

Arts Services Initiative of Western New York 2012 Annual Report

Our Mission:

The Arts Services Initiative of Western New York fosters capacity building, collaboration, and advocacy efforts for the region’s cultural sector, an integral part of our community.

About ASI:

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95 Perry Street, Suite 402
Buffalo, New York 14203

.....
Tel 716-846-8270
Fax 716-846-8269

.....
asiwnyinfo@gmail.com
www.asiwny.org

Arts Services Initiative of the Western New York, Inc. was created in 2011 to foster capacity building, collaboration, and advocacy efforts for the region’s cultural sector, an integral part of the fabric of our community.

ASI works closely with the Greater Buffalo Cultural Alliance, and brings together several networks including Arts Partners for Learning, the Cultural Alliance of Niagara, and Give for Greatness. ASI will pick up and continue the work of the Arts Council in Buffalo and Erie County, the Arts Council in Niagara County, and Advancing Arts and Culture.

ASI is a non-profit 501c3 organization (pending) governed by an independent board of directors comprising leaders in the area’s cultural and community sectors. ASI has the support of the New York Council on the Arts and the Fund for the Arts, both of which participated in its development and provided initial operational funding.



ASI Board of Directors:

- Mr. Randall Kramer – *President*
Artistic/Executive Director, MusicalFare Theatre
Co-Chair, Greater Buffalo Cultural Alliance
- Ms. Kate Koperski – *Secretary*
Director, Castellani Art Museum of Niagara University
President, Cultural Alliance of Niagara
- Ms. JoAnne Schwartz – *Treasurer*
Group Vice President, Community Reinvestment, M&T Bank
- Mr. E. Frits Abell
Managing Director, Northside Advisors / Founder, Buffalo Expat Network
- Mr. James Allen
Executive Director, Amherst Industrial Development Agency
- Ms. Stephanie Cole
General Counsel, Niagara University
- Ms. Anne Conroy-Baiter
Executive Director, Cattaraugus County Arts Council
- Ms. Laurie Dean Torrell
Executive Director, Just Buffalo Literary Center
Co-Chair, Greater Buffalo Cultural Alliance
- Ms. Kathleen Godwin
Owner, Accounting Repair & Maintenance
- Ms. Paulette Harris
Artistic Director, Paul Robeson Theatre
- Ms. Sarah JM Kolberg
Consultant / Adjunct Faculty, Department of Media Study, University at Buffalo
- Mr. Mark McGovern
Project Manager, Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus
- Mr. Gerald Mead
Adjunct Professor, Design Department, Buffalo State College
- Ms. Theresa Quinn, Esq.
Associate, Magavern Magavern Grimm LLP
- Dr. Irene Rykaszewski, PhD
Executive Director, Lewiston Council on the Arts
Secretary, Cultural Alliance of Niagara

ASI Staff:

- Mr. Tod A. Kniazuk – *Executive Director*
- Ms. Jennifer Swan – *Associate Director*
- Ms. Elizabeth Borngaber – *Administrative Assistant*
- Ms. Tracy Shattuck, Event Elements – *Event Planner (contracted)*
- O’Connell and Associates – *Grant Writer (contracted)*

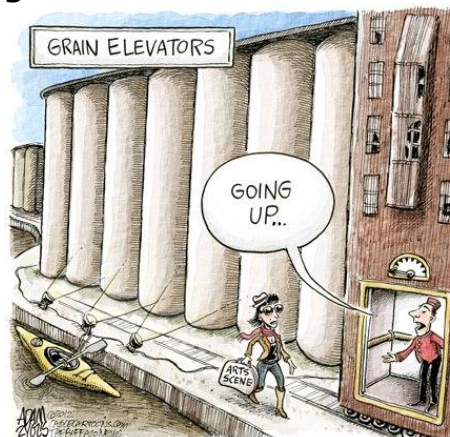
2012 Accomplishments:

ASI created and implemented **New York State Council on the Arts regrant process** for Erie County community arts & arts education, Niagara County community arts & arts education, and bi-county individual artist grants. To effectively re-establish the process, ASI held 19 outreach sessions in the two counties that are attended by 83 Erie County organizations, 14 Niagara County organizations, and 87 individual artists.



This resulted in 42 Erie County Community Arts/Arts Education applications, 12 Niagara County Community Arts/Arts Education applications, and 33 Individual Artist applications. Grants were awarded to 12 Niagara County applicants, 5 individual artist applicants, and 25 Erie County applicants. The successful projects include Tony-nominated actor Stephen McKinley Henderson working with students at the Buffalo Academy for the Visual & Performing Arts to prepare them for a national August Wilson competition, performances by the Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus and Orchard Park Chorale, a Native American dance and beadwork exhibit, a photo project that highlights our refugee community, and concerts in multiple urban, suburban and rural municipalities.

We also created and implemented the **Buffalo River Assisted Programming grants** for the Erie Canal Harbor Development Corporation.



These grants resulted in over 130 programs at sites along the river with thousands in attendance, highlighted by two innovative events at the Silo City grain elevators, *American Grain* and *City of Night*.

ASI, in cooperation with our partners at the Greater Buffalo Cultural Alliance and Cultural Alliance of Niagara, effectively provided **advocacy** in Erie County, Niagara County, and the City of Buffalo. In **Erie County** our executive director served on the County Executive's transition team committee charged with re-establishing a process for cultural funding, then was appointed to the funding review committee. ASI's outreach encouraged 15 successful new applicants for county funding, and the process resulted in an increase in total funding for the cultural sector. We also "rallied the troops" by successfully encouraging the culturals to attend key Erie County Legislature meetings and by holding a joint ASI/GBCA press conference.



In **Niagara County**, the cultural organizations involved in CAN presented to the Niagara County Legislature for the first time in a decade, and the Legislature Chair is continuing dialogue with the goals of building relationships and restoring funding for the culturals in that county. In the **City of Buffalo**, we successfully advocated for an amendment to the 2012-13 city budget that included cultural funding in a city budget for the first time since 2001. We are meeting regularly with Mayor Brown and the Buffalo Arts Commission on issues of continued cultural funding, enforcement of the one percent for public art rule, and other matters.

Our **capacity building** efforts in 2012 saw ASI conduct several training sessions. In addition to the launch of the aforementioned “freshmen class” we hosted three Cultural Data Project trainings, we brought in AFTA Director of State and Local Government Affairs Jay Dick for advocacy training held at a Greater Buffalo Cultural Alliance Steering Committee, and we brought together the editors of Buffalo Spree, Buffalo Rising, and Artvoice as well as the features editor of the Buffalo News to conduct a print media training session. We also work directly with individuals and organizations; providing Board training to the Central Terminal Restoration Corporation and Amherst Players, and working with literally dozens of artists and groups on a more limited basis to answer questions and provide suggestions.



Beyond those direct sessions, ASI weaves capacity building into many of our other efforts. We designed both the Buffalo River and DEC applications in such a way that they would be as accessible as possible to new applicants and smaller organizations, resulting in many first-time awardees. NYSCA DEC applicants had the chance to submit their work early for review and recommended changes to strengthen their applications. Unsuccessful Buffalo River and DEC applicants were offered feedback and ideas as to how to strengthen their future applications. Successful Buffalo River grant awardees were offered the opportunity to have their plans reviewed and improved by ASI’s professional event planner. We are requiring DEC applicants to complete and submit Cultural Data Project reports in order to give them a tool they need for applying to Erie County and Foundations, and also educating them on the ways they can use CDP for their own planning and reporting. We are also working with Erie County to offer the trainings needed by county cultural funding applicants to improve their submissions in future years.

ASI fostered **collaboration** in two different and creative ways in 2012. **Music Culture 716** brought together seven music-based organizations – Blues Society of WNY, Buffalo Gay Men’s Chorus, Buffalo Music Hall of Fame, Buffalo Philharmonic Chorus, Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, Colored Musicians Club, and Music is Art – to develop programmatic and marketing collaborations. ASI secured a contract for the seven to perform individually and with each other on Old Falls Street in Niagara Falls in May, and the groups promoted each other at their events such as the MiA Festival and Hall of Fame Induction Gala.



ASI also brought together eight new executive directors who are also first-time EDs for our **“Freshmen Class”** training sessions. The new directors of Buffalo Arts Studio, Buffalo History Museum (joining us for some of the sessions), Emerging Leaders of the Arts Buffalo, Locust Street Neighborhood Art Classes, Music is Art, Squeaky Wheel / Buffalo Media Resources, Subversive Theatre Collective, and Western New York Book Arts Center are enrolled in an eight session series that started in October and will cover topics including budgets, development, 501c3 rules, and other relevant topics. Each session is being conducted by leaders in the field who have agreed to continue to make themselves available as mentors, further connecting these new directors into the cultural community; presenters have included Anthony Bannon (Burchfield Penney), Laurie Dean Torrell (Just Buffalo), Dan Hart (BPO), Paul Hogan (Oishei Foundation), Randall Kramer (MusicalFare), Mark Mortenson (Science Museum), and Carrie Veltri (major gifts officer at UB Arts & Sciences).

ASI has placed our region back on the **national** stage through our attendance and participation at the annual Americans for the Arts Convention, National Arts Advocacy Day in Washington DC, the first annual Cultural Data Project convention, and the 2013 AFTA convention marketing committee.



Our partnership with **New York State** is also strong. We are working with the **New York State Council on the Arts** through the aforementioned DEC process, hosting new NYSCA Director Lisa Robb on her trip to the region, and by being asked by Ms. Robb to administer a statewide cultural exchange program with Quebec beginning in 2013. Additionally, our Executive Director is serving as the co-chair of Governor Cuomo's **Path Through History** Western Region Working Group, which included giving the region's presentation to a panel that included the Governor, his director of operations, the head of Empire State Development, and the director of the State Museum.

In addition to all of the above, as part of our **ongoing services** ASI:

- Provides administrative support to the Greater Buffalo Cultural Alliance, Cultural Alliance of Niagara, Arts Partners for Learning, and Give for Greatness;
- Provides access to health and dental insurance for artists and workers at cultural organizations through a partnership with the Amherst Chamber of Commerce;
- Connects over 1400 through Constant Contact and close to 1000 through Facebook to grant deadlines, calls for work, job opportunities, and other important information on a regular basis;
- Serves on the GBCA steering committee, CAN, APL leadership team, and G4G funding and allocations committee;
- Speaks on behalf of our organization and the cultural sector on panels and at events ranging from the kickoff of Hispanic Heritage Month to the Rotary Club of Buffalo to a graduate urban planning class at UB;
- Is gathering data for a cultural mapping project that geographically shows the impact of the cultural sector in Erie and Niagara Counties; and
- Continues to broaden our geographic scope through placement of the Cattaraugus County Arts Council on the ASI Board of Directors, through meetings with Chautauqua County stakeholders, and through offering services such as health insurance on a multi-county basis.



Conclusion:

2012 was Arts Services Initiative's first full year in existence, and it was one of which we are tremendously proud. We continue to cement our place as a leader in the cultural community and the community at large, and we continue to strive to provide the services our organizations and individual constituents need to better themselves and our region through their work. 2013 will see us continue many of our existing efforts and add some important new work such as an economic impact statement for the non-profit cultural sector and an Art Access Program that will connect low income individuals to cultural programming.