

As we reflect on yet another year of navigating a changing world, we give extreme gratitude to you – our stakeholder, investor, artist, volunteer – our partner in creating positive change. With you, Artists First grew and expanded on its mission of using creative self-expression to build equity, equality and empowerment in the Saint Louis region and beyond, despite the challenges of COVID-19.

With your support, Artists First safely:

- Directly served 250 individuals with disabilities, veterans and youth.
- Created and implemented the Portfolio program, as well as the *In View* mural program.
- Highlighted our artists' works regionally and nationally
- Were officially presented with the Governor's Council on Disabilities Inclusion award.
- Won 2nd place in the 12th annual Mannequins on the Loop public art installation
- Co-organized Maplewood's first Juneteenth Celebration
- Brought the community together through artistic beautification projects
- Conducted 11 virtual and in person art facilitation classes for the Library system that reached 303 class participants, and helped promote the organization and equal access to art programing despite participant location, ability, or art experience.

Thank you for joining us in making a creative difference - we look forward to what we can do together in 2022.

In gratitude,



Sheila Suderwalla, MSW
Executive Director

An Artful Year in Review: Annual Report 2020-2021



Partnerships-

Collaborative studio projects have included Artists First designing and painting the public bench, food pantry, and electrical box at the Manchester and Yale bus stop in Maplewood, MO as well as creating and designing an award winning mannequin for *Mannequins on The Loop* in University City, MO. Artists had their work shown locally and nationally at exhibits including: Milestones Masterpieces Virtual Art Exhibit at the Milestones National Autism Conference, and The Director's Creativity Showcase by the Missouri Mental Health Foundation where with our support, one of our artists won Best in Show in the Professional Artist category of this juried competition.

Program Highlights

As a **Regional Arts Commission** grant recipient, Artists First began the 2 year **Capacity Building** program through the Devos Institute of Arts Management.



Both the Adult and Youth Open Studio programs increased the number of adults with disabilities and youth served through virtual and in-person art facilitation.



This past year, Artists First created and implemented the Portfolio Program. A new four month program geared towards individuals who want to take their artistry skills to the next level, as well as individuals who require extra one-on-one support to bring out the best of their creative abilities. The goal of this program is for individuals to create a new series of artwork while they simultaneously work on communication skills, self advocacy, and planning skills. Each participant has the opportunity at the end of the program to have their own art show at Artists First studio. Participants are involved with all aspects of creating their art show including framing and hanging the artwork, designing invitations, as well as writing an artist's statement and designing a show flyer.



With the support of the **St. Louis Office of Developmental Disability Resources**, the Lifeworks program had another successful year of using creative self-expression to further independence and growth of individuals with developmental disabilities. Through virtual and in person support, **83%** of program participants increased their self-confidence and **67%** increased advocacy skills used in other areas of their life. **83%** increased their financial literacy and earning capacity through the program.



During the program year 2020-2021, for the safety of all involved and with COVID-19 restrictions, the OMA program was put on hold. Thanks to a generous grant for FY 21-22 from the **Incarnate Word Foundation**, Artists First is preparing to resume the 8-week creative self-expression program for individuals with Dementia.



The past year has presented challenges for everyone, especially veterans in transition. Support from the **Boeing Corporation** enabled Artists First for Veterans in using creative self-expression to increase emotional well-being and reduction of distressing emotions by **75%** for program participants.



New Program Launch

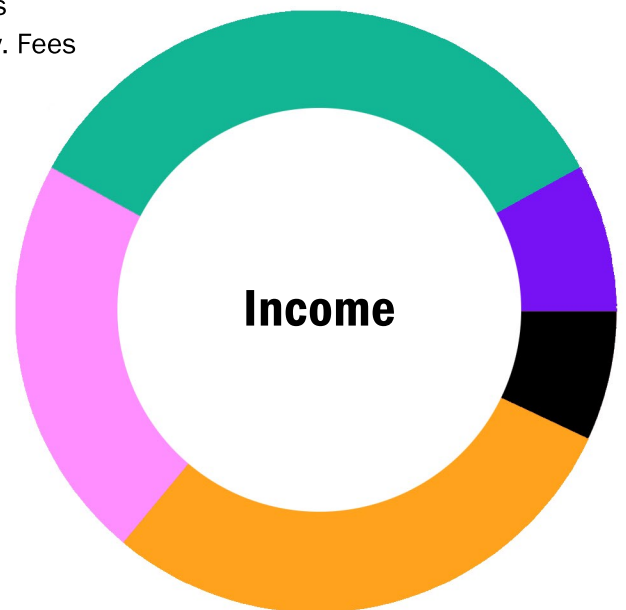
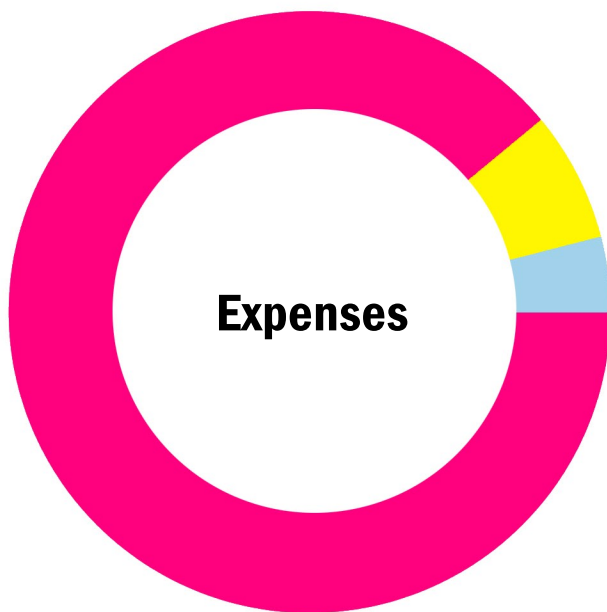
in view

This year, Artists First launched the *In View* Mural program. It resulted in the successful completion of two public murals. The *In View* Mural Project provides the community (businesses, residences, and public spaces) with high quality, hand-painted, custom murals. The project provides artists with disabilities, veterans, and at risk youth with confidence-building opportunities, work experience, inclusion, and visibility.

A1 2020-2021 Financial Picture-

- 4% Fundraising
- 7% Administrative
- 89% Program

- 7% Earned Income
- 8% CARE Funds
- 22% Foundations
- 29% Donations
- 34% SB40 Gov. Fees



Artists First is grateful to our generous community of supporters helping us to make a creative impact. Grant partners include: **The Boeing Corporation, Regional Arts Commission, The Saint Louis Office of Developmental Disability Resources and the Trio Foundation of Saint Louis.**

Our Board-

- Jimauria Evans, Board Co-President
- Anne Hollin, Board Co-President
- Rene Zar, Secretary
- Dede Raskas, Board Member
- Douglas Hall, Board Member
- Nancy Newman-Rice, Board Member
- John Orbe, Advisory Board Member
- Robert A. Powell, Advisory Board Member
- Audrey Jones, Advisory Board Member

Our Staff-

- Sheila Suderwalla, MSW, Executive Director
- Mary Harden, MSW, Outreach Director
- Jasmine Raskas, Lead Art Facilitator
- William Bower-Leet, Executive Assistant

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