

WAC NEWSLETTER



willamette
art center

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I'm writing this message to all of you in the WAC community on the rainy and cloudy first weekend of summer. Somehow it feels perfectly Oregon. I'm also writing with great excitement and anticipation as our studio and community take the first steps on a new journey together at our new home.

The Willamette Art Center studio has been at the Oregon State Fairgrounds location for almost 20 years. So many wonderful classes, events and workshops have been a part of that space. Our community is rooted there in the thousands of students who've learned and grown in their arts practices. In the last six months especially, I've noticed a great deal of joy and a lot of beautiful ceramic work in our studio. Like many of you, I say goodbye to this place with a mix of sadness, nostalgia and hope for our future.

While we leave behind some of the difficulties of being at the fairgrounds (closures, gate entrance changes, etc.), our new space is an ambitious and exciting challenge for the WAC community. There's a lot of work to do to get the new space ready to open. Because of your generous donations, our staff can work with professional tradespeople to help us get everything finished properly. Our plan as of now is to open the doors this fall with a big celebration

event in our new space and our regular calendar of classes. Staff will have more to share in the coming weeks.

The Board is deeply grateful to our staff: Lisa Joyce, Doug Dacar, Don Outland, Kelly Matney, Megan Mersino and Carole Conahan for their incredibly hard work both in keeping the fairgrounds location running smoothly and for moving us forward to the new space. I know Lisa has had many sleepless nights as she works to help ensure our landing is smooth. Don and Doug have done a tremendous amount of (literally) heavy lifting in anticipation of our move as well.

Lisa Joyce convened a special committee to assist with finding our new location. This was an especially challenging task, so please join me in thanking Holly Chamberlain, Doug Dacar, Ruth Dana (our real estate broker) and Pam Prosis. We would not have this exciting, new home without their efforts.

We've also had some absolutely standout volunteers who've helped prepare things and organize for the move – Jesse Breon (move coordinator), Dana Field, Karen Hackney, Sabin Johnson, Cindy Kaufman, Kari Knights, Gordon Minten, Cindy Nelson, James Petrin, Jan Prowse and Twila Shirley. This group cleaned, packed and organized our studio equipment and the space as we prepared to leave. To them and to everyone who gave of their time and energy to prepare for the move, please know your work is most appreciated. I hope I'll have the opportunity to thank each of you in person and encourage others to take a moment to thank our standout volunteers when you see them, too.

It's an honor to serve as your Board President in this time of transition and anticipation. I look forward to seeing everyone at the opening event for our new space.

Carla Axtman, Board President

Next Board Meeting

August 13 @ 5:30 - 7:00 p.m.



MEET CAROLE CONAHAN

Carole Conahan recently joined the Willamette Art Center team as its new bookkeeper. She succeeds Luke Chicquaye, who resigned in mid-March.

Carole is a former small business owner. She provided bookkeeping services to multiple small businesses while living in California. She brings a commitment to accuracy in financial management and reporting.

Like Megan Mersino, our administrative assistant, and I, Carole is an animal lover. She lives with her adult granddaughter and three large dogs. She volunteers at the Salem-Keizer Senior Center and is a member of a book club. She keeps busy!

Carole will help us build a strong foundation as the WAC moves into its next chapter at our new home. Please join me in welcoming Carole to the WAC.

Lisa Joyce, Executive Director

Thank you, instructors!

We appreciate all of the instructors that have supported WAC over the years especially the 2025 instructors who supported our students during this last term before our big move.

Sue Allen
Jesse Breon
Ann Coskey-Wasserman
Doug Dacar
Dana Field
Fred Hamann
Kelly Matney
Andrea Misbach
Amanda Ohrn
Jim Ransom
KD Rowell
Rollie Smith
Candace Ulbricht

BOARD & STAFF MEMBERS

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Executive Committee

Carla Axtman - President
wacpresident@willametteartcenter.com

Dana Field - Vice President

Josie Hummert - Secretary
wacsecretary@willametteartcenter.com

Wendy Cornelisen - Treasurer

At-Large Board of Directors

Pam Baldwin

Renita Hiebert

Paul Hutter

Amanda Katzenmeyer

STAFF

Lisa Joyce - Executive Director
lisa@willametteartcenter.com

Megan Mersino - Administrative Assistant
megan@willametteartcenter.com

Doug Dacar - Studio Manager
doug@willametteartcenter.com

Don Outland - Lead Monitor

Carole Conahan - Bookkeeper
bookkeeper@willametteartcenter.com

Kelly Matney - Family Clay Coordinator

We're Listening

If you have ideas, questions or concerns feel free to connect with a board member or staff.

If you have a desire to serve WAC as a board member, reach out to Lisa Joyce.

Honoring our History

by Jan Prowse, a proud founder

The Willamette Art Center became a reality in 2006. When the Salem Art Association decided to close its Visual Arts Center (VAC) because of cost, a group of about 13 potters, who frequented the VAC, refused to accept the possibility of not having a place to work. We had already formed a support group for the VAC called “Friends of the Visual Arts.” It only seemed natural to use this name to begin our search for a place to start our own nonprofit arts organization.

We heard that the state fairgrounds might be willing to lease one of its buildings at a reasonable price. So, we jumped on it and everything started to come together. The Salem Art Association gave us wheels, big tables, gas kilns, original glazes, a slab roller, shelving and other equipment that would get us started. We discussed names for the new art center because “Friends of the Visual Arts” did not seem to fit as a name for an arts organization. We decided on “Willamette Art Center.”

We moved into a small building that at one time was a dormitory for 4H and FFA students. About a year after we moved in, the fairgrounds decided to tear that building down because of asbestos. They allowed us to



move into what was the FFA display and demonstration building (the building we just moved out of). It proved to be an awkward situation for a couple of years because the FFA still needed to use the building during fairs. They did not give up the building willingly. It was still needed for about three weeks each year during the county and state fair.

The first year in the building, we had to completely move out of the building into storage containers the fair supplied and then move back in when the fair ended. The second year we crammed everything we could into the room we called the gallery and the rest was moved into a storage container. The third year we did not have to move anything! The FFA displayed their things in the parking area. It was a lot of work for all of us.

During the first two years, we worked on the layout inside. The inside of the building was just one open area except for the office, bathrooms and storage room. We divided it into what it is now. We had to add plumbing and sinks, a water heater, and a lot of electrical outlets and lights. We built the movable carts that the glazes sit in. A lot of people did a lot of work to make the place functional.

The WAC continued to grow and that was good because it has taken many people over the years to make the WAC the successful art center that it is now.



WILLAMETTE ART CENTER

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Newsletter Team | Lisa Joyce, Executive Director — Pam Baldwin, Editor — Josie Hummert, Graphic Design

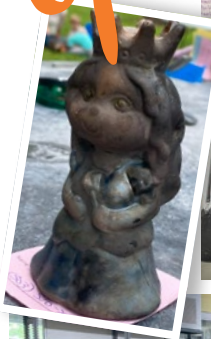
PUTTING THE 'FUN' IN FUNDRAISING

Get Fired Up!, an event modeled after the Artisans' Village raku booth, was held May 31st. Not only did we raku hundreds of pieces, we sold raffle tickets for baskets donated by local community organizations. Our efforts raised \$6,165 for our Reshape Our Community Studio campaign.

We want to thank Gracie's Sweets & Treats truck for joining us so our participants could have a sweet treat while they waited for their piece to be fired.

Thank you to our *Get Fired Up!* committee of Carla Axtman, Josie Hummert, Beth Reilly, Hope Sherman and Rachel Bucci for the work they did to make this event a success. With the success of this event, look for similar events in the future as we settle into the new facility.

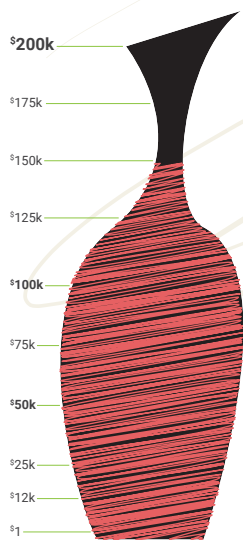
Get Fired Up



RESHAPE OUR COMMUNITY STUDIO



As we continue to raise money to support our new location and efforts to bring more programming to patrons, stay tuned as specific projects and goals are announced.



\$145,003

Watch for updates to our progress vase on the website and social media.

We Want to Hear From You

If you have questions, thoughts, or suggestions, get in touch with Josie Hummert, wacsecretary@willametteartcenter.com or Lisa Joyce, lisa@willametteartcenter.com.

Staying in Touch

Be sure to follow us on socials, sign up for our email list, and stay connected with the website.

Instagram and Facebook

@willametteartcenter

Sign up for email

www.willametteartcenter.com/newsletter

Website

www.willametteartcenter.com

FAMILY CLAY SUNDAY – ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL YEAR

by Kelly Matney

Family Clay wrapped up for the year just before our big move. This summer, we are taking time to reflect and plan exciting new updates to our family clay program. One of our great successes was introducing an early bird hour along with an early bird project. This new addition provided our families with a quieter and smaller space, allowing for more attention from our volunteers. Each early bird project was demonstrated by our youngest Willamette Art Center volunteer. It was delightful to see our little birds gain confidence in working with clay and becoming more adventurous! Thank you to everyone who returned this season to glaze and collect their work. We will be back this Fall once our new studio location opens. Stay tuned for more fresh project ideas and fun for the whole family.



WAC PARTNERS WITH SALEM-KEIZER SCHOOLS

by Kelly Matney

This spring, we successfully introduced clay to students throughout Salem-Keizer Public Schools. With the support of a generous donor and a grant from Assistance League of Salem-Keizer we reached more than 150 elementary students. For many of them, this was their first experience working with clay. At Scott Elementary, first grade students acquired essential ceramic skills and utilized natural resources to incorporate elements of nature into their artwork. They showed enthusiasm for and motivated one another, celebrating their achievements. The students made pinch pots and then impressions were made using local plants, moss, shells, and bark. Meanwhile, fourth grade students at Washington Elementary explored how to express their emotions



through sculpting with extruded forms. They focused on developing their concepts through sketches before translating them into their pieces using coils and carving techniques.

Once items were fired, WAC staff returned for a glazing day. Students speculated on how glaze differs from paint and what colors the glaze would ultimately reveal. They were surprised to discover these glazes melt at 1945 degrees. We aim to connect with even more schools in the upcoming 2025-26 school year.

Are you a teacher or school staff who wants to bring this type of activity into your school? Reach out.

Are you interested in supporting this type of art outreach in schools? Consider a donation to support these types of WAC programs. Contact Lisa, lisa@willametteartcenter.com.

Monitor Volunteers Extraordinaire!

Thank you to all the people over the years who volunteered their time to be a monitor. The WAC could not have opened its doors without their excellent commitment to its success. The 2025 monitors are:

Kevin Belleque
Jennifer Beugli
Holly Chamberlain
Dana Field
Greg and Margrethe Gregg
Renita Hiebert
Claudia Hill
Emily Jackson
Julliette Jessop
Sabin Johnson
Amanda Katzenmeyer
Maija Kawamura
Christine Lamoureux
Kelly Matney
Paxton Moon
Diane Munley
Amanda Ohrn
Jan Prowse
KD Rowell
Julie Vogel

Apple Bakers - Yes, Please!

Submitted by Karin Kayfes, student

"It's not my first class with Rollie, so I already knew he's a great teacher and an encouraging builder of 'a community of makers,' but last Thursday he really went above and beyond. Several weeks ago, he taught us to make ceramic apple bakers. A few people in the class had never heard of baked apples, so Rollie explained, and we went on to make them. Then last Thursday rolled around, and Rollie brought in all eight apple bakers that he had made so we could see all the different glazes and inside each was a baked apple, each with different toppings - one with vanilla sugar and currants, another with brown sugar, cinnamon, and oats. He had notes with the ingredients for the different varieties of apples and toppings. He invited us to enjoy them. It was such a treat and a delight. What a gift it was, and it's just one example of the joy and community happening inside the WAC."



Class Pictures

