



# ARTS SERVICES INITIATIVE OF WESTERN NEW YORK INC

2015 ANNUAL REPORT



**PROMOTING THE WESTERN NEW YORK  
CULTURAL SECTOR**

# Arts Services Initiative of Western New York (ASI) promotes the cultural sector's vital role in economic development and the community through capacity building, collaboration, and advocacy in Erie, Niagara, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, and Allegany Counties.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### OFFICERS

Mr. Randall Kramer – *President*  
Artistic/Executive Director, MusicalFare Theatre

Ms. Kate Koperski – *Vice President*  
Director, Castellani Art Museum of Niagara University

Ms. Paulette D. Harris – *Secretary*  
Artistic Director, Paul Robeson Theatre at the African American Cultural Center

Ms. Kathleen Godwin – *Treasurer*  
Owner, Accounting Repair & Maintenance

### DIRECTORS

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Partner, Harter Secrest & Emery LLP

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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

Ms. Sarah JM Kolberg  
Independent Consultant

Mr. Mark McGovern  
Project Manager, Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus

Mr. Gerald Mead  
Adjunct Professor, Design Department, SUNY Buffalo State

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Downtown Development Coordinator & Manager, Buffalo Urban Development Corporation

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President, Montante Solar

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Senior Associate Attorney, Harter Secrest & Emery LLP

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Partner & CEO, 15 Fingers

Ms. JoAnne Schwartz  
Group Vice President, Community Reinvestment, M&T Bank (retired)

Ms. Michelle Watorek  
Director, Corporate Controller, Finance

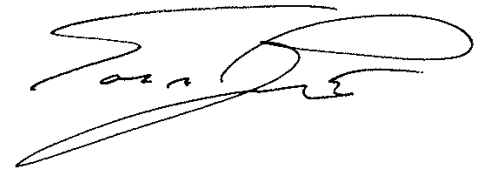
## A WORD FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In the following pages, you'll read many highlights of Arts Services Initiative's efforts to assist artists and cultural organizations in their work, as well as making Western New York a place where the arts are for everyone.

The numbers and highlights speak for themselves, but what really stands out to me is that we've launched and evolved all these programs in just four short years. There is still much to be done, but it is clear that our efforts, and the work of all those with whom we partner, are having a positive impact on the field and in our community.

A special thanks to all our sponsors, partners, and volunteers. With their support, all of our work remains accessible to organizations and artists at no cost. We're especially proud to say that we provide meaningful and equitable service to groups of all sizes and artists in every phase of their careers.

Thanks for taking the time to read through this report, and once you have I hope you'll be inspired to join our efforts, or to provide feedback as to how we can help you in your work. My email is [tod@asiwny.org](mailto:tod@asiwny.org)—I look forward to hearing from you.



## 2015 ASI STAFF

Mr. Tod A. Kniazuk, Executive Director  
Ms. Jennifer Swan, Associate Director  
Ms. Lauren Rojek, Program Coordinator  
Ms. Connie Campanaro, Development Director  
Ms. Elizabeth Borngaber, Arts Access Program Coordinator  
Ms. Ally Spogr, Assistant Program Coordinator  
Ms. Julie Ricchiazzi, Bookkeeper



**In 2015, ASI provided**

**FREE**

**professional development**

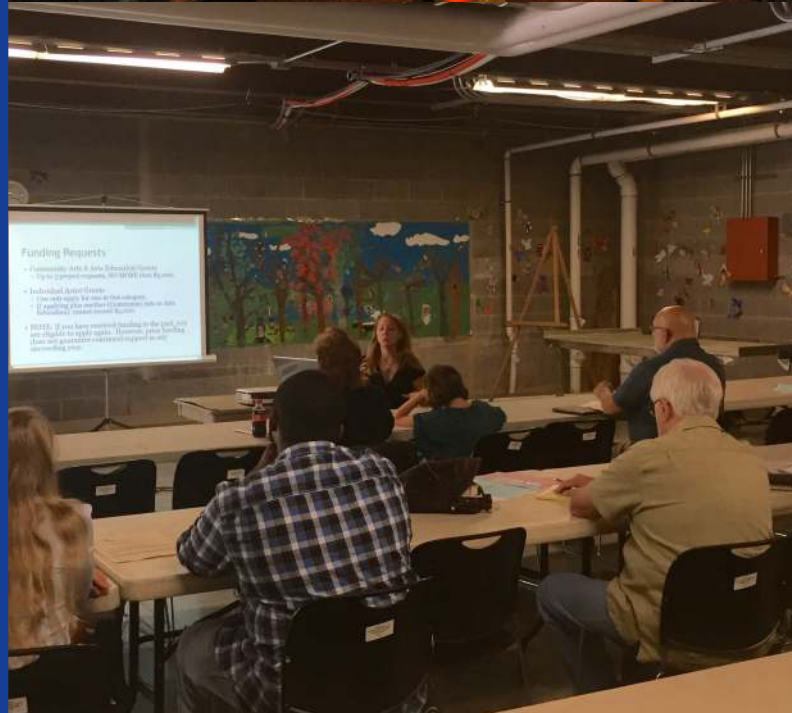
**opportunities to 496**

**individuals on topics such as:**

- ⇒ Board, staff, executive director, and program evaluations;
- ⇒ Succession planning with the New York Council on Nonprofits;
- ⇒ Business strategies for artists with the Arts Business Institute;
- ⇒ Increasing your broadcast media coverage with WGRZ, WBFO, and WBBZ;
- ⇒ Advocacy training for the county budget process with the Greater Buffalo Cultural Alliance;
- ⇒ Do It Yourself websites for artists and more!

In addition, **11** cultural organizations took advantage of our one-on-one training sessions with topics including board training and strategic planning &

**15** new or aspiring EDs enrolled in our Executive Director 101 series which took them through eight sessions on topics essential to their success.



# Increasing *access, opportunities, and capacity* for the region's cultural sector



## **ASI administered the following grant programs in WNY:**

- ⇒ Five **New York State Council on the Arts** regrant programs in Erie and Niagara counties, with applications increasing in both Niagara and Erie (to the extent that for every dollar given out we had \$3 in applications - even with a 20% increase in available funds),
- ⇒ **Give for Greatness** general operating grants; we awarded **30** this past year (doubled from 2014) in **five counties** (two in 2014), with over **80** applicants,
- ⇒ **Erie Canal Harbor Development Corporation (ECHDC) Buffalo River Assisted Programming Grants,**
- ⇒ **Erie Canal Harbor Development Corporation (ECHDC) Outer Harbor Assisted Programming Grants,** and
- ⇒ An artist in residence exchange between **New York State and the Province of Quebec**, which was renewed for an additional **three years** with ASI continuing to administer.

**OVER 100 GRANTS IN TOTAL!**





Continuing our relationship with **Spectra Venue Management at Canalside** and the **Erie Canal Harbor Development Corporation at the Buffalo River and Outer Harbor** to develop cultural programming, and ensure community involvement and diversity.





# Advocating for the cultural sector

## BUFFALO

Working to secure a multi-year commitment for operating funding for cultural organizations, working with the Buffalo Urban Development Corporation to help inform downtown developers on the benefits of including non-profit culturals into their plans, and teaming with the City to encourage participation in the Smithsonian National Museum Day.

## ERIE COUNTY

Continuing to take elected officials of all parties on site visits of cultural organizations and working to preserve and expand operating grants.

## NIAGARA COUNTY

Supporting the Cultural Alliance of Niagara as they determine their advocacy strategy.



## WESTERN NEW YORK

Through the cultural summits discussing what issues on county, regional, or statewide levels we would like to combine our efforts to undertake, and urging the WNY Regional Economic Development Council to strengthen language about the cultural sector in their plan and add a cultural representative to their group.



## NEW YORK STATE

Serving on the steering committee of ArtsNYS with the main goal of creating a statewide arts advocacy organization following our successful initiative to get an increase in NYSCA cultural funding grants of \$5 million, which included a 20% increase in DEC grants for our small cultural organizations in the region.

## FEDERAL

Serving as New York State captain for National Arts Advocacy Day in Washington DC.

## NEW in 2015

ASI became a part of **43 North**'s efforts by taking their winning businesses on tours of local culturals and aiding them in getting more involved in the cultural sector.

# Representing ASI and the cultural sector at:

- ⇒ Americans for the Arts National Convention,
- ⇒ New York State Council on the Arts Regional Economic Development Council CFA and Presenting panels,
- ⇒ CharitySTRONG Western New York Steering Committee,
- ⇒ New York State Funders Alliance, and
- ⇒ Numerous speaking engagements, presentations, and partnerships on everything from a Congressional student art contest to teaching a webinar on emerging arts leaders for Americans for the Arts.

## Service to regional networks including:

- ⇒ Greater Buffalo Cultural Alliance (Steering Committee, Advocacy Committee Co-Chair, administration),
- ⇒ Arts Partners for Learning (Leadership Team, administration),
- ⇒ Cultural Alliance of Niagara (administrative support), and
- ⇒ Cultural Summits (participation, administrative support).



*ASI along with Mayor  
Byron W. Brown and  
the City of Buffalo  
announcing  
the Smithsonian  
National Museum Day*

# Program Updates

## 2015 Spark Awards

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Spark Cultural Awards Party, a signature fundraiser for ASI that is mission driven in that it honors those in the cultural sector and those who support it, once again sold out our **300** tickets, we integrated live art into the event, the winners and finalists came from throughout WNY, and in its second year net profits jumped *from \$4,000 to over \$19,000!*

## ARTS ACCESS

Completion of the second season and launch of the third season of the Arts Access Program; over **400** Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program recipients signed up for the pass that provides free tickets and transportation to cultural events at **30** participating organizations, as well as the website [www.arts-access.org](http://www.arts-access.org) that lists 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.



## THE BIG EASY IN BUFFALO

Continuation of The Big Easy in Buffalo program that brings in New Orleans artists for public performances and connects them to local professional and student musicians for mentoring and career advice.



ArtsAccess



# CANDIDATE SURVEYS

Conducting year three of our candidate survey, this year for those who ran for Erie County Executive, Erie County Legislature, Niagara Falls Mayor, Niagara Falls City Council, and City of Buffalo Comptroller that identified candidates' views on cultural funding and policy, as well as the place of arts and culture in the community, economic development, and tourism, which was published online in *The Public* and circulated throughout the cultural community prior to the Primary and General Elections – making it one of the **most widely available surveys**; this year's survey saw a further increase in both overall and bipartisan participation.



Cultural Employee Pass



NAME

MEMBER ID

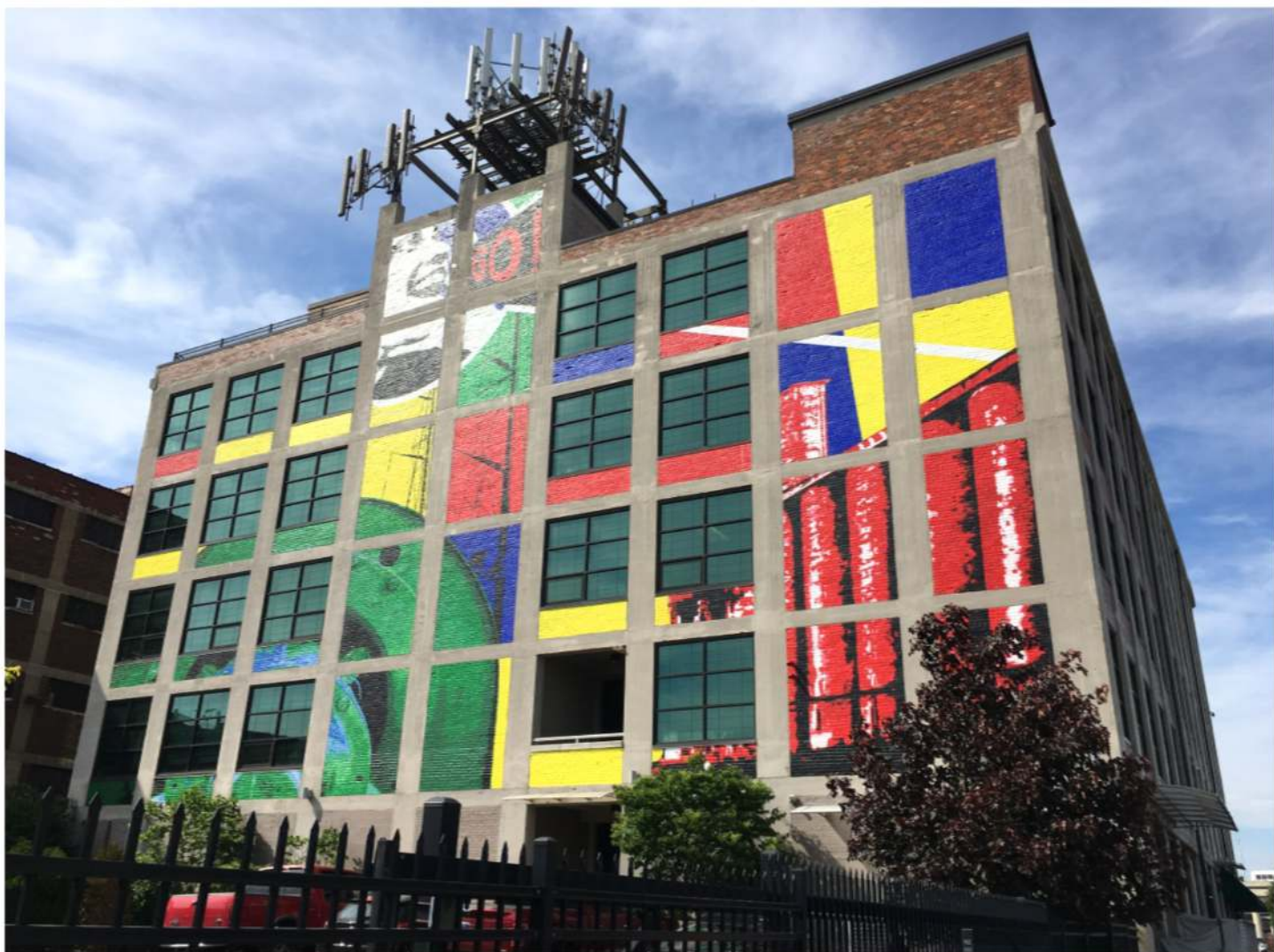
Administered by Arts Services Initiative of WNY 

## CULTURAL EMPLOYEE PASS

Launched the Cultural Employee Pass in conjunction with the Greater Buffalo Cultural Alliance that provides discounts to participating cultural organizations for those who work at other participating organizations, encouraging them to see more of our local cultural offerings and fostering a heightened sense of belonging to the cultural community.

# HEALTH INSURANCE FOR ARTISTS

Offering health insurance through the Amherst Chamber of Commerce (though we have found demand for this virtually dried up following creation of the NYS Health Exchange).



ASI worked with Savarino Companies on two public art projects at 95 Perry (pictured above) and 500 Seneca that brought paid work to three local artists and impressive works of art to thousands of workers, residents, and passersby at the sites. ASI WNY offices are located inside 95 Perry St.

**Arts Services of Western New York, Inc.**

**95 Perry Street, Suite 402**

**Buffalo, NY 14203**

**Phone: (716) 362-8389**

**[www.asiwny.org](http://www.asiwny.org)**

Cover photo by Shelia Benson  
Spark Awards photo by Michael W. Thomas