



2020 YEAR IN REVIEW

San Benito County Arts Council

Images (top to bottom/left to right): Arts Council logo; Teaching Artist Stephanie Skow distributing art supply bags at Sunnyslope School; Census Poster designed by Bryan West; Becky Herbert at the Farmhouse Cafe; Arts Council Window; Teaching Artist Clay Peer; Some of the 9,600 paint cups that were prepared for Hollister School District Students; New mural created by Venecia Prudencio at Hazel Hawkins Memorial Hospital; BLM poster created at the Annex.



*Sculpture by Open Studios Artist,
Sally Diggory*

2020 WHAT A YEAR

No one could have imagined how much we would have to adapt, cope, learn, mourn, create, pivot, celebrate and survive in 2020.

This year has been challenging to say the least. I remember sitting in the Arts Council office with my team on Friday, March 13, 2020 as the phone calls and texts started coming in about how schools were closing for a few days. Little could we have imagined how, close to a year later, students would still be at home, offices closed, people out of work and the arts and cultural sectors hanging on by a thread. And yet, here we are....hanging on.

As I look back on 2020, I can't help but see the many ways we came together and found ways to innovate, create and respond to the times. We started out **navigating new technologies**, such as Zoom and Google Meet, and ended up reconnecting in new and meaningful ways. **Artists stepped in as second responders**, helping students, community members and each other to express themselves through art-making, music, storytelling and documenting the ways in which our lives have changed. **Artists helped promote critical public messages** about the 2020 census, public health and anti-racism. Artists found ways to adapt their practices by moving things outdoors, going virtual and exploring entirely new mediums.

At the Arts Council, we developed new programs, collaborated with numerous partner organizations, and supported the arts community with critical arts funding, workshops and webinars and 1:1 support. Our Board adopted a new **Statement on Cultural and Racial Equity**, committing our organization to deepening our work on cultural and racial equity, access and inclusion. Our staff expanded to 11 employees, comprised of a committed administrative staff that continues to inspire and amaze me and a core group of expert teaching artists that always go above and beyond.

So as we look back in this "year in review" I hope you will see that in some of the darkest of times, there is hope. I believe that the arts will continue to help us understand our individual and collective experiences of 2020, and will also help us begin the processes of healing and renewal in 2021.

Thank you for being with us along the way.

-Jennifer Laine, Executive Director
San Benito County Arts Council

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Courage and Compassion: Our Frontline was an outdoor multimedia installation created by local photographer, Marisa Duran, which was projected onto 3 houses over the course of one weekend in Spring 2020. The installation featured photographs of essential workers interwoven with quotes and text. This was one of our first collaborative projects since the start of COVID.

2020 Program Snapshots

Open Studios went virtual!

Open Studios is one of our most beloved annual events, featuring artists, craftspeople and creatives of all mediums. Due to COVID, we were unable to hold this signature April event and instead hosted a 2-week long virtual Open Studios Art Exhibition and Sale in September 2020. We had over 30 participating artists, who reported greater website traffic, social media followers and online sales as a result of the virtual event. While everyone missed seeing each other in person, we were able to connect via artist workshops and webinars and an Open Studios Happy Hour, where each artist had the opportunity to showcase their work and talk about their artistic process.

Left: Painting by Open Studios Artist Dar Brenneise



Students created artwork at home

With all of San Benito County students at home starting in mid-March, we were able to quickly pivot to creating free online arts curriculum, video tutorials and virtual art classes. The students' resilience, creativity and appetite for learning was inspiring to witness.



Arts Education Planning

As part of a 9-month strategic planning process with the Hollister School District and the CA Alliance for Arts Education, we held a 2-day arts planning retreat on March 5th-6th 2020, just before the shelter-in-place. The resulting DRAFT Arts Plan is currently being reviewed by a committee of educators, District leaders, parents and arts education advocates, with the goal of having the District adopt a final Arts Plan before the end of this school year.



Raising funds for the arts

Our annual "Art of Eating" Farm to Table Dinner for the Arts raised over \$8,000 for arts education. Again, while we missed dining together at this summertime event, we enjoyed partnering with chefs Becky Herbert and Mike Fisher, Martin Ranch Winery, and all of the artists, staff and volunteers that make this fundraiser a true success. In fact, it was so enjoyable that we held a "Winter Farm to Table Dinner" pick up and raised another \$3,500 for art supplies and student ukuleles.



*Photo by Kirti Bassendine
"Homeless Voices Project "
2020 Arts Express Grantee*

UPLIFTING THE ARTS SECTOR

Providing much needed arts funding

In March 2020, we awarded over \$28,000 in arts funding from our 2020 **Arts Express Grant Program**, which supports local artists, art groups and art and cultural organizations through direct funding. The purpose of the Arts Express Grant Program is to support cultural and artistic growth, foster arts accessibility and equity and promote cultural diversity in San Benito County. However, due to COVID, all 2020 grantees were able to modify their original grant submissions and use funding to cover basic operating expenses.

To address the ongoing financial constraints brought about by COVID and business closures, we applied for additional funding from the California Arts Council and Community Foundation for San Benito County to "regrant" through a new **COVID Arts Relief Grant Program**. In November 2020, we awarded 9 local arts organizations and cultural groups with a total of \$22,700 in relief funding. Over \$12,000 of the COVID Relief funds were allocated to arts organizations that serve and represent communities of color which have been disproportionately impacted by COVID. Grantees from this category included El Teatro Campesino, Animation Dance Community, Folklorico Juvenil and JMM Dance Co.

Additional COVID Relief grantees included the Aromas Hills Artisans, Terra Cultura, San Benito Stage Company, Flying Colors Dance & Fitness and San Benito Dance Academy.

2020 by the Numbers

We created, distributed, exhibited, presented, taught, supported and celebrated...

- 1,900 Art Supply Kits
- 11,400 Paint Cups
- 200 Ukuleles
- \$50,030 in Local Arts Funding
- 27 Grantees
- 34 Open Studios Artists
- 1,000+ Visitors to our Online Open Studios Exhibition
- 33 Small Works Artists
- 25 Incarcerated Youth
- 2,000+ 3rd-5th Grade Students
- 1,800 Student Artworks at County Art Showcase
- 1 Poetry Out Loud County Champion
- 3 Art & Healing Workshops
- 6 Professional Development Workshops for Artists
- 2 Central California Regional Art Conversations
- 1 AB5 Workshop
- 1 Arts, Culture & Creativity Month
- 5 After School Art Programs
- 106 Free Tuition Student Scholarships
- 44 Life Skills Art Classes for Special Needs Students
- 2 art spaces
- 11 Arts Council employees
- 10 Board Members
- 24 Business Partners in the Arts
- Countless community partners, volunteers & supporters!

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