

# Erie Arts & Culture IMPACT REPORT

Q2 | JULY 2020

Patrick Fisher  
Executive Director



The team at Erie Arts & Culture is small but mighty. It's amazing what a group of dedicated individuals are able to accomplish, even in the midst of unprecedented times. I'm extremely proud of how the team has adapted to the unique challenges that we've been presented during the second quarter of 2020. It's my pleasure to share with you some of our accomplishments, highlighted here in our Q2 Impact Report.

At 35 years of age, I can say that 2020 is without question unlike any year of life that I've ever experienced before. When looking ahead to the future as a community, the only thing I'm certain of is that we cannot seek to simply return to what life was like prior to when the pandemic swept through our nation. The COVID-19 crisis has removed the veil that thinly masked the racial disparities, systemic oppression, and inequalities that have plagued our nation since its founding. Not a single one of us should feel comfortable with the existence of these chronic issues knowing that they create an untenable world for our family members, friends, colleagues, neighbors, and community members.

Erie Arts & Culture is committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion. In 2018, we adopted a formal Cultural Equity Commitment statement. From that, we formed both a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Task Force and the CHROMA Guild, which works to advance opportunities and access to resources for creative and cultural professionals of color in Northwestern Pennsylvania. As an agency, we unequivocally denounce racism and condemn the violence and oppression that has long marginalized communities of color. We are committed to hearing, seeing, learning, and then taking action to combat prejudice and discrimination in our sector and the community at large.

## Our *Cultural Equity* Commitment

To support an enriched life for all, Erie Arts & Culture commits to championing policies and practices of cultural equity that empower a just, inclusive, and equitable region. We believe that equity is crucial to the long-term viability of both the arts and culture sector and communities at large.

As a sector, we must be committed to doing and being better. The arts have always been more than simply the creation of decorative objects or the presentation of entertaining performances. At the heart of the arts is the human condition. The arts are a means to contemplate our existence as people - exploring broad concepts and a wide range of emotions. One role of the artist in society is to be a record-keeper of the people, places, and events of both the time and place in which they live. It is through the arts that we experience the world from a perspective other than our own. Thus, building empathy, solidarity, and an appreciation of how we are both different and similar all at the same time.

If you're an artist in the present moment, I encourage you to be brave in the work that you make. Now is the moment to embrace your most ambitious and transformative ideas for creating the world we need. If you're an arts organization, I encourage you to lean into the work of examining your organization and its programs and services through the lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion. If you don't know where to start, Erie Arts & Culture is here to help. And for all others, I invite you to join Erie Arts & Culture as we work to build a sector where everyone is invited, feels welcome, and sees themselves reflected. We have a heavy lift ahead of us, but with your support I'm certain that we can do it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patrick Fisher". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Patrick Fisher  
Executive Director



In Q2, our team worked diligently to continue presenting virtual programming that directly responds to community needs. We booked speakers and presenters from a variety of backgrounds as part of our Creative Catalyst Speaker Series and PRO Network. These programs were designed to expand the perspective and capacity of our creative and cultural community. Topics included financial planning and budgeting for artists, how to identify and respond to opportunities, navigating intellectual property rights within the creative sector, adapting to virtual performative and teaching experiences, and more. All virtual programs are recorded and posted to Erie Arts & Culture's blog as a digital resource.

Our marketing team grew by one when we welcomed Natalia Buczek as a Marketing and Administration Intern for the summer. Natalia is a graduate of Allegheny College and she's taking a gap year before pursuing her graduate degree at Sotheby's Institute of Art for their Art Business MA.

In celebration of Juneteenth, Erie Arts & Culture collaborated with Erie's Black Wall Street to create a list of 92 black-owned businesses in Erie. This list can be found as an interactive PDF in our blog. Businesses are listed under 24 different categories, including auto repair or servicing, business and professional services, creative services, event entertainment, real estate, and more.

In recognition of World Refugee Day, Erie Arts & Culture collaborated with the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI) and International Institute of Erie to develop digital content to highlight New Americans in our region. We used food as a tool for storytelling and [featured recipes from former refugees](#) from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Bhutan, Eritrea, Syria, and Bosnia. We also shared [storytelling videos](#) that showcased four artists in our community who are former refugees.

A final noteworthy development in Q2 is our optimized and expanded PRO Network webpage.

This page within Erie Arts & Culture's website now includes a regularly updated list of local, regional, and national opportunities for artists and links to register for upcoming webinars or view recordings of past presentations.

We invite you to use the clickable links below to view our virtual programming and other assets.

Sincerely,

Jade Mitchell  
Creative Director

**Our PRO Network page preview is below.**  
Please click the image to view the live page.

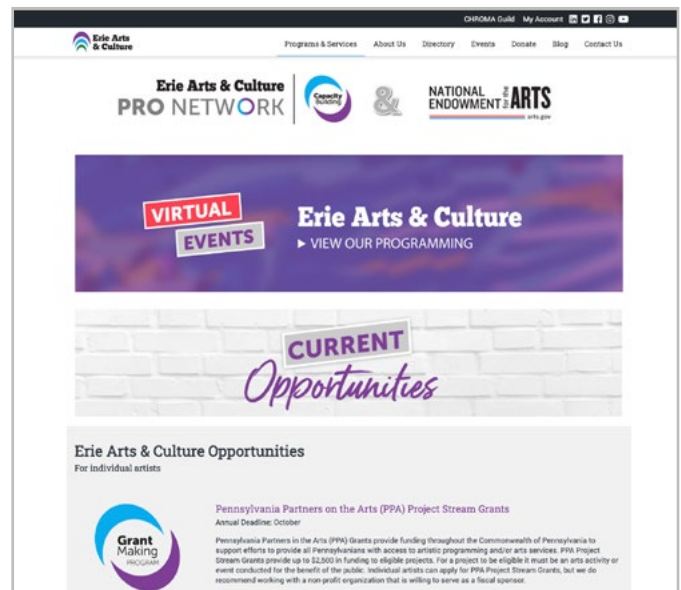
## Helpful links

**Reopening Safely: Blog Post**  
Tips and Resources by the  
Pennsylvania Council on the Arts

[link](#)

**Erie's Black-Owned Businesses: PDF**  
A directory of over 92 local businesses

[link](#)





# JULY

## Virtual Events

[Click here to register for an event](#)

*Creative & Cultural Sector*

### Town Hall

Join us for a conversation about getting back to business for non-profit cultural organizations, the for-profit creative industry, and self-employed creative professionals, including artists.

**LIVE STREAM**  
July 7<sup>th</sup> at 11 AM

**ERIE**  
REGIONAL CHAMBER AND GROWTH PARTNERSHIP

Erie Arts & Culture

**VIRTUAL MEET UP**

### CHROMA

Creative Hub of Resources & Opportunities that support & connect Multicultural Artists in NWPA.

Guid



Erie Arts & Culture | Capacity Building

### Identifying Tools to Build your Artistic Brand

*with Brian Amick*

**WERKBOT** **NATIONAL ENDOWMENT OF THE ARTS**

**VIRTUAL EVENT** July 9 at 4:30 PM



Erie Arts & Culture | **CREATIVE CATALYST** SPEAKER SERIES | New Horizons

### Creating Spaces that Connect Community

*with Geexella*

Geexella is a non-binary, black and latinx DJ from Jacksonville, Florida. They will dive into their process of creating safe spaces for marginalized communities.

July 14 at 6 PM **VIRTUAL EVENT**



Erie Arts & Culture | Capacity Building


### The Boring Part of Being an Artist

Crafting a bio and artist statement

*Prof. Ian F. Thomas*

**NATIONAL ENDOWMENT OF THE ARTS**

July 23 at 6 PM **VIRTUAL EVENT**



Erie Arts & Culture | **PRO NETWORK** | Capacity Building

### Much more than a survey!

Learn about playful research and design methods

*with Gamar Markarian*

**NATIONAL ENDOWMENT OF THE ARTS**

**VIRTUAL EVENT** July 28 at 6 PM



# PROGRAMS HIGHLIGHTS

Chanel Cook

Director of Programs  
and Community Relationships

The cultural and creative sectors are among the hardest hit during the COVID-19 crisis. Social distancing helps save lives; however, it also suspends the operations of non-profit organizations and impacts the livelihood of artists across all disciplines. Our team pivoted at the start of the crisis to develop virtual programming and extend professional development opportunities to creative and cultural professionals in Northwestern Pennsylvania. Working through a crisis is not easy. We applaud all who have adapted during this difficult time to identify new ways to deliver programs, services, and experiences. We especially would like to highlight our partners at the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, our rostered teaching artists, and community stakeholders for persevering to maintain arts education programs for our region's youth.

Sincerely,  
Chanel Cook  
Director of Programs and Community Relations



[View Don's instructional video](#)

## PPA Grantee Highlight: F.A.S.T. Track | Don Gold

Don Gold has been a Pennsylvania Partner in the Arts (PPA) Project Stream Grantee in Mercer County for the past six years. He is the founder of the F.A.S.T. (Fine Arts Senior Training) Track project. Through this ongoing project, Don teaches painting to senior citizens at the Garden Way Assisted Living Place, the Grove City Senior Center, and the Sharon Community Library.

Don was the first PPA grantee to pivot from in-person instruction to virtual instruction. In mid-March, Don conferred with the Programs Department at Erie Arts & Culture to discuss ways that his project could be modified to adhere to social distancing requirements. It was determined that Don could provide art kits to keep creativity flowing among the populations served through F.A.S.T. Track.

Don sprung into action to adapt his project, and he asked his wife Esther for assistance. Don compiled kits that included all the necessary supplies and written instructions. The duo then developed instructional videos that were uploaded to Facebook. Esther recorded the videos using her smartphone and assisted Don with wardrobe styling. Don wrote the scripts for the videos and gathered all the necessary supplies and materials.

It is delightful to receive updates from Don and review his videos. Throughout the duration of the pandemic, Don distributes his kits every two weeks. To date, he has created nine videos. Topics covered in Don's videos have included, watercolor washes, how to paint flowers and sunsets, selecting the right paint brush, steps to advancing your skills, and what to consider when selecting a subject.

Don and Esther are both senior citizens. Together, they've openly embraced the opportunity to learn 21st-century skills and identify new ways of serving the community. Prior to this project, neither Don nor Esther had ever used a cell phone to record a video. Don and Esther prove that it is never too late to learn something new.

Maintaining creative outlets is important during these uncertain times in our lives. We applaud Don's willingness to reimagine this project and pivot when he faced an obstacle. A heartfelt thank you to the teams at the host sites who also adapted during these difficult times to ensure that the project could continue.

"Without the direction of Chanel and the encouragement of Kristen, my senior art students would have felt lost, isolated, and abandoned during this COVID 19 Pandemic. You can imagine that an art teacher without his senior art students would also be lost. The art kit and videos have given me a fresh perspective, self confidence, and boosted my self-esteem. I no longer feel stuck in my home during this crisis."

- Don Gold



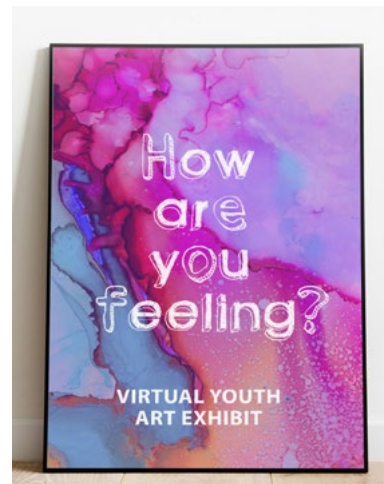
## Feel Your Feelings Fridays

To promote mental wellness in Northwestern Pennsylvania, Erie Arts & Culture launched two new participatory initiatives in June that promote residents to check in with themselves and explore how they are feeling. The initiatives are in partnership with Erie County Executive Kathy Dahlkemper and the Erie County Department of Health. The initiatives engage both youth and adults and leverage the power of the visual, performing, and literary arts to navigate feelings and express emotions. Through the first initiative, Erie Arts & Culture is soliciting works of art from Erie County youth in response to one question, "How are you feeling?" Youth can use any artistic discipline, medium, or material to respond. To provide some guidance and inspiration, Erie-based artists Tom Ferraro (painter), Carla Hughes (dancer), and Cee Williams (poet) contributed videos showcasing their artistic disciplines and how they can be used to express emotions or communicate feelings. Erie Arts & Culture is requesting that artwork created in response to the question be submitted to the agency digitally. We welcome all Erie County Students grades K-12 to participate. We are still accepting youth entries at:

[erieartsandculture.org/blog/fridays](http://erieartsandculture.org/blog/fridays)

The second initiative is a journaling project for adults called "Give Rise To Your Feelings." Kristen Weeks, an Erie-based writer and musician, wrote 30-days of creative prompts. Jessica Annunziata, an Erie-based thespian, recorded video directives for each prompt. Prompts are shared daily through Erie Arts & Culture's social media throughout June and July. The agency purchased 150+ journals to distribute to community members. Organizations that engaged their stakeholders to participate in the initiative include; Bethany Outreach, Sister of Saint Joseph Neighborhood Network, Stairways Behavioral Health, and two New Horizons Creating with Community Residency teams whose footprints include ServErie and Bayfront Eastside Task Force.

Erie county is a creative community. We look forward to the final exhibition of original art from our youth, sharing reflections from adults, and uplifting one another as we shift through the stages of the pandemic.



## Critical Conversations

Erie Arts & Culture introduced a new program titled Critical Conversations. The program, which leverages the arts and humanities to prime conversations concerning social change, is a collaboration with Edinboro University and the Northwestern Pennsylvania Artist Association (NPAA). The program is intended to open channels of dialog, with content and conversations revolving around identity, equity, justice, and other topics that are often uncomfortable to approach yet too important to avoid. This program is part of Erie Arts & Culture's New Horizons initiative, with funding provided in part by the Erie Community Foundation.

The first installment of Critical Conversations focused on *Whitewalling: Art, Race, and Protest in 3 Acts* by Aruna D'Souza. This book was selected as the first to be read and discussed through the program as a result of D'Souza serving as the 2020 juror of the Erie Art Museum's annual Spring Show.

Leslie Sotomayor, a professor at Edinboro University, serves as the program moderator.

Leslie stated, "Critical Conversations around the book *Whitewalling*" facilitated a much needed, safer space for expressing and listening in our Erie community. In the current U.S. climate and the city of Erie, it is apparent to me that safer spaces and re-imagining of what museum and gallery spaces could be are necessary. We, as a community, have an opportunity now for social change in how we rebuild the creative and cultural sectors in Erie. I believe that the Erie community is more committed than ever to increase efforts for greater equity, diversity, and inclusion by embracing a more assertive anti-racist agenda in the art world. This is the time to look at the voices represented in all Erie's art circles and critically evaluate actions; as words and statements are not enough. Art empowers us to interconnect through diversified ways



of thinking and creating meaning for our humanity and communities. How can we re-imagine the arts towards social change?"

**The next book we will read and discuss through this program is *Quitting America: The Departure of a Black Man from His Native Land* by Randall Robinson.**

## Doris Duke Building Bridges

### Authentic Online Learning is Possible for Both Students and Artists

Erie Arts & Culture received a Building Bridges grant from the Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art to build the capacity of artists from Muslim-majority countries and to share their traditions and culture. Artists from Sudan, Iraq, Syria, Bosnia, Sierra Leone, Turkey, and Guinea participated in this initiative.

Thanks to additional support from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts (PCA), ten artists worked with Stephanie Weiss, a teacher at McDowell Intermediate High School, and 20 of her film and journalism students through an Erie Arts & Culture Arts in Education teaching artist residency. The residency was led by Kelly Armor, a rostered teaching artist and the Director of Folk and Traditional Arts at Erie Arts & Culture.

Due to COVID-19, Kelly and Stephanie re-imagined the residency and adapted it to digital platforms.

As part of their capacity building, artists gained baseline videography and digital file sharing skills. Students then interviewed the artists via Zoom, wrote feature articles based on their interviews, and created short, dynamic video portraits using footage from the artists and the interview sessions.

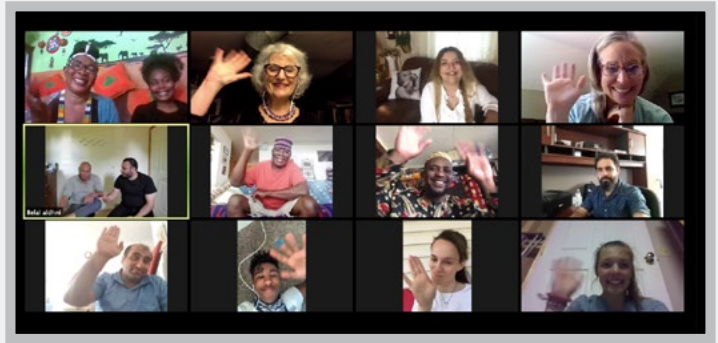
#### Snapshot & Impact of the Residency:

- **90%** of the artists indicated they experienced an increase in confidence in their ability to communicate about their art form, and increased desire to share their culture and traditions with others.
- **10** artists generated over **60** short videos documenting their artistic processes
- **6** journalism students profiled **7** different artists
- **13** film students completed **15** videos featuring **10** different artists

When asked to describe or reflect on the experience, the artists and teacher provided the following responses:

Benjamin Aysan, a calligraphy artist from Turkey stated, "Before this project I do not have as much experience with video. Now I've learned to be careful with shooting and framing. If the video is not good, the art becomes irrelevant. I am now very motivated to improve as a photographer and videographer of my work."

Ashol Akol, a henna artist from Sudan said, "At first we didn't know how to share our art digitally but the online process actually helped us a lot. Making our own videos lets us look back at everything and really helps us think about our culture." Her mother, Nialwak Athow, adds, "We weren't sure if it would work but when I saw the children's faces and how happy they were it made my heart open. I'm so happy, my culture is growing and flying!! It has made me do henna every day and feel more connected to Africa than before!"



Stephanie Weiss, a teacher at McDowell Intermediate High School stated, "Working with Erie Arts & Culture was fantastic! I was able to expose my high school students to culturally diverse artists during a worldwide pandemic! Students learned how to tell the story of someone else in a new way, and share what art meant to the artists. It was a challenge to complete this on stay-at-home orders, but together we all learned new ways to communicate and ultimately to be a little more sympathetic towards others during a difficult time in our world."







Quarterly  
**VIRTUAL**  
**EVENT**

### Virtual Teaching Artist Meetup

In late May, Erie Arts & Culture hosted a virtual meet-up for rostered teaching artists. The purpose of the virtual meeting was to provide updates on how COVID-19 has impacted the Arts in Education (AIE) program, which is funded by the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts (PCA).

Jamie Dunlap, Chief of Creative Catalysts & Lifelong Learning at the PCA joined the meeting to deliver program and timeline updates. She provided examples of how the PCA is pivoting to adhere to the safety of both artists and community participants. Teaching artist residencies are the cornerstone of the AIE program. Through these residencies, artists work collaboratively with the staff or volunteers of schools, social service organizations, or community organizations to align their arts practice with either learning or organizational objectives. During these unprecedented times, residencies have been adjusted to be conducted through digital platforms, which completely reframes the idea of what a traditional residency looks like.

The meeting was not all business, after hearing from Jamie, the group participated in a virtual trivia game to test their knowledge of EAC's service region, which includes Erie, Crawford, Warren, Mercer, Venango, and Lawrence Counties. This friendly competition was a wonderful way for the staff to reconnect with rostered teaching artists and for Jamie to meet and interact with our region's teaching artists on a more personal level.

EAC's Executive Director Patrick Fisher ended the meeting with the announcement of the PRO Network and asked artists to take the time to complete the short survey found on the PRO Network webpage so that EAC has a more in depth understanding of artists' needs. This led to a highly involved discussion and sharing of resources between artists, staff, and the PCA.

### 2020 Artist Fellowships

In 2016, Erie Arts & Culture committed to making a greater investment in the artists living and working in Erie County by establishing the annual Artist Fellowship program. The agency saw a need to provide artists with unrestricted funding that could be used to pursue artistic development and growth.

Originally, Erie Arts & Culture awarded three fellowships annually – two to emerging artists and one to an established artist. In 2020, the agency's Grantmaking Committee reviewed the program's eligibility requirement through the lens of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Upon further reflection, Erie Arts & Culture's Board of Trustees and Grantmaking Committee decided that it was necessary to revise program criteria and guidelines.

Starting this year, the fellowship program now includes three artist categories and awards.

To apply for a 2020 Artist Fellowship, visit: [erieartsandculture.org/pro-network](http://erieartsandculture.org/pro-network)

The deadline to apply is **11:30 pm on August 21, 2020.**

#### Emerging Artist Fellowship (\$2,000)

An emerging artist is someone who is in the early stage of their career and has a modest independent body of work. At this stage in the artist's career, solo exhibitions or performances of their work are often limited and recognition and opportunities occur primarily at the local level.

#### Mid-career Artist Fellowship (\$3,500)

A mid-career artist is an artist who has created an independent body of work over a number of years. At this stage in the artist's career, one has received a number of solo exhibitions or performances through esteemed venues, either regionally and nationally.



#### Established Artist Fellowship (\$5,500)

An established artist is mature in their career. They have created an extensive body of independent work and may even be an influencer in their respective disciplines. At this stage in their career, an established artist has an advanced level of achievement and has sustained national and even possibly international opportunities and recognition.



## Sharon Norwood

Visiting Artist in Residence  
July 16 - August 7

### Visiting Artist Residency Program

In early 2020, Erie Arts & Culture announced a new visiting artist residency program in partnership with Long Road Projects, a Jacksonville-based non-profit organization. On July 16, Erie Arts & Culture will welcome our next visiting artist in residence, Sharon Norwood. While in residence, Sharon will maintain a studio practice at ClaySpace (1505 State Street).

Sharon Norwood is an interdisciplinary artist whose work spans several media, including painting and ceramics. Sharon received her BFA in painting from the University of South Florida. She received her MFA in studio arts from Florida State University. Sharon's work has been exhibited in several Biennials including the Jamaica, Atlanta and Florida Biennial. Her work has been exhibited in Florida, Georgia, Baltimore, Kansas City, Washington, New York, Canada, South Korea, Jamaica, and Germany. Sharon maintains her studio practice in Savannah, Georgia.

"My work often deals with issues of identity and I use lines as a way to explore complex relationships. My aim is to create works that challenge our passive ways of looking. The subject of my work comes from my own narrative with social, political, and cultural content. I am interested in creating a dialogue that speaks in nuanced ways to issues of race, gender, beauty, and class. In my work, the curly line takes on special importance. The curly line at times becomes a metaphor for the black body, and at other times it lives within the decorative, ornate language that connects us all back to the formal language of drawing and assertions about beauty. I enjoy the shift between hair and line, how at one moment the work is read as hair while at other times it is simply a beautiful mark."

- Sharon Norwood

## Thank you!

This visiting artist residency program was made possible through a special grant from the Erie Community Foundation. Erie Arts & Culture would like to thank ClaySpace for their partnership in hosting Sharon.

### LONG ROAD PROJECTS





## Creating with Community Artist Residencies Highlight

### Alex Anthes and Fredy Huam an Mallqui West Bayfront Neighborhood

Alex Anthes and Fredy Huam an Mallqui are two of the 14 artists participating in Erie Arts & Culture's new Creating with Community artist residency program. This program is funded through support provided by Erie Insurance and the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development through the Neighborhood Assistance Program (NAP). Artists were divided into teams of two and then assigned to urban core neighborhoods. Alex and Fredy were assigned to Erie's lower west side, a geographic area served by Our West Bayfront.

In early April, the artist team launched a campaign that was designed to monitor how the pandemic impacted overall community morale and mental wellness. They distributed a letter to neighborhood residents asking community members to answer the following questions in the form of a poem, intention, prayer, journal entry, or drawing. 1) How do you feel today?, 2) How are you spending your days?, and 3) What brings you hope?

Alex and Fredy spent the spring and early summer collecting responses from their prompt. These responses will be used to create a zine that documents life in the neighborhood during the COVID-19 pandemic and other events that occurred in the spring and summer of 2020.



In addition to the creation of the zine, the artist team has been working with Our West Bayfront to develop plans to creatively transform vacant lots along West 4th Street. On Saturday, June 27, the artists created a pop-up living room in one of the vacant lots, which is located next to the Bayfront Mini Mall (566 W 4th Street). They invited members of the community to sit, enjoy coffee and donuts, and have a conversation around how the lot can be transformed into a community asset.

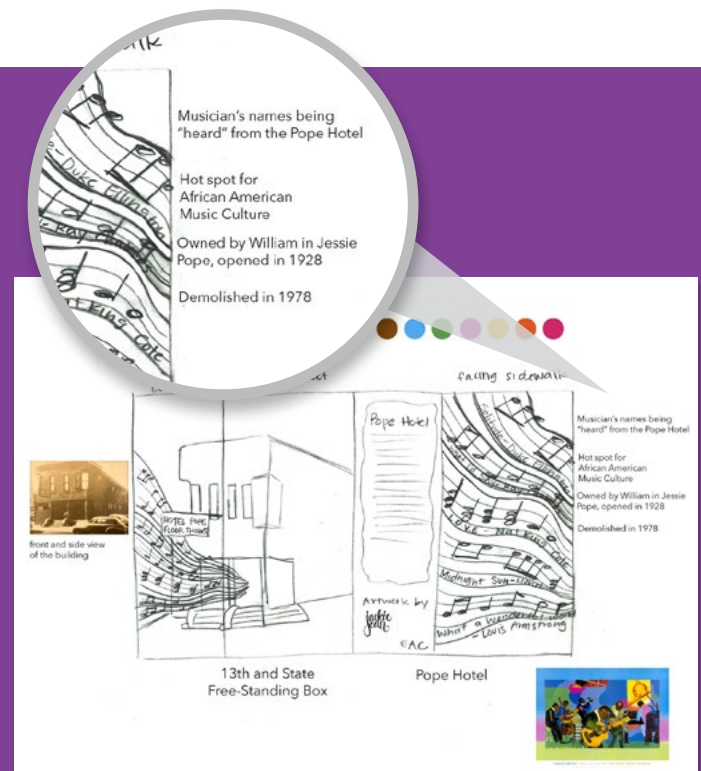
Alex and Fredy's residency will continue throughout the third and fourth quarter of 2020.

## Discovery Trail New Horizons

On Friday, June 26, the four artists participating in the Discovery Trail public art project (Jackie Quigley, Nick Warren, Brigette Davitt, and Scott Gladd) presented their preliminary concept proposals. The goal of this project is to create public art that communicates narratives related to the city, while also reinforcing Erie's pedestrian scale.

The artist's preliminary concepts have been approved by Erie Arts & Culture. The next step in the project is for the artists to present their concepts to a review panel, which includes representatives from the Erie Neighborhood Growth Partnership. After concepts are reviewed by the panel, final artwork will be provided to FASTSIGNS of Erie for production and installation.

The creation of the Discovery Trail is part of Erie Arts & Culture's New Horizons initiative. Funding was provided in part by the Erie Community Foundation through a 2019 Shaping Tomorrow Grant.



# Erie Gives 2020

Please join me and my fellow Board of Trustees by supporting Erie Arts & Culture on Erie Gives (Tues. Aug. 11) by making a donation to the agency. Erie Gives is a special day because your gift is matched in part by the Erie Community Foundation. Checks can be submitted by Aug. 10 and donations can be made online. Visit [eriegives.org](http://eriegives.org) for more details.

Now more than ever before, Erie Arts & Culture is building up our community, through placemaking initiatives, providing training and funding to artists during the COVID-19 pandemic, and advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion in our sector. With gratitude, we look forward when we can again gather together as a community to enjoy excellence in live performances, art exhibits, and dynamic cultural experiences.

If you love and appreciate the culture and creativity that Erie has to offer, please open your hearts and pocketbooks and support Erie Arts & Culture on Tues., Aug. 11 for Erie Gives.

Gifts through Erie Gives support Erie Arts & Culture in our work to:

- Provide tools, resources, and financial support to individuals and organizations that specifically utilize the arts and humanities as a platform to engage the broader community.
- Grow the capacity of our sector to ensure extraordinary creative and cultural experiences.
- Create an environment in which artists and creative industries, representing a wide variety of disciplines, can thrive.
- Fund opportunities for lifelong learning through the arts and humanities experiences in classrooms, institutions, and community spaces.
- Consult on how creativity and culture can be a component in any development or redevelopment project.
- Celebrate Erie's collective identity by preserving and promoting the region's cultural diversity.

Sincerely,  
Tauna Hunter

Trustee and Chair of the Fund Development  
Committee

**100% of your gift positively impacts our region**

