



Annual Report 2020

downriver
council
for the
Arts



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CENTER FOR
ARTS & CULTURE

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ANN MARIE CURLEY
Gold Earring



ANNUAL REPORT 2020

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ANTIDOTE EXHIBIT

Poster graphic by Erin Davis

To say it's been a long year is an understatement. The pandemic has had a huge impact on all of us, but one of the things that kept spirits high at the Downriver Council for the Arts is all of you. Thank you for being part of our creative community! We are optimistic you've found a bit of solace in arts and culture during these difficult times, whether you've enjoyed our art exhibitions online and on-site or social media stories and lessons. Though we have all faced many challenges this year, the DCA has continued working to provide resources to our community. While we missed seeing you all in person, we are ensuring our future as a valuable community asset to you.

The pandemic created exponential challenges that are impacting individuals and institutions at every level in the arts. Like many non-profit arts organizations, we find ourselves facing the toughest obstacles we have encountered in our history. Despite the losses, this unprecedented year has also presented the arts and cultural sector with an opportunity to consider how it wants to rebuild, with a significant focus on the community of individuals who have long been overlooked and underserved in our society. Here at the DCA, we recognize that values of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility are integral to our mission. The pandemic brought about creative thinking in making artist's work accessible to a stay-at-home population. In response, the DCA transitioned programs and services to accessible online formats and has focused efforts on ensuring that artists receive the resources they need to persevere.

It's no surprise that in 2020, we learned to be comfortable with the uncomfortable. Art is essential to creative people. Especially in times of stress and turmoil, artists need to practice their craft as a way of release, as a way of hope, as a way of staying resilient that better times are ahead. Culture is what brings people together, keeps families close, and makes a person feel like there is closeness with one another, even if they can't physically be together. No one has the exact remedy, but one thing for sure... is that we all feel the same urgent necessary need to be brave and make arts and culture accessible to our communities. We aren't sitting around, waiting for things to get better. We try, we regroup, we focus on ideas we didn't have time to focus on before. Things are working. Slowly but surely, we are forging ahead.

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The DCA started back with in person art exhibits in September of 2020. We have broadened our themes and added on-line galleries to each exhibit. While we've lost touch with some of our 'regular' artists, we've been reaching a new group of artists who are finding us online and who are seeking us out because they need to be a part of something. We are returning our programming, with new ideas and modified classes. As we forge ahead into the unknown, I hope you will join us in this compelling journey.

-Erin Suess, Executive Director

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on America's arts sector. While employment conditions improve for artists and creative workers, the arts are recovering slower than other industries and COVID continues to disrupt in-person programming.

The Pandemic's Impact on Artist & Creative Workers: Artists/creatives were—and remain among the most severely affected segment of the nation's workforce. At the height of the pandemic in 2020, 63% experienced unemployment and 95% lost creative income.

Source: Americans for the Arts; COVID-19 Pandemic Impact on The Arts; www.americansforthearts.org



EMILY BIANCHETTE
At Times They Tremble

An updated strategic plan for our organization was developed in 2020 to address the changing economy of downriver and the impact it would have on the organization's future. The previous version, compiled in 2008, outlined a large number of anticipated changes, facility upgrades and programmatic enhancements to address, however, a clear and steady method to reach those expectations had not been outlined, therefore leaving the organization slightly short of its goals. The current plan identifies our needs to define the short-term goals of the organization where we can assess our strengths and weaknesses to ultimately drive programming and help us maintain financial stability. We have been realigning our operations to this plan and the Board and staff will determine a path for the next 10 years and ensure the DCA is achieving its mission and taking appropriate actions.

Before shutdown in March, the DCA partnered with Art Road in February of 2020 to bring student art from Bunche Elementary and Grandport Academy in Ecorse to exhibit in our community gallery. Art Road focuses on bringing art class back into schools in southeast Michigan.

We began presenting all our exhibits online for the stay-at-home audiences. This has attracted national artists who have even become members. We offered online only exhibits in the beginning, but now offer both online and in-person options to artists entering exhibits in our main gallery.

Our on-site gift shop was introduced. We photographed items, uploaded onto our website and patrons were able to purchase items online. This increased visibility during a time when there wasn't a lot of foot traffic into the arts center.

The DCA was able to work with volunteer videographers looking to upgrade their portfolios during the downtime. This is another way we enhanced our online presence to keep our audience engaged when we couldn't be open or hold events. We were able to produce many member artist interviews and other compilations to populate our YouTube channel. The DCA continues to look into securing equipment to

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS

further our video production, including online class capabilities, intern projects and more documentation of our organization and the community.

Stay at home orders and the need to conduct more activities outdoors led to events like the Downriver Art Out in June of 2020. Artists, musicians and performers were invited to create art outdoors from the comforts of their own backyard or anywhere of their choosing on one day. For those who wanted to mingle with other downriver artist as they created, we provided a live video chatroom where everyone could socialize in real time. Then we asked artists to share their work via photos or videos on the event page using the hashtag #DownriverArtOut.

Another outdoor activity we put on was a fundraising event for the DCA called, Walk for the Love of Art! (and Culture). This brought the DCA to Heritage Park in Taylor where patrons were asked to walk the marked course to raise dollars for the DCA organization. The location was beautiful, well-maintained community park, covering 121 acres, features paved walking paths, wooded nature trails, a large pond, pavilion access, restrooms, and ample parking. We provided music and art activities, including en plein air artists sprinkled along the walk.

Funding resources were made available to arts organization in the response to the pandemic. The DCA was able to apply and receive awards from CultureSource, Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs, Wayne County, Community Foundation of Southeast Michigan, and the Paycheck Protection Program.

DOWNRIVER DETROIT STUDENT FILM CONSORTIUM

2020 WORLD PREMIERE



**THE DOWNRIVER DETROIT
STUDENT FILM CONSORTIUM**
2020 WORLD PREMIERE
ARTWORK BY TIM PORTER

FRIDAY, APRIL 3, 2020

ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORY

In 1978, the Downriver Community Conference (DCC) was established in an effort to encourage and promote the economic growth of the Downriver communities. Just a few months later, the Downriver Council for the Arts (DCA) was established. The motivation to form this arts council was to improve the quality of life and enhance the image of the 15 communities that belonged to the Downriver Community Conference. Because arts activities were recognized as an important factor in Downriver's quality of life and its economic development, the Downriver Council for the Arts began as a department of the Downriver Community Conference.

The original mission of the DCA was to encourage the development of an aesthetically satisfying environment among the cities and townships that comprise the Downriver Community Conference area.

In 1989, the DCA left the DCC to become an independent 501(c)3 non-profit organization. This major change greatly enhanced the independence of DCA's decision making and provided many new opportunities for funding. For two years, the DCA was located in Southgate. From 1992 to 2000, the DCA was located at the Historic Marx Home, an "annex" of the Wyandotte Historical Society. In 2000, moved from the Marx Home to a freshly remodeled and reconstructed old farmhouse on the property of Wayne County Community College Downriver Campus in Taylor, Michigan. The move afforded the organization ample room for giving Downriver arts organizations space for meetings, as well as provided room for art exhibitions and an arts library.

The year 2010, brought the official grand opening of the DCA in its current location. The DCA now operates out of the James R. DeSana Center for Arts and Culture (the Arts Center), a three-story, nearly 20,000 SF historic building located at 81 Chestnut Street in downtown Wyandotte. The architecture of the building, constructed in 1911, represents the splendor of a different era: a time



when Wyandotte exemplified our region's entrance into America's industrial boom. The structure was built by the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, an internationally recognized fraternal service organization. In 1943, the building was bought by the Fraternal Order of Free and Accepted Masons. The Masons remained in the building for over 50 years, continuing the Odd Fellows' tradition of community service and good fellowship. The building was purchased by the City of Wyandotte in 2008 under the tenure of then Mayor James R. DeSana (now serving on the DCA Board of Directors). The intention was to preserve its rich history and redevelop it as a cultural facility. The Center became the home of the DCA in 2010 through a partnership with the City and the DDA. In late 2016, the City of Wyandotte and DDA extended our lease for a 10-year commitment. We feel this partnership helped solidify our place and home as a regional arts and cultural center.

ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORY

Our goal for the James R. DeSana Center for Arts and Culture is to be a multi-use, multi-generational, and multi-cultural destination arts facility that contributes to the expansion of the area's economic development initiatives and provides educational opportunities for the communities into the future. The Center serves the community in three ways - it creates opportunities for community artists to showcase their skills, it serves as a cultural resource for the community, and it serves as an educational facility. A significant goal in the DCA's strategic plan is to relate the arts and design programming of the Center to regional economic development, not only through the creation of a destination attraction, but also by acting as a magnet for career and educational opportunities by building partnerships with educational institutions and corporations.

Today, the Downriver Council for the Arts (DCA) is a regional non-profit 501(c)(3) arts and cultural organization that proudly serves nearly 400,000 residents in 21 Downriver communities. Downriver is the area in Michigan comprised of cities south of Detroit. The Downriver area is generally known to consist of communities that rest along the Detroit River south and west of Detroit and including communities as far west as those surrounding the Detroit metropolitan airport and south to Monroe County. In historic times, these cities were accessible by traveling down the Detroit River. Downriver overall is known as a suburban Detroit region with working-class residential neighborhoods. These cities were mainly populated with workers who were employed by the dozens of auto factories, manufacturing suppliers, ship builders, steel mills and chemical plants in the area. Recreational opportunities are often centered around the waterways. The low cost of living, down to earth mentality and good work

ethic in the communities make for a good place for artists to call home. The Downriver area also provides a cheaper cost of living alternative to the immensely growing Downtown Detroit.

Today the DCA's mission is to enrich the quality of life in the Downriver communities by advocating and promoting the arts and providing opportunities for involvement and participation in arts and cultural activities. We actively support local artists and performers through artistic outreach programs and special promotional opportunities. The DCA also creates regional partnerships with other cultural organizations, schools and service clubs to promote artistic, cultural and special events throughout Southeast Michigan. We hold these activities in our Arts Center and by operating in the various cities we serve.



The Downriver Detroit Student Film Consortium (DDSFC) brings together an eclectic group of students to experience every facet of making motion pictures. A volunteer team of producers, writers, actors, sound editors and musical artist serve as mentors. Every week they meet in the arts center and culminate the season with a premiere of their projects. These films have screened worldwide and have won the students multiple awards and scholarships.



MARY JO CAURANA & TIM PORTER
WEARING NEW DCA APPAREL

Caroline

Our youngest DDSFC student



DONNA HINSON
ALONE AT HOME



MEET OUR TEAM



**ERIN
SUESS**

Executive Director
esuess@downriverarts.org

Erin is a lifelong Downriver resident, and earning an Associate's Degree in art from Henry Ford Community College and a Bachelor's Degree in art from Wayne State University. She worked for design agencies and the Detroit News and Free Press and later as an art director with a Dearborn agency. Erin served on the Board of Directors for the Downriver Council for the Arts (DCA) for 6 years and volunteered services for their website design and upkeep, graphic design and social communication. She now has acted as Executive Director with the DCA since 2016. She uses her board experience to take a more proactive role in maintaining the mission of the DCA. Personal experience has taught her that nurturing communities through arts and culture is vital. In 2018, Erin was accepted into the Arts Leaders as Cultural Innovators program, provided by EmcArts. She attends workshops as well as learning to facilitate Adaptive Leadership alongside other rising influencers in the Southeast Michigan arts and culture community.



**LYNN
CAMPBELL**

Office Manager
lcampbell@downriverarts.org

Lynn is a retired Executive Assistant with years of office management experience working for high-level senior management in the chemical and automotive industries. Her role as recording secretary for the board of directors' executive board meetings and general membership meetings simply begins to set the stage for the invaluable services she provides to the DCA. Lynn leads by coordinating, managing and facilitating membership in classes, programs, and camps, and the DCA general membership. She acts as the organization's primary liaison with the public in matters of building maintenance and reporting information to the city. In addition to coordinating the rental of our artist studios and event spaces, she manages the Artisan Gift Shop inventory, sales and display. Lynn also has a creative side, helping to create flyers, decorating for events, and donating and creating raffle baskets for fundraisers. Her hours of donated time, talent and money to assist the DCA help to round out her involvement.



**ERIN
DAVIS**

Visual Designer
erin24davis@yahoo.com

Erin is a local artist and earned her Bachelor's Degree from Grand Valley State University. While in college, she interned at the Downriver Council for the Arts (DCA) and various branding agencies in Grand Rapids. Once completing her degree, she has become a Graphic Designer for The Envelope Printery Inc. and serves the DCA in various ways such as graphic design and coordination with the DCA Gallery Committee. She has helped clients such as Children's Literacy Network, US Jaycees Foundation, Rotary District 6400, and has been featured by various publications globally. Erin stresses the importance of creative programs and solutions in our society. She claims that everyone is creative, it is just a matter of exercising it. She informs people of this necessity, while using her work and ways of thinking as a way to help others.



JOE HOSLER
THE SKY IS CALLING MY NAME





RICHARD ADAMS
ALAS-NYE-NYC

MEET OUR BOARD MEMBERS

MICHELE PORTER

President
Academic Officer
Art Dept, Wayne
State University

AYANA KING

*Secretary,
Owner/Operator
Maximum
Communications,
LLC*

Rob Bovitz

President Bovitz CPA
PC. & Bovitz Mgmt.
Services, Inc.

Travis Reiff

Special Education
Teacher, Wyandotte
Public Schools

JAN DUNBAR

Vice President
Artist /
Acanthus
Art Society

JAMES DESANA

Member at large
Past Mayor, City
of Wyandotte, MI
Past State Senator

Anthony Harrison

Prevention Field
Supervisor,
The Guidance
Center

Dale Cook

Past President,
Vice President
PNC Bank,
Allen Park

LINDA SOULES

Treasurer
President, Seaway
Chorale &
Orchestra

WALTRAUD PRECHTER

Member at Large
Founder, Heinz C.
Prechter Bipolar
Research Fund

Steve Wildern

Theatre Operations
Dean, WCCCD

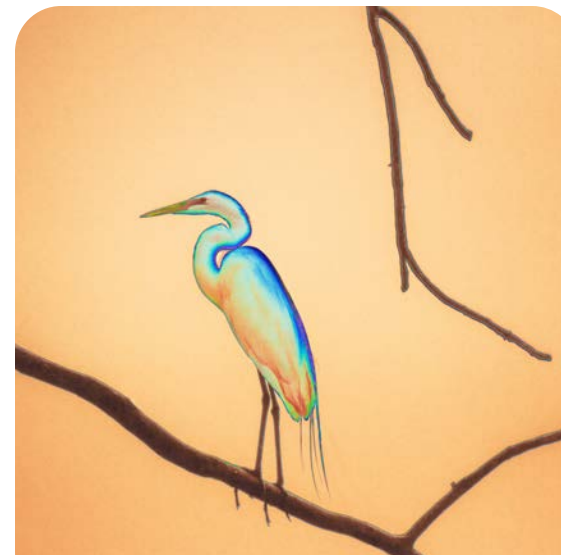
Scott Galeski

Truant Officer,
Wyandotte Schools
/ Retired Downriver
Detroit Police
Detective

OUR MISSION

To enrich the quality of life in the Downriver communities by advocating and promoting the arts and providing opportunities for involvement and participation in arts and cultural activities.

involvement and participation in arts and cultural activities.



MARIE KARAMBIS

EFFORTLESS



SCOTT
GALESKI

Scott is an award winning independent filmmaker and a retired police detective from Downriver Detroit, Michigan. A coach and mentor to at-risk and disadvantaged youth, in combination with his law enforcement career, has given him a unique insight into filmmaking. In 2009 Galeski founded Ring of Fire Entertainment which has produced over 30 independent films and music videos that have screened throughout the world. He founded the Downriver Detroit Student Film Consortium diversely consisting of students from Detroit and Downriver area schools.



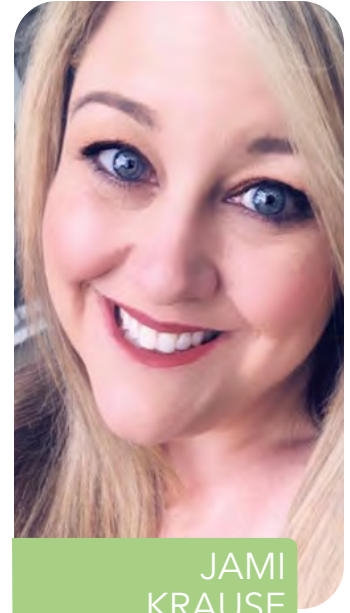
JAMIE
LEBOUF

Born and raised in Lincoln Park, Michigan, Jamie creates hand-crafted, artisan chocolates and confections in the kitchen at the Art Center and distributes them throughout Southeast Michigan. As a Muslim-American woman, she spent nearly 20 years abroad perfecting her craft and opened her first boutique chocolate production facility and group of retail stores in Beirut, Lebanon. Recently she has been selling her product every weekend at Eastern Market in Detroit. See more on Instagram @jpatricechocolatestudio.



SHARON
DOUGLAS

Sharon is an independent fresh floral designer from the Downriver area joining the DCA resident artists in 2019. She has been a resident of Wyandotte for many years, and has worked with fresh flowers for various events for more than forty years. She is drawn to creating with flowers because they are natural elements that can be used to bring happiness to people by their form and color. She particularly likes working with tropicals due to their interesting variations in shape. Events are markers in our lives...whether they be as joyous as a wedding or as emotional as a funeral. Sharon loves being part of those markers, and bringing beauty to those events with her flowers.



JAMI
KRAUSE

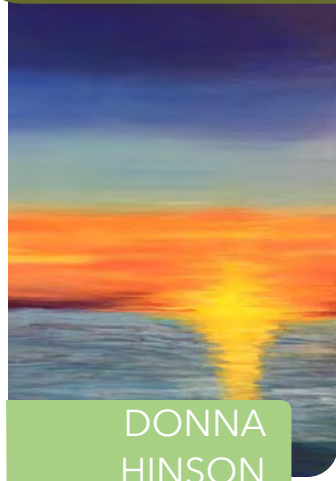
Jami received her Bachelors Degree from Eastern Michigan University in 2004. Jami previously worked at Dance Electric Studio, Canton Premiere Dance, was a Drama Director at multiple high school with after school Music and Drama programs. Jami is very active in community theatre, having performed and directed with several groups such as Downriver Actors Guild, Southgate Community Players, and Ann Arbor Civic Theatre. Jami values the use of performing arts as a tool for fostering development. She has taught voice privately since 2007 and believes in working with each singer's instrument individually and helping them to develop at their own pace. Jami teaches singing to help students create a beautiful and healthy voice, focusing on tone, placement and musicality.

MEET OUR RESIDENT ARTISTS



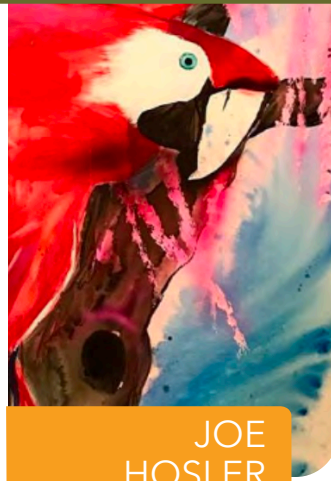
MARTINE
MACDONALD

Martine is an accomplished artist and Adjunct Professor at Wayne County Community College. She explores notions of place and time, refined through life experiences, dreams and memories into a visual essence. She strives to move her work towards a spirituality that reconciles issues of mothering, home, place and identity. Her work can be seen on her website at martinemacdonald.com.



DONNA
HINSON

Donna teaches classes through the DCA for children and adults, including the DCA's Youth Art classes and the DCA's Youth Summer Art Camps. Previously Donna was the owner/operator of a gallery and studio on Grosse Ile, and now focuses her paintings on relationships between people, self and the larger society. She is interested in what makes us who we are and how we interact with one another, how the larger world influences us and how we influence the world. Many of her pieces rely on nuanced balance and simplicity, and can be described best as intimate looks at ideas and feelings. View her art at her Facebook page at Donna Boisseau Hinson Studio.

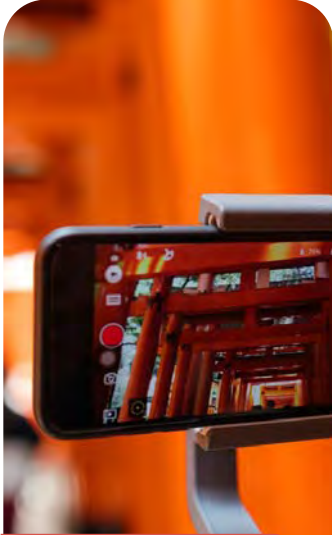


JOE
HOSLER

Joe is an artist who has spent the last 5 years creating artworks that deliver an impact and have a story to tell. He works in various mediums and is not limited to aerosol paints, airbrush, acrylics, pencil, and ink. As he is growing in popularity, he has been commissioned to create various murals in the Downriver community. His work can be seen on Instagram @hoss_designs.

**"You can't
use up
creativity.
The more
you use,
the more
you have."**

Maya Angelou



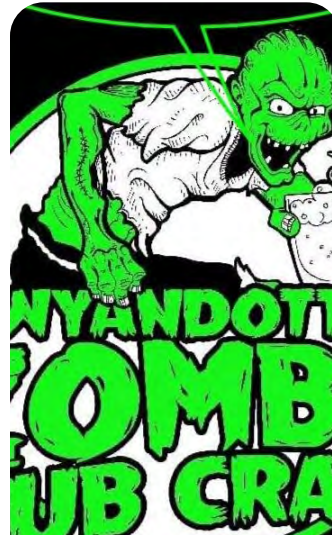
MARK
MESSER

Mark H. Messer is photographer and director of All Tech Visual Services, a commercial photography and video production studio in Wyandotte. Interested and involved in photography at a young age, Mark continued to make it a lifelong career. He studied photography at Red Rocks College, CO and worked for a number of years as a photography assistant with several commercial studios. In 1986 he began work as a staff photographer for Ford Motor Co, where he stayed for 22 years. Mark currently volunteers as a photography instructor with the Downriver Detroit Student Film Consortium, and as a photographer/video producer with the International Wildlife Refuge Alliance.



NICOLE GILLIES
& SHARON
LESPERANCE

Sharon and Nicole, a mother/daughter traditional-crafts team herald from Trenton, Michigan. Sharon worked for nearly 20 years as a craftswoman specializing in textiles, ceramics and tinwork at Greenfield Village located on the grounds of The Henry Ford. Nicole, a fiber artist specializing in 2-D and 3-D felted pieces, wearable art and decorative elements with natural textures/floral elements, teaches classes/workshops through the DCA in felting and surface design in textiles. Instagram is www.instagram.com/rovingeyetextiles



BE WELL MY
FRIENDS

Be Well My Friends is a non-profit fundraising organization founded and administered by Brian Webb of Riverview and Michael Balcom of Wyandotte. Their primary mission is to become the helping hands to those in need in the Downriver Community. Their 8 year history of charitable work began with the first Annual Wyandotte Zombie Pub Crawl which, to date, has raised over \$60k for the Yes Ma'am free mammogram program through Wyandotte Henry Ford Hospital. Currently they are working with local restaurants and online fundraising to provide free lunches to front-line workers at the Wyandotte Henry Ford Hospital throughout the Covid-19 Pandemic.

**"Creativity
is thinking
up new
things.
Innovation
is doing
new
things."**

Theodore Levitt

MEET OUR RESIDENT ARTISTS



JEN
BALCOLM

Jen is a healing arts advocate and a licensed massage therapist in the state of Michigan. She creates a broad range of craft pieces ranging from quirky cross-stitch to jewelry and epoxy tumblers. She has been a frequent exhibitor through local artist fairs including the Downriver Indie Art Fair. Jen also works closely with her artist, musician and charity-fundraising organizer husband, Michael Balcom, at raising their two busy boys.



PORTER
MCKEENN &
MICHELE
PORTER

Husband and wife team of artists, they are active members with the DCA. Porter helps out with the DCA Youth Arts Council and social media content. Working with both digital and traditional mediums, his work is greatly influenced by a pop culture, contemporary illustration, and modern design. Please visit McKeenn.com for more of his work. Michele, DCA Board Member and art advisor at a local university, is a photographer and fiber artist.



DAN
MCAFEE

Dan is a retired director of worship for the Archdiocese of Detroit and a fine art painter concentrating in Christian-based religious iconology. His work analyzes complex thoughts and ideas of religion, embracing traditional and pointilism painting techniques. Dan feels a constant need to be creating and uses it as an outlet to express and reaffirm his Christian faith. He feels that art making is considered a spiritual experience.

“The aim of art is to represent not the outward appearance of things, but their inward significance”

Aristotle

INCOME STATEMENT 2019

HOW THE DCA IS FUNDED

Memberships, grants, foundation support, corporate support, sponsorships, fundraisers and special events, gallery sales, an annual giving campaign, classes, workshop fees and donations



PROGRAMMING
\$100,200



MEMBERSHIPS
\$11,750



FUNDRAISERS
\$11,046



DONATIONS
\$42,160



TOTAL INCOME
\$165,156



TOTAL EXPENSES
\$157,499



Thank you for your donations

The State of Michigan Council for the Arts and Cultural Affairs: \$16,250

Kresge Detroit Arts Support: \$10,000

Hezekiah Zeiber Trust: \$6,000

World Heritage Foundation: \$3,000

C3 Creations Fashion Show: \$2,200

Board of Directors' Raffle Ticket: \$1,294

Karen Wilson-Smithbauer: \$1,000

Mitch Ryder concert fundraiser: \$700

Karen St. Martin: \$500

Wyandotte Rotary: \$500



PAINTINGS BY JOE HOSLER
FOR HENRY FORD WYANDOTTE HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES AND
CITY OF WYANDOTTE PUBLIC SERVANTS IN RESPONSE TO
THE STRUGGLE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC



WWW.DOWNRIVERARTS.ORG

Designed by
Erin Davis

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from the DCA Board of Directors*

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