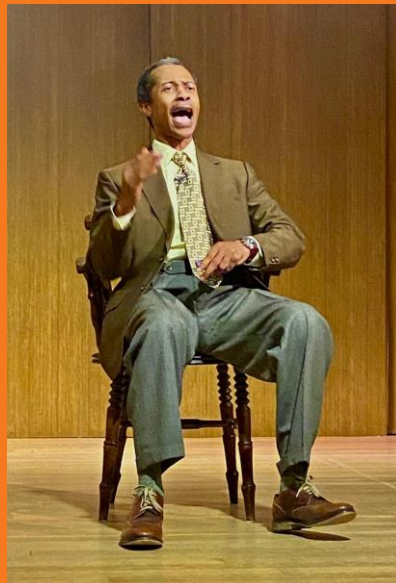




ARTS AND HUMANITIES COMMITTEE

2023-2024 ANNUAL REPORT



“Thanks so much for the opportunity to perform in the *Takoma Park Arts* series. From the moment we arrived, we felt so welcomed and loved the experience.”

- Carmiya Weinraub, Interfaith Comedy producer

“City arts grants have helped transform the Takoma ARTery from an innovative arts project into a credible, vibrant artist community that didn’t previously exist in Takoma Park.”

- ARTery co-founder Eleanor Landstreet

“The Bird Calls Phone never would’ve happened without the City of Takoma Park’s public art program, and now it’s received media coverage from across the world. Pardon my squawk, but thank you Takoma Park!”

- Bird Calls Phone creator David Schulman

TAKOMA PARK ARTS AND HUMANITIES COMMITTEE

2023-2024 ANNUAL REPORT

Takoma Park is recognized as one of the most attractive places to live in the D.C. area due to its strong sense of community, vibrant cultures, and celebration of the arts. Our creative community includes musicians and poets, artists and sculptors; writers and researchers, and countless others who contribute to the local economy and shape Takoma Park’s reputation as an arts-friendly city.

The volunteer Arts and Humanities Committee works with the City’s Arts and Humanities Division to organize the [Takoma Park Arts event series](#) and various public art projects that meet people where they live and work.

During the 2023-24 fiscal year, 14 *Takoma Park Arts* events were held at the Takoma Park Community Center, including film screenings, theater, art exhibitions, dance performances, and even some stand-up comedy. More than 1,500 people attended these free events, including some standing-room only audiences. Recordings of previous events have garnered more than 70,000 views on our [YouTube channel](#), and more than 2,800 people have subscribed to the [Takoma Park Arts e-newsletter](#)

The racial, ethnic, and cultural identities of our wider community have been celebrated in some events, including a one-man play about poet Langston Hughes, a documentary about Cambodian circus performers, a traditional Indian dance performance, and an Interfaith Comedy night with comedians of different religions. City funding provided honorariums totaling more than \$6,000 for performers in the *Takoma Park Arts* series, and audience members contributed more than \$2,000 in donations with all proceeds benefiting the performers.

Takoma Park Poet Laureate Taylor Johnson and his wife Eizabeth launched a new Green Way Reading Series with poetry readings featuring a diverse collection of poets at People’s Book bookstore in downtown Takoma Park.

Arts and Humanities Coordinator Brendan Smith secured more than \$17,000 in grant funds from the Maryland State Arts Council that will mostly be used for a new sculptural installation at the Takoma Park Recreation Center. Other ongoing public art projects include expansion of the sidewalk poetry program, restocking of art supplies in the Free Little Art Gallery, and some upcoming pop-up arts events using a custom electric cargo trike.

Our public art projects have attracted widespread media coverage from across the world, including the *Washington Post*, NPR, NBC 4, ABC 7, French TV, the CBC/Radio Canada, and other media outlets. We’re proud of this long list of accomplishments and look forward to continuing these programs and new initiatives in the coming years.

- Arts and Humanities Committee Chair John W. Warren

Takoma Park Arts and Humanities Committee

Rickey Anderson	Taylor Johnson
Todd Carter	Linette Lander
Susan Comfort	Joshua Vickery
Jose Luis Diaz	John W. Warren
Catherine Goode	

Arts and Humanities Division Staff

Arts and Humanities Coordinator Brendan Smith

ART EXHIBITIONS

Art exhibitions at the Takoma Park Community Center have celebrated the talented work of artists from across the D.C. area. The *Celebrating Sligo Creek* exhibition featured two photographers and a mixed-media artist whose work was inspired by the beauty and wildlife of Sligo Creek, sharing both their artistic visions and an environmental message about this important tributary and watershed. Three artists shared their vibrant abstract artwork in the *Curving Lines* show, reveling in textured surfaces, thousands of painted dots, and geometric explorations.



FILM SCREENINGS

Our film screening series showcases the skills and diversity of local filmmakers, including documentaries about Cambodian circus performers, the politics of criminal justice reform, and the challenges of rural life in Mongolia. Keyboardist Peter Tavalin also performed to a full house with a live improvised score for the classic silent comedy *Steamboat Bill, Jr.* starring Buster Keaton.

PEOPLE'S BOOK PRESENTS

GREEN WAY READING VOL. 8

Poetry Reading
Sun. April 7th @ 5-7 PM

The Green Way Reading Series

POETRY READINGS

Takoma Park Poet Laureate Taylor Johnson and his wife Elizabeth launched a new monthly *Green Way Reading Series* at People's Book bookstore in downtown Takoma Park. The series features emerging and established poets in interdisciplinary, intergenerational, and cross-cultural dialogues.

TAKOMA PARK ARTS PERFORMANCES

The *Takoma Park Arts* series offers a vital opportunity for performers from a wide spectrum of genres and backgrounds by providing a state-of-the-art venue in the Takoma Park Community Center auditorium, extensive promotion, and professional recordings aired on a local cable station and the *Takoma Park Arts* [YouTube channel](#).



The City's Arts and Humanities Division pays honorariums to performers to support their livelihoods, and audience donations are collected. The series highlights the racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity of our city and the D.C. area. In celebration of Black History Month, actor Daron Stewart performed to a full house with his one-man play *Soul of Langston* honoring the life and legacy of Harlem Renaissance poet Langston Hughes.

With intricate rhythmic footwork, lyrical movements and elaborate costumes, the Mayur Dance Company shared both ancient and contemporary Indian dance traditions. An intergenerational performance by the Percussion Discussion ensembles brought lively tap dances to the stage, and Franglais played an eclectic blend of gypsy and American jazz.



PUBLIC ART PROJECTS

Public art projects across Takoma Park share art in its many forms with local residents and visitors by taking art out of museums and galleries and directly to city residents in their neighborhoods. The city's one-and-only Bird Calls Phone continues to attract widespread media coverage, and a new grant was provided to the Takoma ARTerY arts group to support their storefront window displays, online artist directory, and pop-up events.



BIRD CALLS PHONE

Installed in 2016, the Bird Calls Phone keeps on chirping and delighting city residents and visitors. Local artist David Schulman reengineered an old pay phone to play recordings of local bird calls with info about the birds from local residents. The unique public art project was featured recently in the *Washington Post*, which led to more coverage by NPR and many other media outlets. People from across the country also have inquired about how they can build their own Bird Calls Phones for their communities.

FREE LITTLE ART GALLERY

The Arts and Humanities Division partnered with the Operation ARTS Foundation to create Takoma Park's first Free Little Art Gallery that was installed near the corner of Maple Avenue and Lincoln Avenue. People of all ages can make art to leave in the little galleries or take art home that they like. The design celebrates our local Ethiopian community with paintings of traditional Ethiopian woven reed bowls and burlap sections highlighting Ethiopia's centuries-old connections to coffee. City staff regularly restock the Free Little Art Gallery with free art supplies so everyone can experience the joy of making their own artwork.



SIDEWALK POETRY PROJECT

More than 125 local residents ranging from 6 years old to seniors entered their original poems in our sidewalk poetry contest. A committee of local poets chose 10 children and 10 adults as winners, who received a \$100 prize and a chance to have their poem imprinted in a local sidewalk. Seven of the 20 poems have been stamped so far, and an [online map](#) connects the poems in a 5-mile loop to encourage walking and biking. More poems will be stamped during upcoming sidewalk construction and repairs.



POP-UP ARTS CARGO TRIKE

A bright orange custom electric cargo trike rolled over to the Crossroads Farmers Market last year for a pop-up artmaking event with local children. The trike features the city logo, a large umbrella, and the word “IMAGINE” printed in English, Spanish, and Amharic. The trike will be used for more pop-up art, poetry, and library events in Takoma Park.



TAKOMA ARTERY GRANT

The City provided a third grant to the Takoma ARTery artist collective to support their work in building community and opportunities for local artists, including storefront window art displays, pop-up art exhibitions at local businesses, and an online artist directory. Some ARTery members will be featured in an upcoming exhibition in the gallery spaces at the Takoma Park Community Center.



