always loved fashion. She has fond memories of attending fashion shows with her mom and sewing her own clothes as a child and teen. As college approached, she found herself in a tough creative space. She had just been accepted to Parsons School of Design in Manhattan, but after further reflection, declined her acceptance. It was hard for her and her family to justify the steep tuition bill and New York City cost-of-living against the sometimes sparse, early years of pursuing a creative field. "It set me back as a creator, and I didn't do much for a bit."

Aliyah soon started sewing and selling t-shirts and hoodies to fuel her creativity. It helped her hone her sewing skills and learn more about

marketing her products. She soon also learned that this was not where her passion lay as a designer, but she wasn't sure how to pivot her brand to include the bespoke dresses, tops, and handbags she'd always dreamed of creating. She applied for a few grants to fund her transition, but she wasn't successful.

Enter Rita Whitney, the Cultural Alliance's Director of Communications and Engagement. "A weight lifted off my shoulders when I met Rita – she helped me find my voice, she talked to me about my art and craft, and helped me understand how I could reach my potential." Rita and the Cultural Alliance team liken their work to the way a prism functions. When Rita meets an artist, her goal is to connect them to the artistic ecosystem of



## MAKING OUR YOUNGER SELVES PROUD

our region. As a new resident or emerging creator, it isn't always easy to know where to look to build artistic community, find funding, and learn about the business of being an artist. Much like a prism refracts multiple points of light, the Cultural Alliance team is able to connect artists to a constellation of creatives and resources that help them thrive in their creativity and business.

Jess McPherson, one of the Cultural Alliance's five Community Navigators, is a particular point of light for Aliyah. In Aliyah's own words, "Jess is awesome." An artist experienced with the creative process, Jess could tell Aliyah needed a little nudge to connect with her inner creativity. While sewing hoodies and t-shirts helped Aliyah maintain her connection to her craft in a hard season, it no longer felt rooted in the type of art she wanted to produce. In their work together, Jess helped Aliyah focus holistically on what it means to be a successful

artist. She could see that Aliyah needed to connect more deeply with her own, innate creativity and build a realistic budget for how to transition the creative focus of her business. The creative process is iterative, and Jess urged Aliyah to focus on action to help her move out of a perfectionist mindset.

Today Aliyah is sewing her fall collection for her company Armino Wu, a luxury streetwear clothing company. She's also an artist in residence at the Grotto Community Center, a hub of York's creative community. She credits her work with the Cultural Alliance with pulling her out of her creative rut by asking her to consider who she wants to be as a creative. And perhaps most importantly, helping her acquire the skills to get there. For now, Aliyah is "really enjoying connecting with my growing audience" and she's well on her way to her goal of making her younger self proud.



# The Ultimate Navigator

After retiring from his music classroom in 2019, Andrew Smith was on the look-out for new ways to channel his creative energy and time. As a practicing visual artist, Andrew has always valued building local artistic community - especially between the towns of York and Hanover. It's fitting that he learned about the Cultural Alliance through his volunteer work with the Hanover Area Art Guild's Board of Directors.



Andrew was deeply impressed with the CA and its work with artists, and felt especially drawn to the Creative Entrepreneur Accelerator Program, a granting program that offers small business consulting, creative mentorship and funds for artists and creators in York, Adams, Franklin and Fulton Counties in partnership with the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, the York County Economic Alliance, and the J. William Wareheim Foundation. The program had recently undergone restructuring based on feedback from a working group of local artist leaders and community liaisons, as well as in response to the Cultural Alliance's ongoing equity work, all of whom reported that a written application often posed a significant barrier to an artist's ability to access the resources they need. In response, the



Cultural Alliance began using trained navigators to work on their behalf alongside artists, connecting them with resources, advice, and insight as they developed their project.

Andrew became a Navigator for the program in late 2021, and noticed immediately that his teaching experience was an asset as he coached artists through the process of refining their projects. "Creatives often get scared by the word "grant" and think they won't be able to do the application, but this grant is very accessible. A part of my work as a navigator is assuring people they can do it and troubleshooting their questions." The preparation process facilitated by a Navigator, he notes, is an integral part of helping people focus their project goals. "Sometimes people come to the program knowing exactly what they want to do, but more often people need direction to help them focus their next steps." That's where Andrew and the other Navigators can be most useful. Together with the grant funds, the Navigators help boost artist entrepreneurs forward in a focused, intentional way.

Andrew can personally attest to this as a recipient of the grant in 2022 for his website, Culture on the Line - a curated collection of articles and events featuring the work of artists and creatives in the York and Hanover communities. "Community is really important to me," he says, and Culture on the Line is Andrew's way of creating a supportive artistic community that spans the sometimes hard to connect towns of Hanover

and York. A Creative Entrepreneur Accelerator Program grant enabled the purchase of a domain name, website hosting, and advertising for his project. Long term, Andrew hopes Culture on the Line will be the place people go when they want to know what's happening with creatives across South Central Pennsylvania. For now, he's enjoying the work of connecting with artists across our community, finding mutual points of interest in creative work and life more broadly.

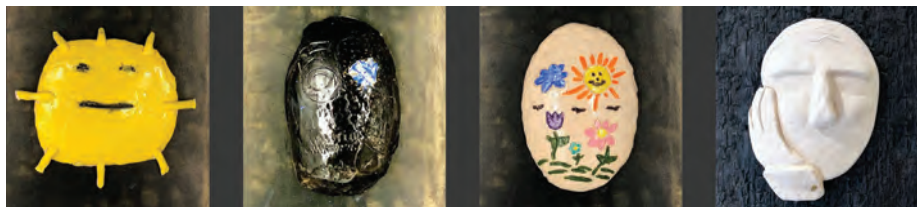
Andrew's creative navigation, both as a program Navigator and grantee, is an asset to the York community, and he's grateful to the Cultural Alliance for their support. When asked about what the Cultural Alliance brings to our community, Andrew replies quickly - "the Cultural Alliance is the ultimate navigator."



Andy Smith, Evolution of Madness

# Arts in Education

## I'm Fine. Project



Sometimes words fail us on our journey through grief. When Maureen Joyce lost her son, Patrick, about five years ago, her artistic practice allowed her to work through her loss and reconnect with the world. "When the fog lifted," she remembers, "I went into my studio and pounded clay."

As she reckoned with her son's death, Maureen began creating clay masks to symbolize the metaphorical ones we each wear in our lives when we're not feeling okay. After some time, she reflected on how beneficial the act of creating was for her as she worked through her loss. She took her idea to her friend and fellow artist, Carrie Breschi, and together they created the I'm Fine. project.

I'm Fine. builds on Maureen and Carrie's belief that art, and particularly clay sculpture, can be

healing. As a part of the project, the duo guide participants through a two hour, communal workshop on mask making. Participants learn how to sculpt with clay, the history of mask making, and the symbolic meaning of masks. Perhaps most importantly, they also talk a bit about mental health and where to find resources if and when they or a loved one need them. "Conversations happen organically," notes Carrie, "when people are creating side-by-side." More than teaching the art of clay sculpture, Maureen and Carrie are creating an environment where people can be seen and heard.

Initially Maureen and Carrie hosted workshops and installations in their home communities of Mechanicsburg and Carlisle, though I'm Fine. has grown into a statewide project backed by a Creative Catalyst Grant from



the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts. York County has hosted 15 workshops and residencies and 10 I'm Fine. installations across the City, including those found at the Grotto Community Center and WellSpan Health York Hospital. "I want to give the loudest of shout-outs to the Cultural Alliance of York," says Maureen. "It was a transformational moment when Kelley Gibson, CAYC's President, invited us to showcase I'm Fine. at the Annual Meeting in 2021. We didn't know how the community would embrace it, but York is where we most deeply embedded ourselves with the project."

Maureen and Carrie are currently at work sharing I'm Fine. with groups and communities in Pittsburgh over the next year. The project will then move east to Perry County, and end its run in Harrisburg in 2024. The duo plan to exhibit

every mask created through the I'm Fine. workshops in public places and spaces throughout Harrisburg City so the installations can be easily visited by anyone who wants to view them. When I'm Fine. concludes in 2024, Maureen and Carrie will have facilitated the making of over 1,200 masks, as well as countless conversations and connections that help those touched by the project know they are not alone.



To find more information about the I'm Fine. Project visit: <https://imfineproject.com/>

# Artist Innovator Award

The Artist Innovator Awards are intended to recognize excellence within the York County arts community as a vital aspect of both our cultural diversity, and our economy. Two \$10,000 prizes are awarded each year to creatives in York County after an extensive jurying process.

## 2022 INNOVATOR AWARD FINALISTS:

**Rob Evans\***

**Visual Art**

Justine Ekstrom

Visual Art

Jay Rock

Visual Art

Troy Engle

Music

Paul Wykowski

Music

Carla Christopher

Literary Arts

Christina Myers

Performing Arts

Doug Henderson

Film

**Joshua Santiago\***

**Film**

*\* Designates the 2022 winners.*

Josh Santiago



Justine Ekstrom



Paul Wykowski



Doug Henderson



Troy Engle



Carla Christopher



Rob Evans



Christina Myers



Jay Rock



# Our Team

Special thanks to those whose work and wisdom have guided the Cultural Alliance to where it is today:

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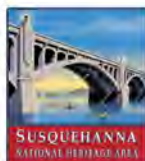


# THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS

## MISSION PARTNERS



## 2022 IMPACT PARTNERS



## 2022 ARTIST GRANTEES

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**Jeannine Dabb**





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(717) 812-9255

