

A Report and Action Plan on Social Justice and Our Core Values





Dancers from Nalini Rau's Natya Anubhava Academy during Performing Families event in ArtsWestchester's gallery (photo credit: Tim Grajek)

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A Letter from the Westchester County Executive George Latimer



George Latimer
County Executive

Dear Friends,

As we continue on our path to the other side of the COVID-19 pandemic, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge that our perseverance, patience and strength has been tested. Our faith has been challenged as we watched our loved ones suffer with illness, and we faced a crisis of the soul through the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and others.

Our friends at ArtsWestchester have provided an opportunity to be a part of a positive effort towards social change and racial equality. Through their report on Social Justice & Core Values, we can build a greater understanding of our diverse cultural heritages, and create a more sustainable social justice environment for our County.

The arts will be key to reopening and reinvigorating our local economy – they are vital to ensuring a more just future for us all. We have leaders throughout Westchester who care very much about inclusion, and we want every person living here to know they are welcome here. Diverse arts programming is one way we can give people a voice, and address the challenges of social and cultural equality that we face.

ArtsWestchester has a long history of supporting under-represented communities through arts programming and education. Their work in immigrant, racial, ethnic and communities of African descent especially have brought people together through the vibrancy and joy of the arts.

We will continue to listen closely to, and honor the expressions of diverse voices in our communities. We will gain a greater understanding of how to best move forward as a County.

Let us engage in courageous conversations, let us support the arts organizations in our communities. Let's take time to listen to each other and our neighbors. We will do all this and more – together.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "George Latimer".

George Latimer
Westchester County Executive

Benjamin Boykin II

Chairman of the Board
Legislator, 5th District



March 1, 2021

Dear Friends,

With the one-year anniversary of the COVID-19 pandemic upon us, we find ourselves looking back on a year of unparalleled challenges -- from the profound loss and dislocation that COVID-19 continues to cause, to the national reckoning over racial and social equity inspired by the murder of George Floyd and too many others.

In good times and bad, the arts have been central to our ability to speak to one another across cultural boundaries, to capture and record the truth of our times, to help us better see and understand one another.

During COVID, ArtsWestchester has led the way in helping sustain Westchester's diverse community of musicians, visual artists, dancers, actors and writers, allowing them to continue to capture our shared story.

With the publication of this Report on Social Justice and Core Values, ArtsWestchester is once again demonstrating the organization's commitment to social justice, racial equity and the needs of our community.

As we rebuild in the wake of the pandemic, the arts will continue to be a bridge connecting our communities, and an economic driver in our recovery, and ArtsWestchester will be an important part of that.

That's why I'm pleased that the Board of Legislators has been able to include ArtsWestchester among the many important nonprofit institutions the County supports, especially the organization's Challenge Grant Program, a powerful public/private partnership that supports the arts throughout the County and pays dividends for Westchester's economy.

I look forward to the time when we will meet together in galleries and theatres. I'd like to thank ArtsWestchester for helping keep creative people working during these difficult times and for keeping the public connected to the arts through its newsletters and website.

The arts in Westchester are as diverse and multifaceted as Westchester itself, and I'm glad that ArtsWestchester remains committed to that richness and diversity.

Sincerely,

Benjamin Boykin II
Chair of the Westchester County Board of Legislators

January 13, 2021

A REPORT ON SOCIAL JUSTICE & OUR CORE VALUES

Over several months, and in light of the growing societal demand for organizations to take the lead in shaping more equitable and just communities, ArtsWestchester has been reviewing:

1. Its commitment to equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility (EDIA).
2. Past actions and performance in embracing social justice.
3. New initiatives that we may have the capacity to implement.

As a first step, we have renewed and strengthened our commitment to social justice, rephrasing our Mission Statement and aligning our Vision Statement to more closely reflect our past and ongoing commitment to advancing equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility within our organization. This examination and exploration has been guided by a ten person committee of our Board, comprised of individuals of diverse backgrounds and perspectives, together with an EDIA consultant. Our committee members were: Froma Benerofe, Mack Carter, Ken Dell Orto, Genia Flammia, Dr. LaRuth Gray, Betty Himmel, Michael Minihan, John Peckham, Bernard Thombs, Marie Smith (Committee Chair), and Waddell Stillman. We are grateful for their committed and thoughtful approach to this important work for our organization.

The following summarizes the process followed by ArtsWestchester to date, and a summary of the Committee's recommendations to the Board.

Process:

1. ArtsWestchester engaged leading EDIA consultant Donna Walker-Khune to work with the Committee beginning summer, 2020.
2. The consultant led the Committee in implicit bias training and oriented the Committee on key issues in EDIA. The Committee was presented with reading materials to help establish criteria for personal and organizational assessment. The Committee and staff explored similar efforts at comparable institutions across the country.
3. The Committee and staff felt strongly that any show of solidarity with social justice work must go beyond a statement of commitment and outline a path of action. There was broad recognition that ArtsWestchester comes to these issues with a record of achievement in the arena of EDIA. We also recognize our limited capacity as an organization, still in the throes of a major pandemic. To best advance the principles of social justice in our community, we approached the work through the lens of our 50+ years of experience as the leader of cultural affairs in Westchester.

Key Recommendations:

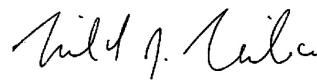
1. Establish a Social Justice Committee of the Board to review the organization's plans and progress with respect to EDIA issues and publish an EDIA dashboard to advance transparency and accountability.
2. Revise our Mission and Vision Statements and adopt a public commitment to social justice.
3. Actively cultivate, recruit, and retain diverse candidates for staff positions and board membership.

4. Continue to make diversity and inclusion core criteria of our grants process and professional development agenda.
5. Over a two to five year period, raise monies for several leading edge initiatives to increase service to and representation of Westchester's diverse populations, including:
 - 1) Launch a Cultural Leaders Fellowship for emerging arts leaders from historically underrepresented populations.
 - 2) Initiate an organizational award for an affiliate that has done exceptional work in the EDIA field;
 - 3) Establish a grant initiative for artists making work around social issues, in collaboration with service organizations; and
 - 4) Develop programs that celebrate the work, legacy, and living traditions of the diverse groups in Westchester County.
6. Develop a Cultural Plan for Westchester, outlining strategies for cultural development in Westchester and incorporating EDIA principles.

Submitted by:



Janet T. Langsam
CEO, ArtsWestchester



Michael J. Minihan
Board President, ArtsWestchester



REVISED MISSION & VISION STATEMENTS: A COMMITMENT TO SOCIAL JUSTICE

ArtsWestchester's mission is to create an equitable, inclusive, vibrant and sustainable Westchester County in which the arts are integral to and integrated into every facet of life.

Our Core Values: The arts are for everyone, amplifying the multi-ethnic and culturally diverse voices within our community. The arts offer opportunities for advancement and personal growth. The arts are a catalyst for systemic change, economic development, and community empowerment. The arts create life-affirming experiences, celebrating differences and finding shared values.

Advancing our Mission through Leadership: ArtsWestchester supports the arts in Westchester through leadership, funding, programming, education, advocacy, audience cultivation and professional development. We work to ensure the accessibility and diversity of the arts, at every level for every resident and visitor in Westchester County.

Our Commitment to Social Justice:

ArtsWestchester is a not-for-profit organization which is vital to the growth and sustainability of the arts in Westchester for all residents and visitors regardless of race, age, gender identity, disability, religious and cultural beliefs and sexual orientation. We support and present a broadly defined array of arts and cultural activities, in various forms and disciplines, which embrace the varied expressions of our multi-cultural community.

As ArtsWestchester looks to the future, and in recognition of the current needs of the communities we serve, we reaffirm and further commit to advancing social justice through our policies and practices. We acknowledge that this work is on-going and commit to enacting a strategic vision that is proactive and responsive in shaping a just, fair, and equitable Westchester.

Our Definition and Commitment to the Four Pillars of Social Justice

We define and commit to these principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility as interpreted as follows:

Diversity is the representation of all our varied identities and differences (including race, ethnicity, gender, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, age, socio-economic status) collectively and as individuals. As an arts organization, ArtsWestchester extends its definition of diversity to also include all creative artistic expressions (performance, visual and language-based) as practiced by any group or individual.

We commit to embracing and increasing diversity, believing that diversity in the arts is excellence in the arts.



The ArtsMobile visits the Peekskill Senior Center.

Equity seeks to ensure fair treatment, equality of opportunity, and fairness in access to resources for all. We commit to working actively to challenge and respond to bias and harassment, and discrimination. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, national origin, age, socio-economic status, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, disability, religion, physical appearance, or veteran status.

We commit to enacting programs and policies that promote cultural equity, ensuring that the arts are available to all, and especially to Westchester's most vulnerable residents.

Inclusion builds a culture of belonging by actively inviting the contribution and participation of all people. Inclusion is where people's differences are valued and used to enable everyone to thrive.

We commit to ensuring that Westchester County is a place where all creative differences and expressions are welcomed, different perspectives are respectfully heard, and where every individual feels a sense of belonging. We commit to fostering an inclusive workplace with fair policies and practices that enables a diverse range of people to work together effectively.

Accessibility is ensuring that the arts are available to all. We believe in providing awareness, resources and services in the arts so that individuals are not excluded, denied services, segregated, or otherwise treated differently because of their disability, socio-economic status or other barriers that might preclude participation.

We commit to embracing accessibility of the arts in the broadest possible sense of its meaning to address any and all barriers to participation.





Installation artist Amanda Browder working with BOCES student Leslie Valdovinos for Browder's upcoming public art installation (photo credit: Aaron Paige)

NEW INITIATIVES IN OUR COMMITMENT TO SOCIAL JUSTICE

As part of our reaffirmed commitment to advancing social justice, ArtsWestchester undertakes raising funds and seeking support for a series of new initiatives for the next five years. These initiatives emerge from our ongoing field work and are possible based on our organizational capacity. These programs and policies aim to touch each corner of Westchester through serving artists, cultural organizations, and residents, and through ongoing self-reflection and training at our own institutional level:

- **Social Justice Board Commitment:** In 2020, ArtsWestchester established a committee to review our past work and future goals in the field of EDIA, including evaluating our practices and success in recruiting and retaining diverse candidates for job and board positions. The Social Justice Committee will become a committee of the board, and continue to engage in ongoing work in the field of equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility. The Committee will help establish benchmarks for ArtsWestchester and engage in ongoing evaluation of our success in these areas. In addition, the Committee will lead in the creation of professional development programs around EDIA topics for our affiliates and grantees.
- **Publish a Dashboard on EDIA:** ArtsWestchester intends to add a “dashboard” on EDIA activities to its website. The dashboard serves as a public scorecard on ArtsWestchester’s progress in meeting EDIA benchmarks and goals in key areas.
- **Ongoing EDIA and Sensitivity Training for ArtsWestchester Staff, Board, and Affiliates:** ArtsWestchester believes in a work environment where all members of its team feel comfortable to express their unique identities and have opportunities to contribute. We commit to providing ongoing EDIA and Sensitivity Training for our staff and board members, with the goals of creating and maintaining a respectful, inclusive workplace. We will continue to make diversity and inclusion core criteria of our grants process and professional development agenda.
- **Cultural Leaders Fellowship:** ArtsWestchester acknowledges that Black, Indigenous, and Persons of Color are still largely underrepresented in leadership positions in the arts and across other sectors. ArtsWestchester believes that diverse perspectives are a hallmark of artistic excellence and that residents deserve to see their identities and aspirations reflected in our cultural offerings and leadership. The Cultural Leaders Fellowship advances diversity and excellence within ArtsWestchester and the arts sector at large. The Fellowship is an opportunity for emerging arts leaders from systemically disadvantaged and historically underserved populations to gain valuable field training and professional development towards sustainable careers in non-profit cultural organizations, including museums, galleries. Fellows will work alongside ArtsWestchester staff for eighteen months, receive a stipend and other benefits, and be empowered to develop and present a program of their vision.
- **Voices for Change Artist Grant:** “Voices for Change” is a unique artist grant opportunity designed to promote social awareness through the arts. At ArtsWestchester, we believe that art has the power to illuminate complex issues, encourage civic discourse and open the community to new ways of thinking. “Voices for Change”

provides the creative community with an opportunity to develop and present new work that inspires and informs, and may be a catalyst for action. Proposals may include a collaboration with a service or community-based organization. Artists will receive grants in significant amounts to create new works of art, in any discipline, which will be debuted at ArtsWestchester.

- **Social Justice Cultural Organization Award:** In recognition that many arts organizations in our area have also embraced EDIA as a core of their mission, ArtsWestchester wishes to recognize outstanding work in the area of social justice through the arts. The award will be presented at our annual Arts Award event, and come with a cash grant.
- **The ArtsWestchester BIPOC Artist Grant:** The ArtsWestchester BIPOC Artist Grant provides direct support to emerging and mid-career Westchester artists, in all disciplines, who identify as Black, Indigenous, or a Person of Color (BIPOC) to further their practice. ArtsWestchester defines an emerging artist as a creative at the early stages of their career, or who has received some recognition for their work, but is not yet widely known in their field. ArtsWestchester considers a mid-career artist to be an artist who has created an independent body of work over a number of years and who has received regional or national recognition through publication or public presentation of their work. One grant of \$5,000 will be awarded annually for three consecutive years through a competitive process. The grant recipient will have an opportunity to present work at ArtsWestchester, in person or virtually.
- **“Who Writes History” Exhibition:** Supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts, “Who Writes History?” is an exhibition of new work that will address the complexities of writing (or rewriting) history. Commissioned artwork created by Hudson Valley regional artists will be exhibited in context with a diverse roster of artists from other corners of America, to explore how images and language (together and independently) shape our collective memory and mainstream narratives related to race, gender and politics. The exhibition seeks to bring marginalized stories to the fore in an effort to work towards a more complete recounting of the past and present.
- **“Crossing Borders” Initiative:** “Crossing Borders” is a three-year interdisciplinary community development and programmatic initiative that seeks to highlight the living traditions and contemporary artistic expressions of Westchester’s diverse immigrant populations. Developed in collaboration with local stakeholders “Crossing Borders” will consist of developing an advisory group and a series of performance and exhibition programs that reflect the creative practices and contemporary cultural expressions of Westchester’s diverse populations. To make the content accessible to a wide audience, each program will be enhanced with digital materials and interpretive workshops, talks, and community-conversations (in person and virtual) that will take place at ArtsWestchester and at partner sites.
- **Juneteenth Across Westchester:** ArtsWestchester has been an active supporter of Juneteenth celebrations in Peekskill and White Plains. Through collaborations with municipalities and grassroots organizations, ArtsWestchester intends to increase its involvement in organizing and promoting Juneteenth observances across Westchester County.
- **Celebrating Pride:** ArtsWestchester’s LGBTQ+ Arts Initiative was inaugurated in 2018 to bring greater visibility and appreciation to the expressive practices of New York’s LGBTQ+ communities. Combining demonstration, hands-on activities and conversation (virtually and in person), ArtsWestchester Pride programs will explore art forms like runway walking, vogue dancing, and effects/costume design, all practiced within New York’s Black and Latinx LGBTQ+ ballroom community.



Performing Families II: The Art of Runway and Step (photo credit: Tim Grajek)

- **Creation of the Art Factory for Teens:** Since 2017, ArtsWestchester’s “Teen Tuesdays and Thursdays” has offered free workshops to young Westchester residents in transition, many of whom are homeless, have special social and emotional needs and challenging economic circumstances. The program serves 750 teens enrolled in eight partner organizations including the White Plains Housing Authority, the Coachman Family Center, and the Boys & Girls Club. Workshops are currently offered in ArtsWestchester’s gallery, but as we make our way back to in-person programming in a post-pandemic world, we aim to use creative arts to help youth overcome everyday stressors of isolation and fear. Our greatest need is for a discreet enclosed and equipped learning space, that provides teens with a creative safe home, where they can find consistency and feel comfortable to collaborate, create and communicate. The Art Factory is first, a place, a constant source of inspiration and space for expression for the youth who attend.
- **Cultural Plan:** It has been nearly 25 years since the last cultural plan for Westchester County. In the wake of COVID-19 and a changing Westchester demographic, ArtsWestchester wishes to embark on a new Plan for Arts & Culture for Westchester County - a plan that maps cultural assets throughout the County, and establishes new goals for promoting and supporting the work of artists and cultural organizations, of all sizes.





Conductor Rachael Worby, concertmaster Robert Chausow and the Westchester Philharmonic perform Vivaldi's "Four Seasons," accompanied by dancer Savion Glover (photo credit: Louis Vaccaro)

A REVIEW OF OUR PAST ACTIVITIES TO ENCOURAGE SOCIAL JUSTICE

Equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility have long guided our work in the field. What follows is a history of the services, programs, and initiatives we have embraced over the past 20 years to best support the needs of our diverse community:

An Institutional Journey:

- ***Building Capacity:*** In 1998, ArtsWestchester's budget was \$1.8M with the grants program representing 12 organizations and a small portion of overall activities. The grantee pool lacked diversity. Over the next 20 years, ArtsWestchester grew its budget to \$4M, with grantmaking at the core of its activities.
- ***Purchasing a Permanent Home as a Community Anchor:*** In 1998, driven by our commitment to make the arts accessible and to support the growing needs of the creative community, ArtsWestchester purchased a 9-story historic building in the County seat and transformed it into an "arts incubator." The \$10M renovation resulted in a unique, urban destination for the arts. The first two stories were converted into a presentation space, with exhibitions and public programs offered free or at affordable ticket prices (less than \$20pp). The remaining floors were converted to artist studios and small office spaces, and offered at affordable rates for creative industry tenants. In addition, the 9th floor space was made available as a community arts space, and offered to affiliate art organizations for rehearsals and meetings.
- ***Adopting a Diversity Policy:*** In 2003 and again in 2020, ArtsWestchester engaged Donna Walker-Kuhne, a leader in the field of equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility in the arts to work closely with the Board and staff. In 2003, ArtsWestchester's Board adopted a formal policy on diversity, equity, and inclusion. In our hiring practices, we strive towards greater transparency and a more diverse applicant pool. To achieve this we have included salary ranges in our job postings, partnered with universities for workforce training and internships, and edited our by-laws to remove the restriction of being a 501c3 nonprofit organization as a requirement for being an affiliate member.
- ***Partnerships with Service Organizations:*** Collaborating with organizations who support communities of color and historically underrepresented populations is fundamental to our work. Among our collaborators are:
 - African American Men of Westchester
 - White Plains Housing Authority
 - White Plains Library
 - City of White Plains
 - League of Women Voters
 - The Boys & Girls Club
 - American Women of African Descent
- ***Accessibility through Diversified Media:*** ArtsWestchester's monthly publication *ArtsNews* is a leading resource for Westchester residents seeking cultural events, workshops, and experiences. We began publishing an online version and further expanded the circulation through partnerships with the *Westchester Business Journal* and *Examiner Media*. Our Arts e-Newsletter and our weekly "Top Five Art Picks" allow us to

feature more events by our cultural partners and market those to a wider audience. Social media has also diversified our readership.

- **A More Diverse Board:** We have expanded the potential number of board seats to create opportunities for more diverse representation in our leadership. At this time, 16% of our board members are persons of color, and we continue to actively seek board members with different cultural backgrounds, from different industry sectors, striving to achieve a board that reflects Westchester.
- **External Vendors:** In seeking bids for various contract work, ArtsWestchester seeks bids from women-owned and minority-owned businesses.

Diversity and Inclusion in our Grantmaking:

- **Advancing EDIA in the Field:** In 2009, we developed a series of diversity and inclusion workshops for our affiliates and grantees. Attendance by Executive Directors and board leadership was mandatory for grant recipients. The goal of these workshops was to provide tools for Westchester cultural organizations to help them make EDIA part of their institution and to improve diversity at the leadership level, especially among board members.
- **Making EDIA a Core of our Funding Opportunities:** In 2009, we required applicants to submit a diversity plan along with their funding requests, asking organizations to map how they intended to diversity their leadership and programming. We also included the following mission statement in our funding overview:

“... We seek to support organizations that demonstrate ongoing efforts to include people of all races, ethnicities, nationalities, socio-economic backgrounds, genders, sexual orientations, and religions, as well as those with disabilities. We expect funded organizations to reflect inclusiveness in all areas of operation – including policy, administration, programming, and audience.”

- The application included the following language:

“As part of its recent strategic planning process, ArtsWestchester’s Board of Trustees determined that your organization’s efforts to become more diverse and inclusive at every level of operations will be an increasingly important factor in determining your award. The panel reviewing your application for 2010-2011 funding will assess the merits of your organization’s diversity plan, your progress in meeting the goals, and evidence of diversity throughout your operations. These factors will have a significant impact on your 2010 award, and may result in an increase or decrease in your current level of funding.”

“How Important Is Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion?”

Equity, diversity, and inclusion are very important. ArtsWestchester’s ‘Basic Program Support Grants’ are supported by public dollars. Therefore, we seek to support organizations that demonstrate ongoing efforts to include people of all races, ethnicities, nationalities, socio-economic backgrounds, genders, sexual orientations, and religions, as well as those with disabilities. We expect funded organizations to

reflect inclusiveness in the all areas of operation – including policy, administration, programming, and audience.”

“An organization’s efforts to become more diverse and inclusive at every level of operation are significant factors in determining an award. At the same time, we recognize that an organization’s service area informs its efforts to be inclusive, and that organizations will address diversity/inclusiveness in different ways.”

- **Increasing Access:**

- We initiated three new grant initiatives to increase access to the arts in underserved communities and to support arts organizations within communities of color. These programs are: “Mount Vernon Initiative,” “Yonkers Initiative,” and “Special Needs”.
- In 2010, ArtsWestchester began offering programmatic support to organizations, in addition to its longtime funding of general support. The opportunity to fund specific projects was designed to both reach a more diverse pool of applicants and to respond for a growing field of smaller community-based arts and culture organizations. In the first year of the program, we funded 18 organizations. In 2020, we funded 25 organizations.
 - Applicants are prompted to address how their program/organization attempts to meet diversity and inclusion goals:

“Provide a brief narrative describing your organization. Include information about its history; size; the community/region/audience it serves (please be specific); programs and activities; any major changes, and efforts/accomplishments related to engaging a broad and diverse population (audience and board, if applicable).”

- **Building the Capacity of Community Organizations:** “The Challenge Grant,” which is administered in collaboration with Westchester County, is a matching grant program that helps eligible organizations reach new donors. Over the program’s history, ArtsWestchester has worked with the County to increase available funds and expand the eligibility pool, welcoming community-focused, smaller and emerging organizations in communities like Mount Vernon and Yonkers to access the match pool. As of 2020, the program was expanded to include 120 eligible organizations.

- **Supporting Grassroots Efforts:** The “Arts Alive” grant category is one of ArtsWestchester’s most effective means of supporting arts activity to Westchester’s geographically, economically, and ethnically diverse population. The goal of the “Arts Alive Project Grants” category is to support cultural expression of Westchester’s many ethnic groups, and to make cultural programs accessible to those who have been underserved. In addition, applying organizations must conduct all activities in a way that does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex or disability. Diverse, densely populated areas (Ossining, Yonkers, White Plains) tend to have the highest number of applicants. On average, 10% of “Arts Alive” Westchester grantees are new, first-time applicants. The “Arts Alive” program was opened up to support the work of individual artists in their communities. The program awards up to four \$2,500 grants annually. In 2017, ArtsWestchester added funding for individual artists to the Mount Vernon and Yonkers Initiatives funding opportunities.

- **Our Grants and Regrant Funding Priorities:**

- Projects that reach underserved Westchester communities. Underserved clients are people who have limited access to services. Underserved people may be marginalized due to geography, race, economic status, gender, sexual preference, age, religion, or disability.
- Projects that reflect cultural traditions or contemporary creative expression of a particular ethnic group.

- **Other Important Milestones:**

2010 – Guidelines in Spanish for the first time. Offered again in Spanish in 2020.

2015 – Guidelines edited to include Diversity/Inclusiveness.

2019 – Description of Diversity and Inclusiveness provided for the first time, (2015 listed this in its criteria, but provided no description.) The term “community” can refer to a group of people with a common heritage or characteristics, whether or not living in the same place. Age alone – i.e. youth, seniors – does not qualify a group as being underserved.)

Advancing EDIA in Arts in Education:

- For the past 25 years, our Arts in Education program has brought arts experiences to underserved communities, most particularly in Yonkers and Mount Vernon. Over that period, we have brought \$4M in federal funding to these districts.
- In 2018, ArtsWestchester launched two new initiatives to increase arts access among LMI (low or moderate income) communities: the ArtsMobile and “Teen Tuesdays & Thursdays”. Both programs were developed in collaboration with the White Plains Housing Authority. In the first year of service, the ArtsMobile visited 90 sites around the County.
- For 30 years, we have been working the County Department of Mental Health to offer services to clients receiving support for mental and cognitive illnesses in Westchester and Rockland. ArtsWestchester presents “Visions,” an annual exhibition of artwork by clients, in its gallery.

Our Folk Arts & Performance Programs:

- In 1992, ArtsWestchester established its Folk Arts program to present, promote and preserve the living cultural heritage of Westchester County through collaborative community programming, education, research, and documentation.
- Since its inception, ArtsWestchester has presented and co-presented exhibitions, performances and festivals at its headquarters and in locations across Westchester. Our early programs highlighted the expressions of various occupational traditions (stone masons, boat building, net-making, millinery) and cultural groups (Japanese, Mexican, Irish, Bulgarian, and Colombian), as well as collaborations on Juneteenth celebrations in Peekskill and White Plains.
- Since 2018, we have worked with 271 folk artists/heritage bearers from Westchester, representing 18 different cultural groups.



ArtsMobile in action at Refuge of Hope Church.

- In 2019, we met with the LOFT: LGBT Center and other local LGBTQ leaders, who expressed a growing need for public programs highlighting the expressive traditions of queer and trans* communities of color. After extensive field research and discussion/planning with local LGBTQ artists and service organizations, ArtsWestchester introduced an annual series of educational programs open to all, but geared towards queer and trans* identified youth.
- **JazzFest White Plains, a Cross-Cultural Exchange Event:** JazzFest White Plains is one of ArtsWestchester's signature programs. Now heading into its 10th season, the annual celebration of jazz receives funding from the New York State Council on the Arts, is a multi-venue, 5-day celebration and collaborative effort with the City of White Plains, the White Plains Business Improvement District, the White Plains Library, and White Plains Department of Parks & Rec. Originally conceived as an audience development strategy to better serve the long-time African American residents in the City, the project has taken a more contemporary and international approach, bringing in new and younger audiences. Jazz is often cited as a true American art form, with its roots in the African American experience. JazzFest White Plains explores the music's origins but also features musicians whose approach to jazz draws on their diverse backgrounds -- Asian, Afro-Caribbean, Latin American, to name a few. The event highlights the ways in which immigrants and cross-cultural exchange shape American art forms into something new, that is both American and global.

Our Community Engagement Exhibition Program:

- Since acquiring our building in 1998, ArtsWestchester has presented the works of more than 1,000 regional artists in thematic exhibitions that engage with contemporary conversations and that resonate with our audiences. Themes we have explored include: the new immigrant experience, gender identity, voting rights, the expanded definition of family, the intersections of art and medicine, the age of data, and the economic crisis of 2008. In addition, exhibitions are typically developed and presented in collaboration with a non-profit service organization.
- In 2015, under direction of ArtsWestchester's Arts Committee, we adopted a mission statement for our presenting programs and exhibitions.

“We are committed to developing exhibitions that showcase regional artists, increase access to works of significant artistic merit, and advance thoughtfulness about topics that resonate within the community.”
- “Soles of the Movement” is one example of a transformative exhibition and an arts in education program that told the story of the Civil Rights Movement through an artist-led project. In addition to a significant work of art created in collaboration with school children, the project developed a classroom curriculum.
- We have increasingly diversified our roster of artists, expanding our service pool to the Hudson Valley Region and actively recruiting emerging artists from diverse backgrounds. More than half of our artists represent historically under-represented populations.
- In 2015, to celebrate our 50th anniversary, we awarded 50 artists in various disciplines grants of \$1,000 and presented their works in an exhibition in the gallery.



- In 2017, we initiated the “Larry Salley Award for Excellence in Photography.” The award comes with a \$1,000 cash prize, and in 2020 all finalists were presented in the first annual “Larry Salley Award (Virtual) Exhibition.”

Making Art Accessible for All: Promoting Public Art

- **Public Art for Accessibility:** ArtsWestchester believes that public art is one of the most powerful tools for community empowerment and cultural equity in its arsenal. Art in public spaces improves the built environment, promotes a sense of community pride, and fosters economic development. In 2015, we strengthened our commitment to public art. Working with municipalities, private developers, State and County agencies, and the health sector, we consulted on a number of projects which placed art in public spaces.
- **New York State Thruway Authority:** In June 2020, ArtsWestchester completed a two-year collaboration with the New York State Thruway Authority to commission 10 major works of art for termini of the shared use path of the new Gov. Mario M. Cuomo Bridge. The final collection included five major sculptures, a monumental mural, and four functional bike racks. The path was opened on June 15, 2020, and is used by 2,300 recreational cyclists and pedestrians daily.
- **Alexander Development:** which owns two residential properties in the Fleetwood neighborhood of Mount Vernon, has collaborated with ArtsWestchester on public art since 2013. In 2019, we collaboratively launched a competitive selection process to commission a new work of site-responsive sculpture for their new project at 42 Broad Street. Nigerian-American artist Eto Otitigbe’s proposal, “Peaceful Journey,” which also pays tribute to Mount Vernon native and hip-hop icon Heavy D, was selected for the commission.
- **Memorial Sloan Kettering:** From 2017-2021, ArtsWestchester worked with Memorial Sloan Kettering Westchester to produce temporary exhibitions of work by regional artists for their cancer-care waiting rooms.
- **Public Art in White Plains:** ArtsWestchester has served as consultant on a number of temporary and permanent public art projects in White Plains. In 2018, working in collaboration with the **White Plains BID**, the **City of White Plains**, and **Kite Realty**, ArtsWestchester commissioned renowned street artist Wane One to produce an asphalt mural in the drop-off lane outside of ArtsWestchester’s headquarters. In 2019, we collaborated with developer **LMC**, a Lennar Company to commission six murals for temporary construction walls surrounding a major property on South Broadway. In addition, ArtsWestchester serves as consultant for **Ginsburg Development Company’s** City Square property in downtown White Plains. In addition to curating a collection of two- and three-dimensional works for the interior of the 50 Main Street building, ArtsWestchester managed an international competition for a major “gateway” sculpture that will be installed at the building’s entrance.
- **White Plains Housing Authority (WPHA):** Working with residents at The Prelude, a new WPHA property, ArtsWestchester installed two murals in common spaces in the building. Works by Piero Manrique and Nick Kuszyk animated walls in the mailroom and recreation room, and reflected the tastes and aspirations of the building tenants. In the summer of 2020, ArtsWestchester worked with residents of the White Plains Housing Authority to create a mural that expressed solidarity with the Black Lives Matter Movement. We will continue to work with the community to create works of public art that reflect the needs, aspirations, and expressions of residents.



Lakecia Benjamin performing at JazzFest White Plains in 2018 (photo credit: Tim Grajek)

ARTSWESTCHESTER SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE 2020-2021 MEMBERS

Committee Members:

Froma Benerofe	Genia Flammia	Michael J. Minihan	Marie Smith (Committee Chair)
Mack Carter	Dr. LaRuth Gray	John Peckham	Waddell Stillman
Ken Dell Orto	Betty Himmel	Bernard Thombs	

Consultant:

Donna Walker-Kuhne

Staff Liaisons:

Janet T. Langsam and Kathleen Reckling

Donna Walker-Kuhne is an award winning thought leader, writer and strategist for community engagement, audience development and social justice. She is President of *Walker International Communications Group*, a 30 year old boutique marketing, audience development, diversity training and social justice consulting agency. She provides consulting services to numerous arts organizations throughout the world and has generated over \$23 million in earned income. She is also Senior Advisor, Community Engagement for New Jersey Performing Arts Center. She is a veteran of over 22 Broadway productions and her nonprofit clients include: Lincoln Center, Seattle Theater Group, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre and The Apollo Theater. She is co-founder of *Impact Broadway* a multicultural project that engages over 300 students as audience members for Broadway with the goal to empower this community to be economic drivers of new audiences for the Broadway Theater district. She is a lecturer and keynote presenter for arts conferences in Moscow, Russia, Blomfontein, South Africa, University of Berlin, AMA Conference in Edinburgh and Australian Arts Conferences. She is an Adjunct Professor at New York University, Columbia University and Bank Street College.

Walker-Kuhne serves on several boards including Signature Theater, Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation, HARLEM WEEK and The Harlem Arts Alliance; she is also Vice President of the Board for Newark Arts Council. She is a member of The League of Professional Women in Theater and the National Theater Conference. Recipient of over 50 awards including the 2019 League of Professional Theatre Women Rachel Crothers Leadership Award and the 2019 SPAA Award for Community Service from Rutgers School of Public Affairs and Administration/Newark. Her first book, *Invitation to the Party: Building Bridges to Arts, Culture and Community*, was published in 2005 and she just completed her second book, *Champions for the Arts: Lessons and Successful Strategies for Engaging Diverse Audiences*. She has a weekly blog, *Arts and Culture Connections* that explores cultural efforts to expand diverse audiences.



Prestige Step Team performs at ArtsWestchester's "Performing Families II: The Art of Runway and Step" event (photo credit: Tim Grajek)