ASI’s Mission

Arts Services Initiative of Western New York promotes the cultural sector’s vital role in economic development and the community through advocacy, capacity building, and collaboration.

About ASI

Arts Services Initiative of 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 the five county Cultural Summit Group.

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

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Mr. Randall Kramer – President
Artistic/Executive Director, MusicalFare Theatre
Co-Chair, Greater Buffalo Cultural Alliance
Ms. Kate Koperski – Vice President
Director, Castellani Art Museum of Niagara University
President, Cultural Alliance of Niagara
Ms. Paulette D. Harris – Secretary
Artistic Director, Paul Robeson Theatre
Ms. Kathleen Godwin – Treasurer
Owner, Accounting Repair & Maintenance
Mr. E. Frits Abell
Managing Director, Northside Advisors
Founder, Buffalo Expat Network
Mr. Kenneth Africano
Partner, Harter Secrest & Emery LLP
Mr. James Allen
Executive Director, Amherst Industrial Development Agency
Ms. Jak Deluca
Executive Director, Squeaky Wheel Film & Media Arts Center
Ms. Journey Gunderson
Executive Director, Lucy Desi Center for Comedy /Lucille Ball Desi Arnaz Museum
Ms. Tina Hastings
Executive Director, Cattaraugus County Arts Council
Mr. Tod A. Kniazuk – ex officio
Executive Director, Arts Services Initiative of WNY
Ms. Sarah JM Kolberg
Independent Consultant
Adjunct Faculty, University at Buffalo Dept. of Media Study
Mr. Mark McGovern
Project Manager, Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus
Mr. Gerald Mead
Adjunct Professor, SUNY Buffalo State Design
Mr. Daniel Montante
President, Montante Solar
Mr. John A. Mueller
Senior Associate Attorney, Harter Secrest & Emery LLP
Mr. Hal D. Payne
Vice President for Student Affairs, SUNY Buffalo State
Council Member, New York State Council on the Arts
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
Ms. JoAnne Schwartz
Group Vice President, Community Reinvestment, M&T Bank
Ms. Michelle Watorek
Director, Corporate Controller, Finance, HealthNow New York Inc.

STAFF

Mr. Tod A. Kniazuk – Executive Director
Ms. Jennifer Swan – Associate Director
Ms. Denise Ambrusko-Maida – Development Director
Ms. Elizabeth Borngraber – Arts Access Program Coordinator
Ms. Lauren Rojek – Program Coordinator
Ms. Kristin Rose – Bookkeeper
ASI reached over 1,500 “Likes” on our Facebook page, approached 1,000 followers on our ASI Twitter, and saw close to 19,000 visits to the ASI website, which allowed us to communicate job opportunities, calls for work, grant deadlines, and serve as an online resource guide for other important information.

2014 Accomplishments

ASI PROVIDED FREE TRAININGS ON:

- Data + Stories = Advocacy,
- Nonprofit Revitalization Act,
- Overview of Fundraising Types,
- Board Governance,
- New York State Council on the Arts funding and process overview with NYSCA Executive Director Lisa Robb,
- Taking your career as an artist to the next level,
- Using economic impact data for advocacy,
- Albright-Knox/Erie County/Buffalo Public Art Initiative,
- Rochester Fringe Festival opportunities, and
- Art collecting 101 and 102 with echo Art Fair.
ASI completed its third year administering the Erie Canal Harbor Development Corporation (ECHDC) Buffalo River Assisted Programming Grants, conducted five New York State Council on the Arts Regrant programs in Erie and Niagara Counties, co-chaired the New York State Path Through History Western Region Work Group, and carried out an artist in residence exchange between New York State and the Province of Quebec, which was renewed for an additional three years.

2014 Accomplishments

ASI ALSO...

...Released the Economic Impact of Western New York’s Not-for-Profit Cultural Industry Report.

...Provided One-on-One Cultural Data Project (CDP) sessions to assist organizations in completing their CDP reports, which enabled them to apply for or remain in compliance with the Erie County cultural funding grants and/or NYSCA Decentralization grants.

...Administered One-on-One training sessions with individual organizations on topics such as board training and strategic planning.
ASI began the process of transitioning Give for Greatness (G4G) to become a program of ASI. G4G, through ASI’s administration, gave out a total of

15 grants

to organizations with budgets ranging from $8,000 to $220,000 in Erie and Niagara Counties.

2014 Accomplishments

One of G4G’s fundraisers, the Lawyers for the Arts Event 2015

ASI became a subcontractor of Global Spectrum to work on developing and ensuring cultural programming, community involvement, and diversity at the sites at Canalside, and produced the event that opened the Ice @ Canalside.

Canalside Music and Dance Series

F-Bites Culinary Class

Canalside Ice Rinks Grand Opening 2014
ADVOCACY

BUFFALO

Working with the Mayor and Common Council, ASI helped secure a multi-year commitment for operating funding for cultural organizations. We worked with the Buffalo Urban Development Corporation to inform developers on the benefits of including non-profit culturals into their plans. ASI also teamed with the City and the Albright-Knox Art Gallery to apply for the multi-year Bloomberg Philanthropies Public Art Challenge.

ASI continued to take elected officials of all parties on site visits of cultural organizations, served on the county’s cultural funding review board, and worked to preserve and expand operating grants. ASI also offered trainings and individual organization consultation on topics the county identified as in need of improvement by the culturals who apply for county funding.

ERIE COUNTY

Through the Cultural Summits, ASI discussed issues on county, regional, and statewide levels where the Summits could combine future efforts. ASI urged the WNY Regional Economic Development Council to strengthen language about the cultural sector in their plan and add a cultural representative to their group.

NIAGARA COUNTY

ASI supported the Cultural Alliance of Niagara as they determined their advocacy strategies moving forward.

NY STATE

ASI served on the steering committee of NYS Arts with the main goal of encouraging Governor Cuomo to increase NYSCA cultural funding grants by $5 million, which he included in his proposed budget.

WESTERN NEW YORK

2014 Accomplishments
ASI serviced regional networks including Greater Buffalo Cultural Alliance, Arts Partners for Learning, Cultural Alliance of Niagara, and WNY Cultural Summits.

In collaboration with the City of Buffalo, ASI developed the Smithsonian National Museum Day in WNY with 15 participating venues in Erie, Niagara, and Chautauqua Counties. Over 2,500 visitors attended, which significantly increased attendance at the participating venues.

2014 Accomplishments

**ARTS SERVICES INITIATIVE** represented the WNY cultural sector at the following:

- Americans for the Arts National Convention
- One Region Forward Housing & Neighborhoods Works Group
- New York State Council on the Arts State & Local Partnerships and DEC State Panels
- CharitySTRONG Western New York Steering Committee
- Americans for the Arts National Arts Advocacy Day
- New York State Tourism Summit
- Open Buffalo Arts Integration Committee
- New York State Path Through History Day
- WNY Grantmakers Association
ASI re-launched the former arts awards as the Spark Cultural Awards Party. It is a mission driven fundraiser for ASI that honors those in the cultural sector and those who support it. In 2014 – its first year – the event sold out with 300+ attendees. The event integrated live art and the winners and finalists came from throughout WNY. ASI transformed the event from a sit down lunch to an interactive party and feedback was overwhelmingly positive.

In 2014, the Arts Access website (www.arts-access.org) listed free cultural organizations and events, pay what you can previews, rush tickets, and other ways to enjoy local cultural programming at low or no cost that are available to all.

Over 400 Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients signed up for the Arts Access pass, which provides free tickets and transportation to cultural events.
ASI teamed up with Block Club, producers of dining cards and beverage cards in Buffalo, to establish **Cultural Cards** for the sector for the second year.

2014-2015 decks offered discounts to area arts and cultural organizations.

The **Big Easy in Buffalo** became a program of ASI beginning with the 7th Annual Mardi Gras Jam. Strong partnerships with Sportsmen’s Tavern and Dick & Jenny’s Restaurant kept costs down while being able to bring in New Orleans artists for public performances and connect them to local artists. A committee was formed to work on developing the series and integrating it into ASI’s long-term mission.
Candidate Surveys

Year two of candidate surveys were conducted for those who ran for New York State Governor, New York State Senate and Assembly, as well as vacancies in the City of Buffalo Common Council and Erie County Legislature.

The surveys help identified candidates’ views on cultural funding and policy, as well as the place of arts and culture in the community, economic development, and tourism.

Results were published in Artvoice and circulated throughout the cultural community prior to the Primary Election.
Arts Services Initiative of Western New York would like to thank the following...