

Imagine the Future

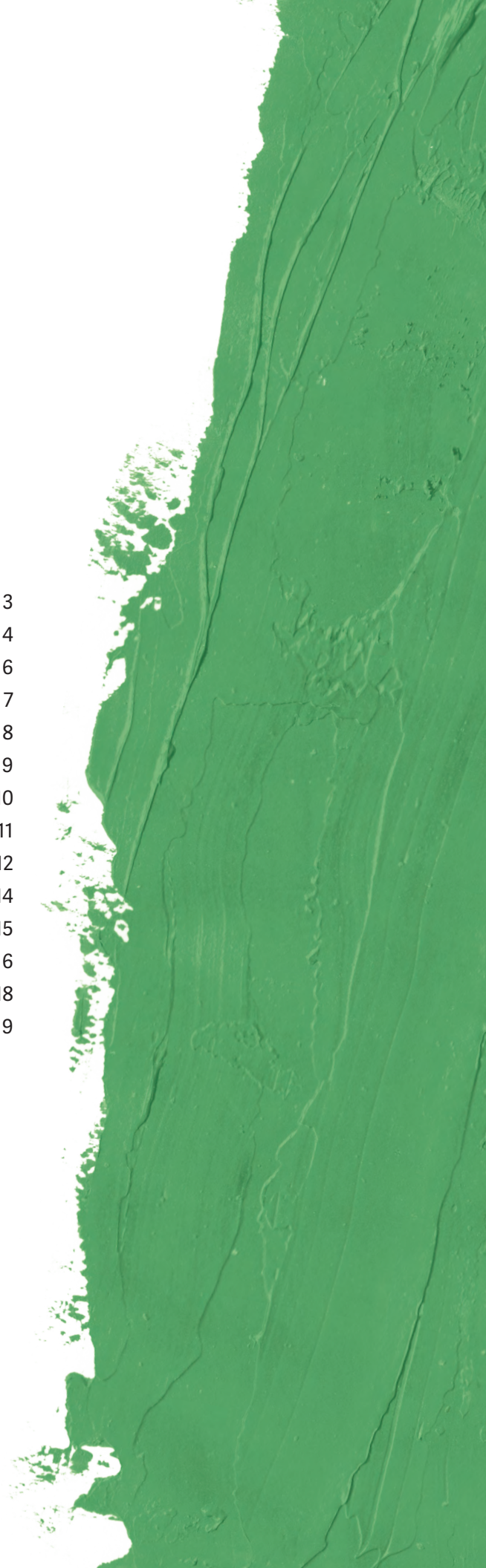
2023–2024 CELEBRATION REPORT



SUFFOLK CENTER *for cultural arts*

Contents

A Message from Tom Yannuzzi, PhD	3
Rewind – A Celebration of 2023–2024.....	4
Capital Campaign	6
Donor Spotlight - The Birdsong Family	7
Instructor Spotlight - Beth Blanchard	8
Would You Believe?	9
Instructor Spotlight – Alicia Edwards.....	10
Artists in the Schools.....	11
Our Members and Donors.....	12
Volunteer Spotlight – Amanda Newsome.....	14
Flashback - The 2024 Imagine Gala.....	15
Not to Brag, But... ..	16
A Message from Our Board Chair, Tim Daniel.....	18
Imagine Yourself at the Center	19





A Message from Tom Yannuzzi, PhD

Welcome to our inaugural Celebration Report

Welcome to our inaugural Celebration Report, in which we highlight the work done throughout the past year at the Suffolk Center for Cultural Arts. I am very proud of what we've accomplished and, more importantly, the impact we've had on our community, especially the youth of our community. I am personally committed to the mission of the Center to cultivate and promote creative and performing arts for all residents and visitors through programs and education. I am especially committed to creating access to our programs and educational experiences. Access to the arts and the power it has to unearth our shared humanity is essential for any healthy community, and I am honored to steward the Suffolk Center's role in keeping the arts alive in downtown Suffolk.

In this inaugural edition, you will see that our work doesn't just occur within our walls, through performances, exhibitions, and classes, but now extends to our outside grounds and beyond. We are especially proud of the outreach work we are doing with our schools and youth groups throughout the region.

If you are a supporter of the Suffolk Center, I want to extend a sincere THANK YOU for helping us accomplish the work represented throughout this report. Your support does matter and does make a difference! I encourage you to imagine yourself with us, building community through the arts, knowing that it CAN be reality! Be it through your time, talent, treasure, or advocacy, join us in creating a thriving arts community in Downtown Suffolk and all Western Tidewater. I hope to see you at the Suffolk Center soon. Until then, be well, stay safe, and enjoy the read!

Most Sincerely,

Thomas J. Yannuzzi, Ph.D.
Executive Director and CEO
Suffolk Center for Cultural Arts

514 Hours of interactive movement and dance classes conducted for adults with disabilities

192 Senior citizens, in partnership with Suffolk Parks and Recreation, participated in art classes

9 Dynamic theater performances graced the stage

8 Visual art exhibitions hosted

32 Adult art courses offered

328 Art education classes completed



Mr. Peanut Statue was designed and donated by Schadel Sheet Metal Works, Inc.

Rewind 2023-2024

4 Children's summer camps conducted

2,803 Children engaged

9 Full length movies shown

7,528 Youth contact hours achieved



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**"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can
change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."**

– Margaret Mead

The Birdsong Family

DONOR SPOTLIGHT

When you go to the Birdsong Corporation website, you will find the statement below:

Following the advice of Mark Twain – “Put all of your eggs in one basket—and watch that basket!” – we hold a singular focus at Birdsong. While we may use custom bags instead of baskets, you can count on our commitment to peanuts and peanuts only. From planting to harvesting to shelling and shipping, we closely monitor every peanut’s journey to make sure that only those of the highest quality are shipped to our customers.

While it is certainly true that the Birdsong Corporation has an unwavering commitment to producing a high-quality product, they have another unwavering commitment about which anyone from Suffolk and its surrounding areas are well aware—community building!

Plain and simple, the Suffolk Center for Cultural Arts, as well as many other non-profits, community programs, and community-based initiatives, would not exist if it were not for the unwavering commitment that the Birdsong Corporation and, in fact, the entire Birdsong family has to supporting its community. Words cannot express the amount of gratitude we have for their kindness and generosity!

More impressively, the Birdsong Corporation’s commitment to community does not end in Suffolk and the Western Tidewater region. Through their work with Peanut Proud, Inc. and Battle Against Hunger, they continue to build healthy communities around the world. In fact, their commitment to sustainability

demonstrates their focus on the world as a shared community; one in which we not only care about each other, but about the land and resources that allow us to co-exist in a healthy, productive manner.

Our first edition of SCCA’s Celebration Report celebrates the Birdsong Corporation and the entire Birdsong family for their unwavering commitment to community building. Suffolk, the Western Tidewater region, the US and, in fact, the entire world would not be the same if it were not for the compassion and generosity started in 1914 by Thomas Henry Birdsong, Sr., and now carried out by five generations of Birdsong leadership.

We are most proud to have such a compassionate and caring organization based in our city.

THANK YOU!



Capital Campaign Committee

They may not have changed the world, but they completely transformed the Suffolk Center for Cultural Arts. Our dedicated Capital Campaign Committee, Chaired by Mac Birdsong, along with Honorary Chairs Bob Aston and George Birdsong, inspired our community to support a much-needed renovation of the 100-year-old, 78,000 square foot building. Every window—205 to be exact—was replaced; exterior walls were sealed and painted; floors were replaced; lighting and sound were upgraded; the pergola walkway was covered and graded; new outdoor space was created; the restaurant was renovated, and so much more!

We are now ready for another century of service to our community! Thank you to all of our donors!

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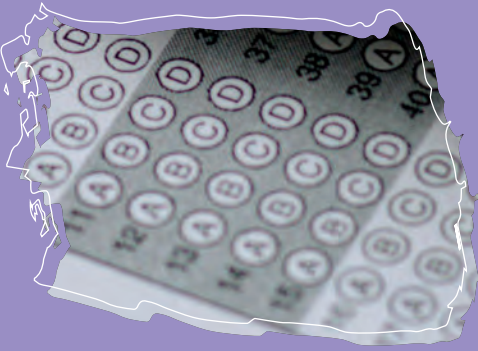
Instructor Spotlight

In 2011, Beth Blanchard embarked on a journey into the world of oil painting at the Suffolk Center for Cultural Arts. Under the expert guidance of Robert Lemasters, teacher of the Suffolk Center’s “Joy of Painting” class, Beth found herself immersed in a realm of colors and creativity. Though she had dabbled in art during her youth, this return to artistic expression as an adult proved to be a profound and life-changing experience. As she delved deeper into her artistic journey, she discovered a calling beyond her own creative pursuits. “Besides my faith and family, art became one of the most defining parts of my life,” Beth says.

In 2019, Lemasters sadly passed away. Beth had a good relationship with her fellow students in the “Joy of Painting” class and had been helping fill in when the instructor wasn’t there, so she transitioned easily to the role of teacher. “It seemed that my artistic journey had come full circle,” Beth reminisced. With grace and dedication, she now guides others on their own artistic paths.

Today, Beth welcomes new and seasoned oil painters to learn alongside her and share in her artistic journey. “Joy of Painting” meets on Thursday evenings. Beth also teaches art to homeschool students and at Suffolk Christian Academy.





Two-thirds of public-school teachers believed that the fine arts are among subjects getting crowded out of the school day by a focus on math and English. ²

Students who take four years of arts and music classes score an average of over 150 points higher on the SAT than students who take only one-half year or less. ¹



Low-income students highly engaged in the arts are twice as likely to graduate college as their peers with no arts education. ³



Would You Believe?

A recent study showed that arts education experiences reduce the proportion of students in school receiving disciplinary infractions by 3.6 percent. ⁴

Arts unify communities. 72% of Americans believe “the arts unify our communities regardless of age, race, and ethnicity” and 73% agree that the arts “helps me understand other cultures better” — a perspective observed across all demographic and economic categories. ⁵



Arts have social impact. University of Pennsylvania researchers have demonstrated that a high concentration of the arts in a city leads to higher civic engagement, more social cohesion, higher child welfare, and lower poverty rates. ⁵



1. <https://reports.collegeboard.org/media/pdf/2016-total-group-sat-suite-assessments-annual-report.pdf>, p. 9
2. <https://www.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/cc-learning-less-mar12.pdf>, p. 1
3. <https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/Arts-At-Risk-Youth.pdf>
4. <https://kinder.rice.edu/research/investigating-causal-effects-arts-education-experiences-experimental-evidence-houstons-arts>
5. <https://www.americansforthearts.org/by-program/reports-and-data/legislation-policy/naappd/10-reasons-to-support-the-arts-in-2021>

Alicia Edwards

Instructor Spotlight

Alicia Edwards plays a pivotal role in the Suffolk Center for Cultural Arts dance program, and this year, she shone. This year's theme was designed to foster children's awareness of the diversity of people in their community and the world. Alicia dove into this challenge and designed one-of-a-kind dance classes that were unique for each theme and creatively named to reflect the spirit of each cultural celebration. For instance, when the children were celebrating International Day of Peace, Alicia developed an anti-bullying line dance, allowing students to learn and embody these principles through motion and physical expression.

Alicia Edwards began her dance passion at the age of 5 in Yonkers, NY, taking up ballet, jazz, and tap. For over 15 years, Alicia has performed as a student and teacher in various locations all over the United

States. Over the past five years, Alicia has developed and taught classes ranging from hula to line dancing to ballroom dancing at the Suffolk Center for Cultural Arts. With a belief that lifelong learning is essential for all, she began to expand her repertoire to include dance forms such as belly dance, African traditional, African modern, and Mexican folkloric.

Alicia is loved everywhere she goes, by the students, adults, administrators, and parents with whom she interacts. Alicia has helped expand our cultural dance programming beyond what we dreamed possible a year ago. We are delighted to have Alicia on our Artist Instructor team at the Suffolk Center for Cultural Arts and look forward to more of her creative contributions this upcoming year.





The Suffolk Center's unwavering commitment to community arts education and cultural awareness is truly remarkable. It's difficult to express just how much we value this program and the positive impact it has on our students.

– Dr. Joleen E. Neighbours, Coordinator of Fine and Performing Arts, Suffolk Public Schools.

Artists in the Schools

An innovative blend of arts and education

Once again, the Suffolk Center for Cultural Arts' Artists in the Schools program brought artists into schools in Suffolk, allowing students to participate in the arts through interactive, hands-on learning experiences. Our award-winning Artists in the Schools program offers workshops that are geared to our K-12 student population, and that provide holistic arts and humanities education through the arts. Each program contains the elements of dance, movement, and art. They can be tailored to any grade level and are free to all schools.

The theme of this year's program was "Connecting with our Community." Nine celebrations were studied to give children a sense about the many cultures represented within their communities.

These celebrations were:

- ▶ Humanitarian Day
- ▶ International Day of Peace
- ▶ Indigenous Peoples Day
- ▶ International Day for People with Disabilities
- ▶ Chinese Zhonghe Festival Celebration
- ▶ International Women in History Month
- ▶ World Autism Acceptance Month
- ▶ Cinco de Mayo
- ▶ World Environment Day

Artists in the Schools served eleven public elementary schools and provided art enrichment classes at Nansemond-Suffolk Academy.

Your donation is an investment in people and community

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creating access to the power of the arts for children and adults.

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In memory of Bayla Goldberg, Suffolk High School
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We are only as strong as the support we receive from you.

Information as of June 14, 2024.

Amanda Newsome

Volunteer Spotlight

There is no questioning the importance of our volunteers. The fact is, we would have a hard time operating without them. They are our unsung heroes, and while we appreciate each and every one of our volunteers, we want to celebrate Amanda Newsome in this report.

Amanda has dedicated nearly two years to volunteering at the Suffolk Center for Cultural Arts. Hailing from Hawaii, Amanda has lived and travelled across the country. Five years ago, she and her husband, Gary, decided to plant roots in Suffolk; closer to Lake Prince Wood, where he is the Director of Spiritual Life.

In 2022, Amanda began her journey with the Suffolk Center. After being disappointed to have missed out on a sold out show, she was determined not to miss out on future opportunities, Amanda delved deeper into the Center's offerings, which coincidentally coincided with her growing desire to give back to her Suffolk community. Not only did Amanda learn about the opportunities for classes and performances at the Center, but she also learned about the Suffolk Center's important role in the community and that she could be part of it by volunteering.

These days, Amanda's welcoming face is a fixture at every performance, greeting and assisting guests as a volunteer. Amanda also volunteers at the art gallery opening receptions and student matinees. You will also spot her lending a hand at special events, such as the 2024 Imagine Gala, which she thinks "truly outdid itself this year! The atmosphere was electric, with restaurants offering a delightful 'progressive dinner' and entertainment echoing throughout the venue."

While Amanda has always had a passion for working with children, her own grandchildren are now grown. This year, therefore, she's trying something new: volunteering at SCCA's summer camp!





Flashback— The 2024 Imagine Gala

On Saturday, February 24th, over 200 guests indulged in a night of creativity, live music, and local flavors as the Suffolk Center hosted the 2024 Imagine Gala annual fundraiser, a gala like no other.

Guests danced the night away to music by the LittKeys and delighted in a culinary journey presented by nine Suffolk independent restaurants. Patrons were captivated by the incredible talents of local artists as they meandered through the Suffolk Center.

Funds Raised from the event's sponsorships, ticket sales, auction sales, and "Raise the Paddle" event supported SCCA's arts education and community outreach programs. To date, the Imagine Gala is the Suffolk Center's largest netting fundraising event.

Thank you to our Gala Sponsors

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Not to Brag, but...

Our people are the best!

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This page is dedicated to our "Steel Magnolia," Betsy Brothers, whose visions and insights continue to flourish and bloom throughout the Suffolk Center.

We have created the best outdoor performance venue in downtown Suffolk!

We have the BEST volunteers... over 50 of them!

A reimagined gift shop is coming soon.

Coastal
VIRGINIAMag.com

Best Art Gallery Award - 2024
Best Performance Space Award - 2023

Suffolk NEWS-HERALD

Best Art Exhibit - Gold
Best Live Theater - Gold
Best Entertainment Venue - Gold
Best Art Gallery - Silver
Best Family Entertainment - Bronze

Board Member, Charles Pond, and wife, Juanita, honored for outstanding philanthropy by Chowan University.

Former Board Member Mac Birdsong, and wife Sandra, named First Citizens of Suffolk.

Board Member Joleen Neighbours, Ph.D., was named Outstanding Administrator of the Year for the Virginia Music Education Association.

We have two new morning TV stars on staff!

Arts Kitchen

Our newly renovated restaurant, Arts Kitchen, opens with great accolades.

We have the BEST event venue!

A Message from Tim Daniel

Board Chair, Suffolk Center for Cultural Arts

It is indeed an honor to chair the Board of such a magnificent (and vital) institution. As Chair, I see firsthand how the quality of life in Suffolk and our neighboring communities continues to benefit from the work we are doing together through the Center. The fact that you received this report indicates you are very likely already an important part of this good work. If this is the case, THANK YOU. Your continued support helps keep access to the arts alive in downtown Suffolk. Remember, we are imagining big things happening through the Center and we cannot do it without you.

If you take anything from this report, please consider:

- 1. Suffolk and the entire Western Tidewater region is a better place to be because of the Suffolk Center for Cultural Arts.**
- 2. The Suffolk Center is a better place when it supports and is supported by the various communities that represent who we are as a city and a region, and who we want to be as a nation and a world.**
- 3. And finally, perhaps most importantly: The Suffolk Center partners with public and private schools, homeschool groups, and community organizations to provide creative and often transformational art education experiences for all youth, particularly those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Thanks in large part to funding from people like you, we can offer many of these enriching experiences free of charge to children who would otherwise never have the opportunity.**

Again, thank you for your support, past, present and future. YOU make the difference.

Sincerely,



Tim Daniel
Board Chair
Suffolk Center for Cultural Arts



Imagine Yourself at the Suffolk Center.

Become a Member

Make an Unrestricted Donation

Become a Volunteer

Come and Visit Us

Enroll in a Class

Attend a Performance or Event

Plan Your Next Corporate, Organizational, or Family Event Here

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Learn more



Contact us

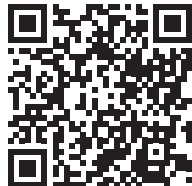
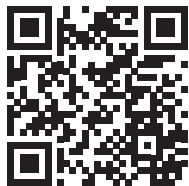
Reasons Why You Should Join Us

- ▶ You can use your inner sleuth and solve a murder mystery or two!
- ▶ You deserve a date night!
- ▶ You can party like it's 1999.
- ▶ You have great taste, and you know it!
- ▶ You need to just "let it go"!
- ▶ You can be a Princess, if only for a day!
- ▶ You will get jazzed with live music.
- ▶ You can laugh until you cry!
- ▶ You know two pianos are better than one!
- ▶ You make a difference when you support the Center, and your community will say "thanks!"





Suffolk Center for Cultural Arts is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization in partnership with Virginia Commission for the Arts and National Endowment for the Arts. Donations are tax-deductible.



Suffolkcenter.org
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