



transformative art + design academy

cultureworks

ANNUAL REPORT
2025-2026



WELCOME!

Celebrating fifteen years of transformative art + design programs at CultureWorks!

In June of 2025, our Student Advisory Council chose the theme: **WAYFINDING**, and we kicked off our fifteenth year with three vastly different budgets, due to rising economic uncertainty and threats to state and federal funding. We aimed for the middle budget, which would have sustained current levels of programming.

By May of 2026, our journey with *wayfinding* looked more like **WAYMAKING**, thanks to an incredible outpouring of support from families, donors, local foundations, and state programs. In the end, total revenue surpassed even the highest anticipated budget, enabling us to create 2 new positions and serve over 1900 youth, with over 400 enrolled in multi-week classes! To top off the incredible year, in June of 2026, I was invited to a garden party at Governor's Whitmer's residence, where I was delighted to present her with artwork designed and created at CultureWorks!



WE FOUND OUR WAY through this extremely challenging and extraordinary year by leaning into the wisdom and guidance of our community, and by renewing our commitment to our mission, vision and values. A highlight of the year was a series of free workshops and community events led by Chicago-based interdisciplinary artist, Salvador Jiménez-Flores.

These events, funded by MillerKnoll Foundation, were a culmination of our Visiting Artist Series, which sought to celebrate and elevate the work of artists from historically underrepresented communities, thereby helping our student body to envision successful careers in the arts.

We invested deeply in our team this year. From our Student Advisory Council to our staff, contracted educators, volunteers, and board members, we invested more time and resources than ever before on team building, professional development, civic engagement, and training. **TOGETHER**, we grew stronger, more agile, and better equipped to find our way - *make our way* - forward!

ON BEHALF OF OUR STUDENTS, STAFF, AND BOARD, THANK YOU FOR HELPING US PROVIDE GREATER OPPORTUNITIES FOR PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, IN AND THROUGH THE ARTS!

Cheers to the next 15 years!

Emily Christensen
Executive Director



WHO WE ARE

MISSION: TO CULTIVATE CREATIVITY, BUILD COMMUNITY, AND EMPOWER STUDENTS

VISION: IN ORDER TO FOSTER WHOLENESS IN A FRACTURED WORLD.

As a youth-driven space, we're celebrating 10 years of student-led growth with our Student Advisory Council!



THROUGH CLASSES, WORKSHOPS, FIELD TRIPS, AND COMMUNITY-WIDE EVENTS, WE CONNECT MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WITH PROFESSIONAL TEACHING ARTISTS AND DESIGNERS TO INSPIRE CURIOSITY, CULTIVATE COMPASSION, AND DEVELOP 21ST CENTURY SKILLS.



PRIMARY AUDIENCE:

Teens who are creatively inclined but lack access to traditional arts programming because of mental, physical, or social challenges, or geographical, financial, or transportation limitations.

WE OFFER:

Affordable, accessible arts education in the form of after school and summer classes, workshops, community-wide events, field trips, and professional development for young artists and designers.

Free transportation is available from West Ottawa and Holland Public Schools.

ARTS & MENTAL HEALTH:

52% of enrolled students struggled with or had been treated for anxiety, depression, or stress over the two years - down from 55% the previous year and 74% the year before that. Eighty-Four percent said being creative helps them feel calmer, happier, or more joyful.

STUDENT AND PARENT SURVEYS INDICATE THAT STUDENTS FACING MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES ARE THRIVING BECAUSE THEY FEEL SUPPORTED, CONNECTED, AND ENGAGED.

VALUES (WE DEDICATE RESOURCES TO):

- * Accessibility
- * Inclusion and belonging
- * Excellence
- * Holistic growth
- * Ecological sustainability
- * Career advancement and paid opportunities for artists
- * Youth-adult partnerships in leadership
- * Empathy/respect for people and space
- * Creativity and self expression
- * Experimentation
- * Curiosity
- * Wonder





IMPACT OVERVIEW

CULTUREWORKS PROVIDED HANDS-ON ART EDUCATION TO 1,916 STUDENTS LAST YEAR, OF WHOM 435 WERE ENROLLED IN MULTI-WEEK SPRING, SUMMER, AND FALL CLASSES... ENROLLMENT GREW BY 82%!

Of enrolled students:

- * 39% of households were below the ALICE threshold for income
- * An estimated 21% of households were below the poverty level
- * 40% identified as Hispanic/Latino, African American, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Asian American, or 2+ ethnicities
- * 33 schools represented, with the majority of enrollments from West Ottawa, Holland, and Black River Public Schools

We network with school counselors, pastors, art teachers, physicians, the juvenile justice system, and therapists to recruit students and we partner with over 20 youth-serving organizations in order to maximize impact and extend resources.

When asked how CultureWorks has impacted their lives, students wrote about

**INCREASED CONFIDENCE,
NEW FRIENDS, & THE
SAFE, WELCOMING
COMMUNITY**

WE CONSISTENTLY HEAR FROM STUDENTS, PARENTS, COUNSELORS, AND TEACHERS THAT OUR PROGRAMS ARE AFFORDABLE, WELCOMING, AND ACCESSIBLE TO STUDENTS WHO RELY ON ARTISTIC EXPRESSION FOR THEIR EMOTIONAL, MENTAL, AND SPIRITUAL WELL-BEING.

As a **YOUTH-DRIVEN SPACE**, we rely on feedback from our Student Advisory Council as we develop transformative programs aimed at personal & professional growth, academic success, and long-term positive outcomes.

We survey all enrolled students to get feedback on program quality and areas of interest.

CultureWorks **ALUMNI** serve as leaders in all levels of our organization as

- * paid interns,
- * contracted educators,
- * studio/admin assistants, and
- * directors of our board.



PROGRAM IMPACT

At the heart of our programming, **multi-week classes** offer opportunities for long-term mentoring, career connections, and personal/professional growth.

- * Student enrollment in multi-week classes: **435** (82% growth)
- * Total amount of scholarships provided: **\$91,118** (159% growth)
- * Schools represented: **33**



We expanded our **music and digital arts programs**, thanks to funding from MACC for new iPads and recording equipment, and we launched **jewelry making** classes, by student request. **Open Studio** students had access to all our industry-standard supplies & equipment plus guidance from our staff & interns. Classes were all at (or beyond) capacity, and 88 students remained waitlisted.



Funding from MiLEAP 32n OST, Shine Foundation, Michael & Kim Mulder, and Community Foundation of the Holland/Zeeland Area enabled **significant program expansion with additional services, career exploration opportunities, free workshops, civic engagement, and extended SAC mentoring.**

- * an additional 18 hours of SAC engagement & mentoring
- * more substantial snacks due to rising food insecurity
- * new opportunities for students to shine through exhibitions, sales, and performances of student work

Accessibility: In response to parent feedback, we pivoted from a pay-what-you-can-afford model of registration to tuition-free enrollment last June, and enrollment nearly doubled. Thanks to generous local, state, and federal funding, we increased class size by 20%, added new sections and classes, and increased program hours by 12%. Over 80 students relied on free rides from West Ottawa and Holland Public Schools in order to attend. We provided Spanish and ASL interpretation for several students, enabling greater access to arts education and professional development.



Workforce Impact: CultureWorks provided meaningful work, professional development, and competitive wages for 28 artists, 11 of whom identify as Black/African American, Hispanic/Latine, Asian, or two or more ethnicities. Over \$48,000 was paid to BIPOC artists as employees, interns, and contracted educators, representing 26% of total wages. We added 2 new part-time positions to increase program capacity, and supported 6 interns (2 college, 2 high school, and 2 Ready for Life interns, in partnership with Hope College). Parents, students, and alumni have shared that exposure to leaders with diverse backgrounds and experiences broadens career options and connects students directly with successful professionals with whom they identify on a personal level.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

VISITING ARTIST: SALVADOR JIMÉNEZ-FLORES

We're so grateful to MillerKnoll Foundation for supporting a weekend of events with Chicago-based interdisciplinary artist Salvador Jiménez-Flores, as a culmination of our Visiting Artist Series last fall! This series, which also included a 3-month Artist in Residency and 2 Career Exploration Panels, celebrates and elevates the work of artists from historically underrepresented communities, and helps our student body envision successful careers in the arts.

Salvador's work explores the politics of identity, double consciousness, colonization, migration, "the other," and futurism through socially conscious installation, public, and studio-based art. His practice spans community-based work, drawing, ceramics, prints, and mixed media sculpture. In getting to

know him, we've seen that his joy is to serve, support, and connect with others, so we were

thrilled to offer 3 free community events with Salvador in September of 2025.

On Friday afternoon, 12 high school students learned more about Salvador's artistic practice and carved blocks representing their own cultural identities. We test printed those blocks and then used them over the course of the weekend at our other events.

On Friday evening Salvador hosted Tortilla Social, an intimate, family friendly gathering centered on food, art making, and conversation. Directed by Salvador, 60 participants learned how to make fresh tortillas

and then screenprint them with mole sauce, and we feasted on great food and conversation.

On Saturday, we offered a community printmaking event for hundreds of participants at Tulip City Walls Mural Festival. It was a joy to partner with 3sixty once again to provide free hands-on art activities amidst the mural painting, live music, and dancing.

The whole weekend was a celebration of life, art, and community, and as such, it was also an act of collaboration and hope. Over a shared meal, artmaking, and personal stories, we connected with new friends and invested in community.

Many thanks to all who helped make Salvador's visit possible, including: MillerKnoll Foundation, Michigan Arts and Culture Council, Hope Church, for hosting our Tortilla Social, Tulip City Walls Mural Festival and our Student Advisory Council, who were on hand throughout the weekend as helpers and hosts!



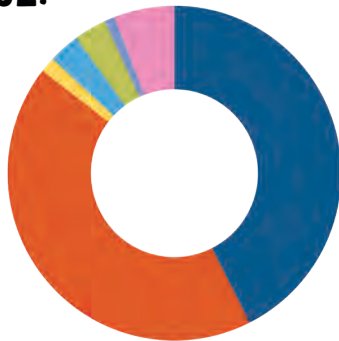
FINANCIALS

BUDGET

We started the fiscal year with 3 different budget projections, given the uncertainty of state and federal funding, and we aimed for the middle budget of \$271,500. Our first ever end-of-year campaign in December brought in more than anticipated, and with state and federal grants finally available, we shifted the budget to \$310,000. By the end of the fiscal year, we increased the budget to \$332,922, having secured state and federal funding at higher levels than ever before, and with a strong birthday bash campaign in the spring. We exceeded that budget as well, bringing in \$342,984 in revenue (26% more than we'd initially projected).

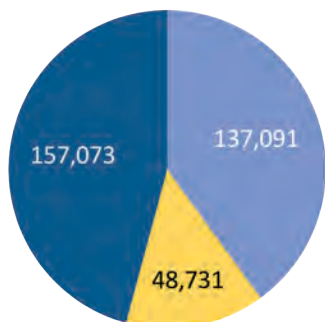
TOTAL REVENUE: \$342,984

- Contributions
- Grants & Bequests
- Program Income
- Sales
- Sponsorships
- In Kind Revenue
- Fundraising Income



Over 85% of CultureWorks' revenue was contributed, and about half of all contributions came from individual donors and family foundations.

TOTAL EXPENSES: \$333,940



- Administrative
- Facilities
- Vehicle
- Programming

EXPENSES

As enrollment nearly doubled throughout the year, expenses kept pace with revenue growth, with the greatest increases in grant-funded equipment, staffing, professional development, and supplies/snacks. We closed out the fiscal year with a net gain, thanks to overwhelming support at the local and state levels!



435

FULL
SCHOLARSHIPS
(compared to
89 last year)

**WE'RE SO GRATEFUL
FOR NEW AND INCREASED
OPERATIONAL FUNDING FROM
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF
THE HOLLAND/ZEELAND AREA,
MILLERKNOLL FOUNDATION
MACC, MILEAP 32N OST, SHINE
FOUNDATION, AND OUR INCREDIBLE
FAMILY OF SUPPORTERS, WHICH
GREW BY 89%!**

81

STUDENTS TRANS-
PORTED TO CLASS
(compared to
53 last year)

\$91,118

TOTAL IN
SCHOLARSHIPS
(compared to
\$35,128 last year)



QUALITY ASSESSMENT

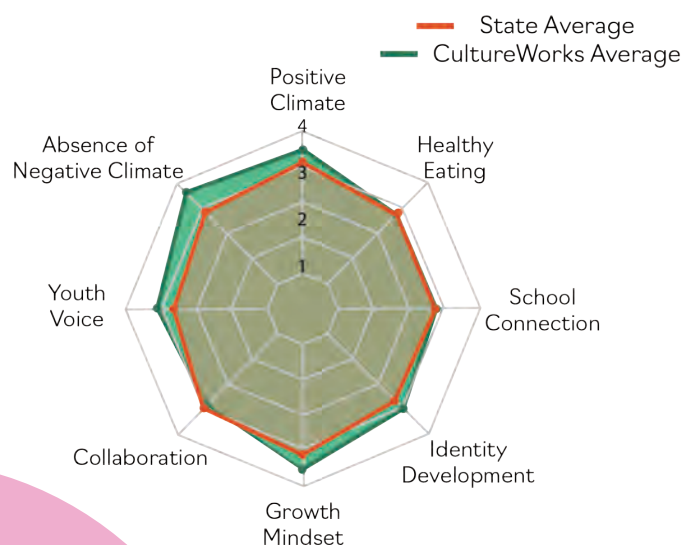
Over the last 2 years, independent reports based on student and parent surveys conducted by MSU for the State of Michigan indicated that CultureWorks classes nurture positive adult-student and peer-peer relationships and impact day-to-day school engagement, mental & social health, and the development of critical life skills including self-expression, empathy, communication, creative problem solving, critical thinking, social-emotional learning, and civic engagement.

Our programs support academic success, mental health, and social-emotional learning, along with providing opportunities for professional development and career connection. Healthy relationships with peers and mentors offer meaningful opportunities for interpersonal connection and growth, and help students navigate circumstances and systems outside of their control. Relationships with trusted adults also help mitigate the negative impacts of adverse childhood events. Regular opportunities for self-directed play, creative exploration, self expression, and giving/receiving feedback, build personal confidence and agency, leading to greater school and civic engagement.



Program Quality Profile

CultureWorks Average vs. State Average



The chart above compares average student experiences at CultureWorks with those at similar out-of-school-time programs across the state, and shows that we excel at fostering youth voice, nurturing a positive climate, and supporting growth mindset & identity development.

The caliber of our programs has been recognized at the state level, with significant increases in competitive operational grant awards from Michigan Arts & Culture Council (MACC) and MiLEAP 32n OST. This year, CultureWorks was the highest-state-funded arts organization in Ottawa County through Michigan Arts and Culture Council, and I was invited to the Governor's residence, where I presented her with artwork designed and printed at CultureWorks.

CULTUREWORKS ATTENDANCE AND % IMPROVED IN SOFT SKILLS



CULTUREWORKS ATTENDANCE AND % IMPROVED IN SCHOOL BEHAVIORS



Data above exclude responses from families who selected "My child already met expectation" or "I don't know."

PARTNERSHIPS

PARTNERSHIPS & COLLABORATION ARE ESSENTIAL TO OUR MISSION & IMPACT!

We were thrilled with the level of interest and engagement in our new music initiatives this year, including a 9-week songwriting class in partnership with **ESCAPE MINISTRIES** & Levitate festival of the arts, in collaboration with **HERRICK DISTRICT LIBRARY** and a handful of incredible partner organizations. The success of these collaborative initiatives inspired our Birthday Bash concert at **PARK THEATRE**, where 9 students performed original music and covers and our SAC assembled a choir.

We also provided free hands-on art activities for over 1600 participants at community-wide summer events, including Pride Festival, LAUP Fiesta, Tulip City Walls Mural Festival, Macatawa Water Festival, International Festival, & Dia De Los Muertos. These events support our partner nonprofits, build community, & empower students/interns with skills in curriculum development and leadership. We invest \$1000-\$1500 for each event through staffing, curriculum development, and materials.



We meet regularly with community partners to share knowledge, data, & expertise in regard to youth development, arts, & culture, and we actively collaborate to maximize impact through shared resources.

In response to ongoing conversations, we provided a free 6-week visual art elective for **TRIO UPWARD BOUND** students, along with free or subsidized workshops for 300 participants, in collaboration with partner organizations including:

**ARBOR CIRCLE * HEIGHTS OF HOPE * HOPE CHURCH *
HOLLAND MUSEUM * OUT ON THE LAKESHORE * WEST
OTTAWA HIGH SCHOOL * BLACK RIVER PUBLIC SCHOOL
* AWAKENING AT HOPE COLLEGE * SAUGATUCK
CENTER FOR THE ARTS * LATIN AMERICANS UNITED
FOR PROGRESS * NEA LAKESHORE BIG READ**



PARTNER HIGHLIGHT

CULTUREWORKS + HARMONY SCHOLARS AT HOPE CHURCH!

We launched a new partnership with Harmony Scholars in 2025 to offer free group music lessons over the summer, and program participation grew from 21 to 31 students in 2026. This summer, we added intermediate strings and classical guitar classes, and we added a cello instructor for beginning violin/viola class. Over the course of 6 weeks, students leaned into the challenges of individual and group performance, and offered an informal performance (informance) for parents and community members at the end of the summer.



Beginning students learned proper techniques for holding and playing their instruments and gained the ability to play appropriately challenging pieces with with accurate rhythm, intonation, and tempo, led by a dedicated team of professional musicians. Intermediate students

worked on small-group skills like listening, leading, responding to non-verbal cues, sharing ideas, and being part of a small ensemble. Classes took brain breaks outside and engaged in full-body learning through rhythm games, utilizing ball throwing, foot stomping, hand clapping, and body percussion. All three classes enjoyed playing with visiting violinist, Josh Holcomb and experimenting with solo improvisation.



HIGHLIGHTS!

STUDENTS BORROWED INSTRUMENTS FOR THE DURATION OF CLASSES, AND CLASSICAL GUITARS WERE AVAILABLE FOR THE FIRST TIME THIS YEAR, THANKS TO PETER MIDDLETON!

BEGINNER STUDENTS WERE CHALLENGED TO PRACTICE AT HOME BETWEEN LESSONS, AND 5 EARNED A PRIZE FOR RETURNING COMPLETED PRACTICE SHEETS!

ALL THREE CLASSES COLLABORATED ON A SONG FOR THE FINAL "INFORMANCE."

STUDENTS GIGGLED, CONNECTED, ENCOURAGED ONE ANOTHER, AND HELPED EACH OTHER OUT.

We're so grateful for this growing partnership that fosters music engagement through accessible hands-on education, and for our incredible team of musician-educators including Lauren Garza (principal violist of the Holland Symphony Orchestra, + founder of Harmony Scholars), Suzanne Dorman (classical guitarist), & Bridget Palmer (cellist), and our musician-assistants, Annabelle Boyd and Ella Nicole Pusztai.

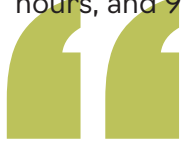


These classes were made possible with funding from: Harmony Scholars, Community Foundation of the Holland/Zeeland Area, Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, & Potential, Michigan Arts & Culture Council, the National Endowment for the Arts, and Hope Church!

PARENT PERSPECTIVE

"MY CHILD
HAS BECOME **MORE
CONFIDENT, STRONG,
SELF-RELIANT, &
SELF-TRUSTING.**
THEY HAVE BLOSSOMED."

According to surveys conducted by MSU, families of students at CultureWorks most strongly agreed that "This program makes me feel supported and welcomed," and reported that the program helped their child the most with "Being safe and staying out of trouble." Families also highlighted the program's importance in supporting household stability and childcare needs. If CultureWorks were no longer available, 49% of families reported they would need to pay for alternative services or programs, 2% indicated they would need to reduce their work hours, and 9% said they would rely on relatives or family friends for care.



"MY CHILD ABSOLUTELY BLOSSOMED AFTER THEIR TIME AT CULTUREWORKS. THEY WERE ABLE TO MEET **NEW FRIENDS** THEY WOULDN'T HAVE OTHERWISE MET. THE STAFF WAS SO SUPPORTIVE THAT **MY CHILD FELT NOURISHED AND INCLUDED.** THEY ALWAYS CAME BACK BRIMMING WITH POSSIBILITY. WE WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN ABLE TO AFFORD ART PROGRAMMING IF NOT FOR THIS ORGANIZATION!"

"CULTUREWORKS HAS PROVIDED A **SAFE AND WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT** FOR MY CHILD. A PLACE THEY CAN GO AND **EXPRESS THEMSELVES**, LEARN NEW ARTS, HAVE DISCUSSIONS WITH TRUSTED PEOPLE, EXPLORE THE CITY, MEET NEW PEOPLE, BE INTRODUCED TO A VARIETY OF VIEWPOINTS IN A NEUTRAL PLACE."

"THIS PROGRAM HAS PROVIDED OPPORTUNITIES FOR **PROFESSIONAL GROWTH** FOR MY DAUGHTER. SHE'S GAINED HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE IN DEVELOPING AND EXECUTING SPECIAL PROJECTS AND HAS GROWN MUCH MORE CONFIDENT IN HER **COMMUNICATION AND LEADERSHIP SKILLS.** SHE SEEMS HAPPIER AND MORE WILLING TO ENGAGE IN CONVERSATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES AT HOME WHEN SHE'S PARTICIPATING IN CULTUREWORKS CLASSES."



"THESE ART CLASSES ALLOW OUR SON ACCESS TO AREAS HE IS INTERESTED IN THAT GO **BEYOND WHAT IS OFFERED AT SCHOOL** (AND NEXT YEAR HE WON'T HAVE ENOUGH ELECTIVE FLEXIBILITY TO TAKE ART CLASSES)."

"IT GETS MY SON **OFF OF SCREENS** AND TEACHES HIM USEFUL ART SKILLS. HE LOVES ART AND IT'S NICE TO HAVE A FREE AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM FOR HIM WHERE HE CAN LEARN NEW THINGS AND **SHARPEN SKILLS** HE ALREADY HAS."

FROM THE STUDENTS

"I WOULD LIKE TO STUDY ACCOUNTING. CULTUREWORKS HAS HELPED ME CONNECT WITH PEOPLE."

"I FEEL LIKE ALL THE CLASSES MADE ME **TALK MORE, THINK MORE, AND ENGAGE MORE.**"

"WHILE AT CULTUREWORKS, I'VE MET TONS OF PEOPLE OF DIFFERENT IDENTITIES EVERYONE, FROM MY PERSPECTIVE, FELT VERY **WELCOMED**, AND WHILE HERE, MANY PEOPLE DON'T FEEL LIKE MINORITIES."

"I GET TO BE A **LEADER** BUT ALSO LEARN FROM OTHERS MY AGE AND YOUNGER THAN ME."

"I NOT ONLY LEARNED ABOUT **ART** HERE, BUT ALSO COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, ADVOCACY, AND EVEN SCIENCE, WHICH I HAVE USED TO INFORM MY CAREER CHOICES."

"I WOULD COME FROM MY SCHOOL UPSET OR FRUSTRATED AND THE PEOPLE HERE WOULD CHEER ME UP, THEY WOULD **BRIGHTEN MY MOOD WITH ART**. THEY LISTENED TO ME AND HELPED ME FEEL **MORE ALIVE**. I DON'T KNOW WHAT I WOULD DO WITHOUT CULTUREWORKS."

"CULTUREWORKS HAS BEEN INSTRUMENTAL IN MY GROWTH AS A PERSON. I **HAVE GROWN DRAMATICALLY** BECAUSE OF CULTUREWORKS. CREATIVITY, ARTISTICALLY, SOCIALLY, IN LEADERSHIP SKILLS, AND MORE."



ALUMNI PERSPECTIVE

Liliana Snyder



CultureWorks' Long-Term Impacts

As we celebrate our 15th year, we're assessing the long-term impacts of CultureWorks programs through quantitative and qualitative data gathered through alumni surveys. Our survey questions were based on research funded by the Wallace Foundation in 2025 and published in the report: *Creative Expression, Caring Relationships, and Career Pathways: A Guide to Youth Outcomes in Community Arts Programs*.¹ The report created a comprehensive taxonomy of impact, based on open-ended, in-depth life history interviews with over 100 alumni from 32 arts organizations across 3 countries. Their research has been invaluable as we seek to understand and improve the ways in which our programs provide opportunities for personal growth, interpersonal connection, well-being, and professional development.

Initial responses to our alumni survey (and ongoing surveys of current students), indicate that the impacts of our programs closely resemble those outlined in the Wallace Foundation study, and can be grouped into two types: **relational outcomes and opportunity outcomes**. Liliana Snyder's survey responses beautifully encapsulate both types of outcomes, and we're so grateful that she was willing to share them here, along with some of her recent artwork.

¹ Peppler, K., Corrigan, S., Dahn, M., Sefton-Green, J., Nelligan, P., DiGiacomo, D., & Mejias, S. (2025). *Creative Expression, Caring Relationships, and Career Pathways: A Guide to Youth Outcomes in Community Arts Programs*. The Wallace Foundation. <https://doi.org/10.59656/A-YA2685.001>

From Liliana:

CultureWorks introduced me to a community of friends that helped me grow both interpersonally and as an artist. Having something to look forward to on a weekly basis gave me a reason to keep making an effort, keep making art, and friends, during a time in my life where I was facing debilitating depression. The conversations held amongst classes greatly helped me look beyond my own world and step into other peoples shoes, and to understand how limitless being an artist can be.

I started doing commission work during my years at CultureWorks and having access to a group of mentors helped me shape how I operate as an artist now. I learned very valuable structures



on how to communicate with clients to make their vision come to life. I got to see what success looked like in artists of many different media and styles. It gave me a lasting impression that creativity is a tool and not a hindrance.

In my final years of high school before I dropped out in the 10th grade, this was one of the few spaces I felt I could be myself without rejection. After leaving high school, it gave me one of the rare opportunities of connecting with my peers that wasn't revolving around making an income. Figuring out how to create friendships felt easier here than anywhere I had experienced at the time and I was grateful for the opportunity to meet people from other areas in the community. Not many places felt welcoming at that age (whether from my own inability to feel at home or otherwise) but every time I walked through the doors there, I felt seen and appreciated and my presence welcomed.



Outside of CultureWorks, I also attended BLFAC (Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp) which gave me access to art supplies I would've otherwise not gotten a chance to experience. Even as an adult now, I have some regret about not taking every single possible class I could have during those years. CultureWorks allowed me to explore so many different media and see not only what my mind was capable of creating, but the others around me which is an invaluable source of inspiration. Participating in showcases helped me grow comfortable with being perceived and also with using my voice. Working collaboratively continued to push me towards growth, a common goal, one that I participated in with gratitude rather than resentment. I always felt my voice was heard by my peers as well as challenged by their point of view.

Getting financial aid to both CultureWorks and BLFAC gave me access to artists I would've probably never crossed paths with. Having access to various field trips and experiences that got shared with

each group felt significantly different than say a school field trip; everyone's excitement was magnified and the childlike wonder of sharing a completely new experience in art had a lasting impact. As an adult, I retrospect about how unique my experience at CultureWorks was and wish there were more community based things like this in adulthood. The financial aid especially was one of the few reasons I could keep returning to take classes.

There's too many mentors to specifically shout out, but I remember each of them very fondly. They made a big effort to make each student feel seen and heard. It would be really special to get to have another chance to see everyone again, hear about their growth and share my own. I am delighted that CultureWorks has grown and continues to be such a staple in the community. Thank you for all that you have done and will do.

Liliana is a multi-media freelance artist who finds "serious joy" in working with watercolors and watercolor graphite. Since attending CultureWorks, she's continued to expand her artistic range, and is learning oil painting, digital and film photography. lcsnydersart@gmail.com





*Many thanks to our partners and supporters;
we simply could not do this work without you!*

**MillerKnoll
FOUNDATION**



cfhz
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MILEAP
Michigan Department of Lifelong
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