



**OCTAGON**  
CENTER FOR THE ARTS



**Annual Report**  
**2023 - 2024**



## Our Mission

The Octagon Center for the Arts encourages interaction and creative self-expression by providing inclusive opportunities and spaces that bring people together through art.

\*Revised in 2019.



## OCTAGON STAFF

Heather Johnson  
*Executive Director*

Beth Weninger  
*Education Director*

Terrie Hoefler  
*Octagon Shop Manager*

Casey Bridgham  
*Gallery Director &  
Communications Director*

Kristen Greteman  
*Business of Art Coordinator*

Theresa Warren  
*Office Manager*

Laura Teske  
*Outreach Coordinator*

Katie DuVal Mihelich  
*Gallery Assistant*

*Octagon Shop Assistants:*  
Josh McCunn  
Teddy Stark

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Heather Lanning  
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# The Octagon Center for the Arts

Annual Report

July 2023 – June 2024

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*Front and Back Cover art by Christian Vandelaar*

*Page 21-22 art by Brooke Hartmann*



# DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

2023-2024 was quite the year of change at the Octagon. The 3<sup>rd</sup> floor renovation project to create 5 private studio spaces for artists was completed! Special thanks to the City of Ames for the Arts Capital Grant Program and the amazing donors who made this project a reality. Welcoming artists into the Octagon to use the studios aligns with the Octagon mission to “encourage interaction and creative self-expression by providing inclusive opportunities and spaces that bring people together through art.”

One of our goals at the Octagon is to use art as a way to connect with people and create community. This past May we held our first Art Sale. It was a great resource for people to pass along artwork as they redecorated or were downsizing. The public was able to provide new homes for the artwork at reasonable prices, and funds were used to help support art education programs. We will plan to bring back this event in Spring of 2025.

I want to acknowledge our wonderful staff, who pour their heart and energy into all of the programming here at the Octagon. Observing their passion for the arts is truly inspiring. We were thrilled to welcome Laura Teske this last year to serve as our Outreach Coordinator. The Octagon receives many requests for art outreach opportunities and Laura will greatly assist us with managing community engagement events.

We are excited for new opportunities to provide art experiences in the coming fiscal year. I welcome you to sign up for a class, volunteer for an event, view an exhibit or purchase some great gifts in the Octagon shop.

Thank you again for your continued support for the Octagon Center for the Arts.



With gratitude,  
Heather Johnson  
Executive Director



# 58 YEARS OF THE OCTAGON!



The Octagon Center for the Arts began as the dream for a special place to foster the arts in Ames, IA. In Late 1965, four incredible women came together to make their dream a reality. They rented the center's namesake octagonal house (shown below), drew up a logo like the one to the left, and scheduled classes and exhibits for the up

coming year. On January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1966, with the help of many artists and volunteers, they opened the doors to an astounding 500+ person crowd! But It wasn't long before they outgrew their octagonal art center.

And we haven't stopped growing since! Though the octagon house no longer stands and times have changed, the Octagon Center for the Arts continues to be an integral part of arts education in Ames. With the addition of both co-working and private studio spaces, more class and workshop opportunities, and several new local artists displayed in the shop, we are inspired every day by our four founders who had the vision and the passion to create something new for our community.

We're increasing the number of gallery exhibits, free community and outreach events, and welcoming more artists into our co-working and private studios. As we head into our 59<sup>th</sup> year, we will continue to provide impactful and engaging programs for our community.



## Our Wonderful Founders

The Octagon was the vision of four women dedicated to promoting the arts in Ames: Veronika Ruedenberg, Martha Benson, Priscilla Sage, and Janet Harris Squires.

(pictured left to right).

# THIRD FLOOR

## The Co-working Studio!

At the beginning of the Third Floor Initiative in 2018, the Octagon decided that our Main Gallery's location on the 3rd floor as well as its large size was underutilized as simply a gallery space. We could do much more to support our area artists! One of the very first phases of the Initiative was to re-imagine the Main Gallery as a co-working studio.

It's now been three years that we have offered studio space in our Co-Working Studio. By keeping the original open floor plan, there is now potential for up to eight studio spaces along with a large, open communal work area for shared and collaborative work.

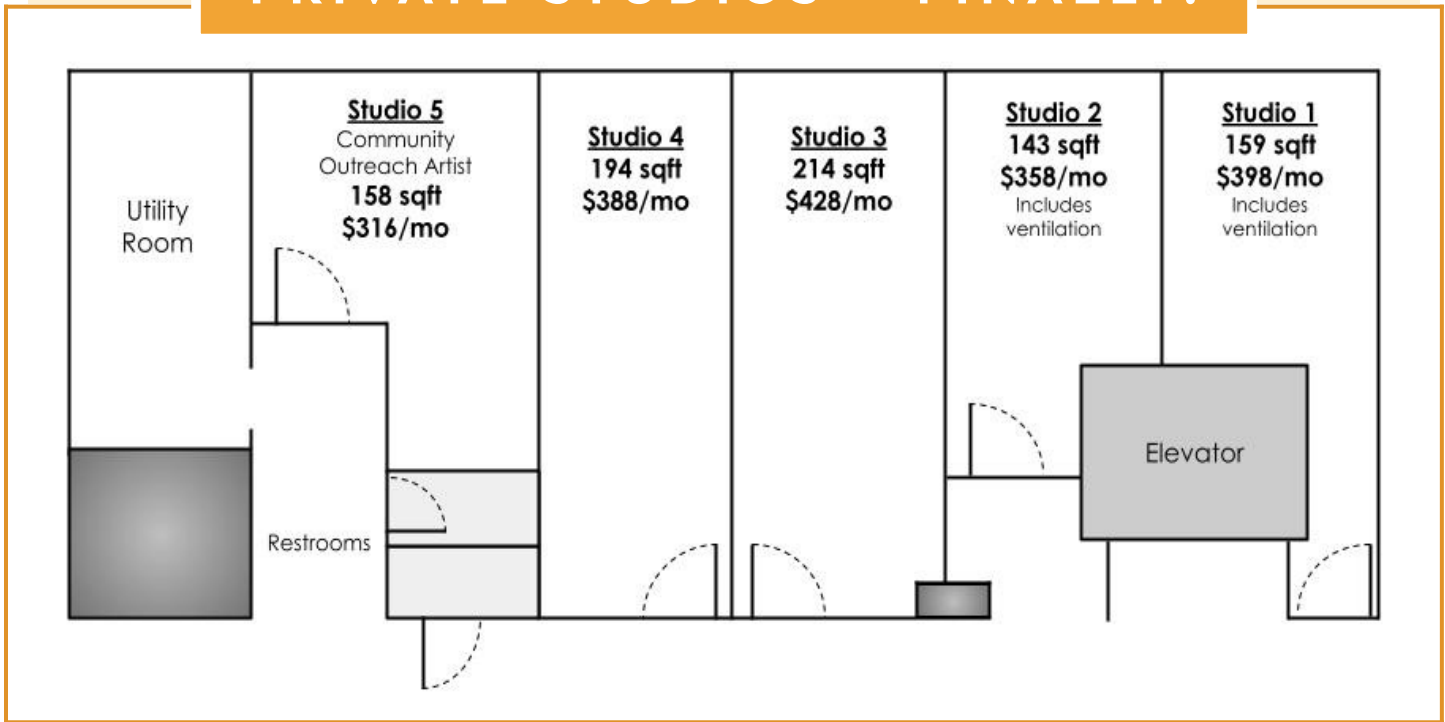


During the past year, the Co-working Studio has been home to five graduate students from the Iowa State University College of Design Integrated Visuals Arts program. These emerging artists are in their final semesters and we are so proud and grateful to be able to provide them studio space at this exciting time in their careers!



# ARTIST STUDIOS

## PRIVATE STUDIOS - FINALLY!



## Private Artist Studios!

We are so excited to be able to finally offer five new studio spaces to our local artists! These studios range from 143 to 214 sqft and have 24/7 access with individually locking doors, ample outlet access, dimmable overhead LED lights, and large north facing windows. Two of the studios are equipped with independent ventilation units that are able to accommodate artists whose medium of choice might require higher ventilation, such as oil painting.

Studio #5 will be home to a Community Outreach artist. These artists will rotate out every 6 months, and will have a focus on community engagement and be involved with leading and organizing outreach events and workshops.



# COMMUNITY GALLERY

This last year has simply flown by! In the gallery, it's been a whirlwind of show openings, receptions, gallery changes, and wall repairs. In August 2023, Katie DuVal Mihelich joined us as a gallery intern, but we quickly realized the incredible talent and passion she brought with her and we couldn't do without her. To my delight and relief, just a few months later Katie accepted a gallery assistant position. She has been instrumental when it comes to getting an exhibition prepared, I quite literally could not have gotten through the busy gallery season without her.

Each year we always want to try to improve upon the previous gallery season. Last year we added the Octagon Shop Winter Market into the annual mix, with real success! Then in May 2024, we implemented a new group show: the Iowa State Integrated Visual Arts Exhibition featuring the works of 11 MFA students.

Looking to next year already, I'm excited to implement a new schedule and flow to the gallery exhibitions. This upcoming gallery season, we'll be adding another group show, similar to the annual Octagonal exhibition in March, but with a narrowed "theme". There will also be 2 additional show slots, resulting in a total of 14 show slots. I cannot wait to see how it all unfolds!

-- Casey Bridgham, Gallery & Communications Director





## Our Gallery Assistant: Katie DuVal Mihelich

December 2023 – Present

Born and raised in rural Iowa, Katie DuVal Mihelich holds an MFA in Integrated Visual Arts with an emphasis in jewelry and metalsmithing from Iowa State University. She is a certified Gemological Institute of America Applied Jewelry Professional. Her work has been featured in *Midwest Metalsmiths*, New York Jewelry Week in New York City, and exhibited in national juried shows.



11

Shows in our  
Community Gallery

334

Exhibited Artists in  
Solo & Group Exhibits

## '23 - '24 COMMUNITY GALLERY SEASON

ARTIST	EXHIBIT TITLE	OPENING – CLOSING DATES
Various Member Artists	3 <sup>rd</sup> Annual Member Show	June 26 – July 22, 2023
Lisa Lockman	<i>Misplaced and Lost</i>	July 31 – August 26, 2023
Central Iowa Textile Artists	<i>Crossroads</i>	September 5 – September 30, 2023
Jen Hem & Julie Russell-Stewart	<i>Intersection of Parallel</i>	October 9 – November 4, 2023
Ethan Edverson & Kimberlee Rocca	<i>Uncontainable Meanderings and Affinities</i>	December 18, 2023 – January 13, 2024
Antonia Ruppert	<i>The Music in My HeART</i>	January 22 – February 24, 2024
Various Juried Artists	Octagonal: The All Media Show	February 29 – March 30, 2024
Various Student Artists	Elem/MS/HS Annual Student Show	April 8 – April 20, 2024
Various MFA Artists	ISU Integrated Visual Arts MFA Exhibition	May 1 – May 9, 2024
Various Member Artists	4 <sup>th</sup> Annual Member Show	May 20 – June 15, 2024
Nick Gadbois	<i>American Oddities</i>	June 24 – July 18, 2024

# THE OCTAGON SHOP

Once again Ames, the surrounding communities, and our fabulous members have chosen to support small businesses! Our fiscal year did not beat the previous 2 years in sales, but it was still clearly a strong year, graph shown to the right, as we once again topped \$100,000 in gross sales. The COVID pandemic was terrible and scary, and it is still with us, but we're continue to come together to share beauty with the world. We are so thankful for our artists and our community!

Speaking of our artists, this year we have nearly 190 artists that represented in the Shop, that is a lot of artists! We're so grateful to be a retail home for some many, but due to our limited physical space in the Shop, beginning in October 2024, we will only be jurying once per year for artists who'd like to consign.

We've also very lucky to bring Laura Teske on as staff. She is now extending into other areas at the Octagon, but her help in the Shop has been incredible and monumental! Her eye for merchandising and work on cycling the shelves with new items from our artists has given the Shop a fresh new look.

-- Terrie Hoefler, Octagon Shop Manager



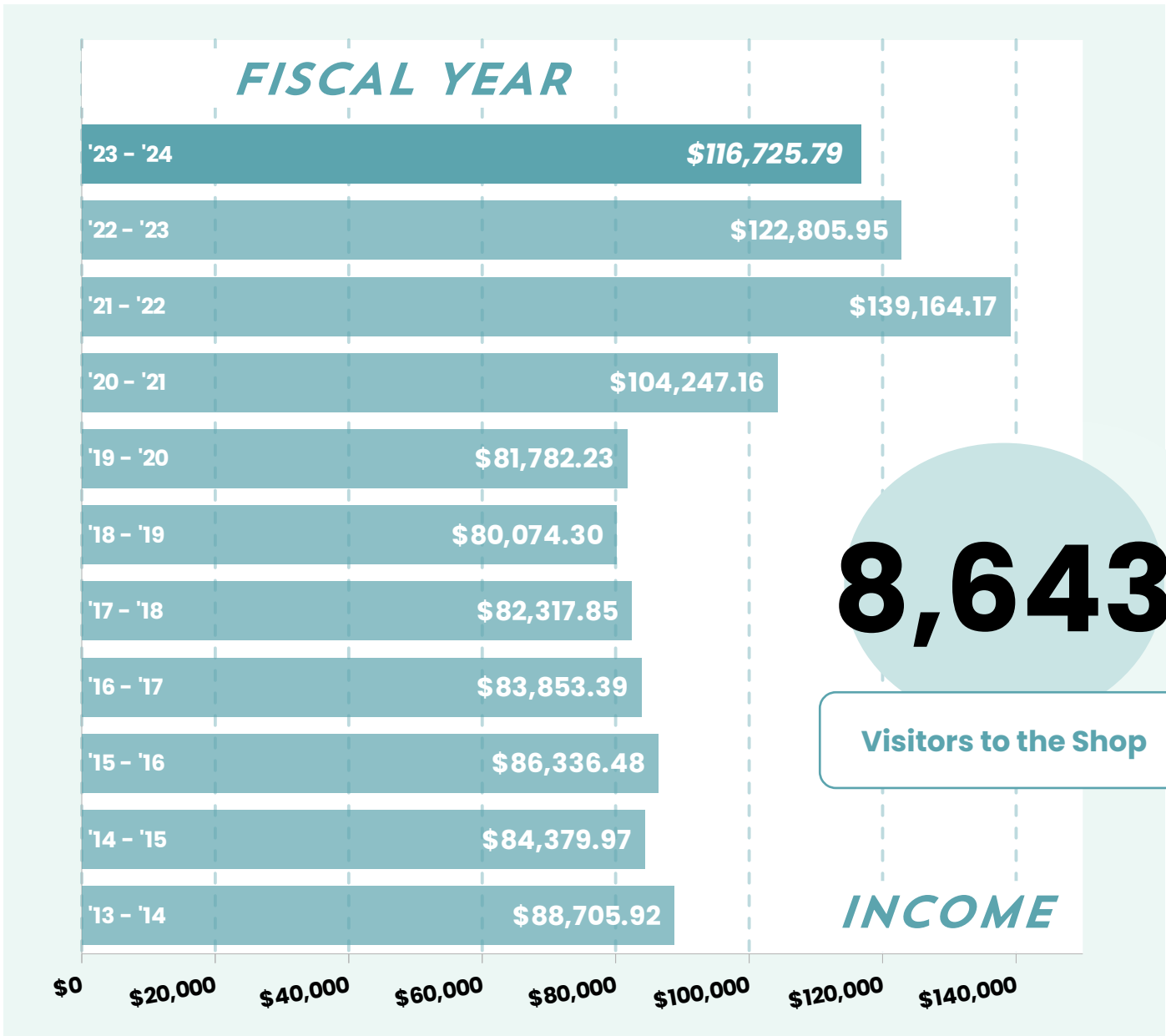
## Our Outreach Coordinator: Laura Teske

This new role encompasses all the ways in which we make ourselves available to the community. My primary focus has been on working to develop and expand our volunteer base to include additional ISU students and the broader Ames community. We're also working to increase the number of our community events to include Third Thursday programming year round and fostering more cross promotional relationships with other downtown businesses.





# SHOP SALES BY FISCAL YEAR



# EDUCATION

The past year at the Octagon has been a period of growth, creativity, and community engagement. Our education programs continued to increase, offering over 36 combined classes, camps, workshops, and outreach programs to students of all ages that have reached a total of 1262 people! These programs have nurtured creativity, artistic and self expression, built community, and expanded creative skills for all of our participants.

Each semester, we work with student volunteers that are integral to prepping for arts programming, but especially for the children's art tent during our annual art festival. This year's festival was record breaking, reaching 300 people with in-person and take-home activities!

Looking ahead, we continue to ensure that our offerings remain fresh, diverse, and responsive to community interests. We are deeply thankful to our instructors, volunteers, and supporters who have made our programs possible!

-- Beth Weninger, Education Director



## CLASSES & WORKSHOPS

- › Modern Macrame
- › Clay Ornaments
- › Printmaking Workshop
- › Winter Maker Table
- › Valentine Maker Table
- › Handbuilt Ceramics
- › Wheel Throwing Ceramics

**Thank you to the generous support of the 100 Women Who Care Ames for the purchase of a new electric pottery wheel.**



## ART CAMPS

**Spring Break and Summer art camps are geared for Grades K - 5.**

- › Building Tree Houses Camp
- › Cuckoo Clock Art Camp
- › Drawing and Painting Camp
- › Magical Wonder Worlds Camp
- › Tiny Travel Trailers Camp



36

Classes, Camps,  
Workshops, and Events

500

Outreach Event  
Attendees

762

Students of All Ages

## OUTREACH & EVENTS

### > Mending Night:

A free monthly event to practice fiber mending and community building.

### > Boys and Girls Club Outreach:

The Doodle Club, led by Tim Read, with after-school art workshops.

### > Food at First:

Community art activities, partnered with Nancy Gebhart and Susan Norris.

### > Iowa Art Council Arts Summit:

Offered hands-on art activity to all 274 participants.

### > Osher Lifelong Learning Institute:

Hosted terrarium building and Mandala painting workshops.



*We strive to offer a variety of opportunities that repeat on a regular basis:*

### **Exploring Art & Creative Explorations**

For children 18mo. to 3yrs. and 3 to 5 yrs. respectively, these weekly classes are filled with activities focused on playful, artistic, and sensory exploration!

### **All Kinds of Art**

All day workshops for children in Grades K – 5 during no-school days. Students can spend the day making a variety of different projects while learning about art!

### **Ceramics Open Studios**

Each week our North/Clay Studio is open to all current and past students of ceramics classes to practice skills and processes independently.





# OCTAGON EVENTS





# THE OCTAGON ART FESTIVAL SEPTEMBER 24<sup>TH</sup>, 2023



The Octagon Art Festival takes place, rain or shine the fourth Sunday of each September along Main Street in Downtown Ames. Visual arts, children’s art area, food vendors, and performing arts form the foundation of the Octagon Art Festival.

### Our Best of Show Award Winner:

**Ruben Ruiz (Ceramics)**

### Our Honorable Mention Awards:

Susan Cunningham (*Fiber*)

Emily Koehler (*Printmaking*)

Lauren Pesta (*Mixed Media*)

**85**

**Artists Participated  
From 7 States**

**10,000**

**Estimated  
Attendance!**

**183**

**Volunteer Hours Went  
Into the Day**

## OCTAGON ART FESTIVAL SPONSORS



# 6<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL BUSINESS OF ART CONFERENCE MARCH 1<sup>ST</sup> – 2<sup>ND</sup>, 2024

The Business of Art Conference is designed to provide resources for both formally trained and self-taught creatives. Professional or student, part time or full time, all are welcome! Topics have included: developing your brand, building an online presence, retail and wholesale opportunities, funding research, as well as general self-care and well-being practices to prevent burnout. There are also ample networking opportunities, giving attendees the chance to talk one-on-one with both speakers and other creatives.



## BUSINESS *of* ART CONFERENCE 2024

### Our Keynote Speaker:

**Jill Wells**

#### Friday Speakers:

- > Clark Colby
- > Megen O'Toole
- > John Engelbrecht
- > Vivian M. Cook
- > Alex Braidwood

#### Saturday Speakers:

- > Claire Krüesel
- > Ellen Kleckner
- > Lee Anne Willson
- > Susan Norris
- > Tibi Chelcea
- > Linda Hardie
- > David Schmitz
- > Rachel Buse

## BUSINESS OF ART SPONSORS



BRACKETS CUSTOM  
WINDOW  
COVERINGS



AMES  
Community  
Grant  
PROGRAM



IOWA ARTS  
COUNCIL





# 4<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL PARTIES ON THE PATIO 3<sup>RD</sup> THURSDAYS, MAY - OCTOBER



Thank you to our community for supporting our 4<sup>th</sup> year of Patio Parties! We love featuring a wide variety of genres and welcoming local performers at all stages of their careers, whether as hobbyists or a veteran show-people.

To get ready for the season, our patio also received a make-over this spring, in conjunction with our 3<sup>rd</sup> floor renovations. Thank you to the ISU Pay It Forward organization for all your help painting and rearranging!



## PATIO PARTIES ALL SUMMER LONG!

### PATIO LINEUP 2023:

- May* – Leo Bird (Stand-up)
- June* – Cyre Empire™ (Hip Hop)
- July* – The Bone People (Jazz, R&B)
- Aug* – King Wylde (Rock, R&B)
- Sept* – Madhyami Deshmukh (Sitar)

### PATIO LINEUP 2024:

- June* – Ben Sanders (Jazz Piano)
- July* – Abdul Muhammed &  
Phil Herbert (R&B, Funk)
- Aug* – Sweet Tater (Americana)
- Sept* – Marilyn Jerome (Guitar)
- Oct* – Paige Clouse (Acoustic Guitar)

# COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Thank you to all of our members, donors, sponsors, volunteers, instructors, students, and visitors! We are so grateful that you continue to support us so we can stay your community art center!



Your support allows us to provide materials for classes, offer diverse workshop topics, host low to no-cost programming, exhibit new and local artists, and simply keep our building open and the gallery free to the public. The Octagon staff is small and there are times that we just don't have enough hours in the day, but to have community members come together to help, I cannot say how much that means to us.

Thank you, thank you, thank you.

*- Theresa Warren, Office Manager*



We also couldn't do anything without our incredible volunteers! From the more than 80 individuals who volunteered at the Octagon Art Festival from before sunrise to well after dark, to the crews of ISU students doing the messy work of helping repaint our patio, we had a total of over 750 volunteers hours logged over the past 12 months!



To the nearly 480 members, donors, and sponsors that generously gave, we couldn't do what we do without you! Thank you!

## LIFETIME MEMBERS

Lisa Avalos | Martha Benson | Gary & Carol Kline  
Klaus & Ursula Ruedenberg | Priscilla & Charles Sage

## OPERATIONAL GRANTS

City of Ames Commission on the Arts

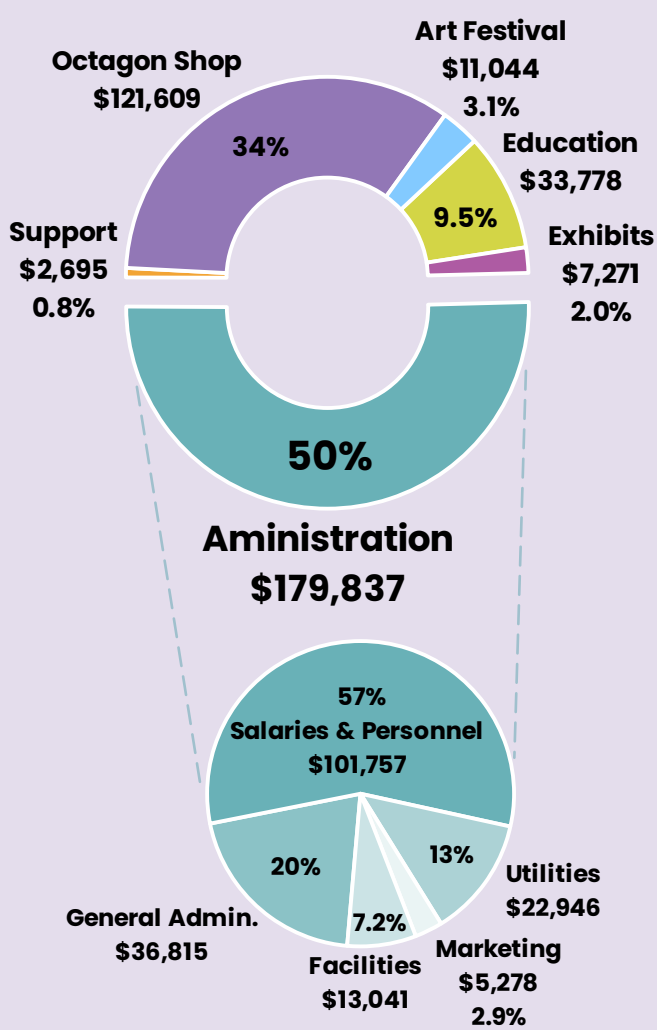
Iowa Arts Council – Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs

## OUR GENEROUS DONORS

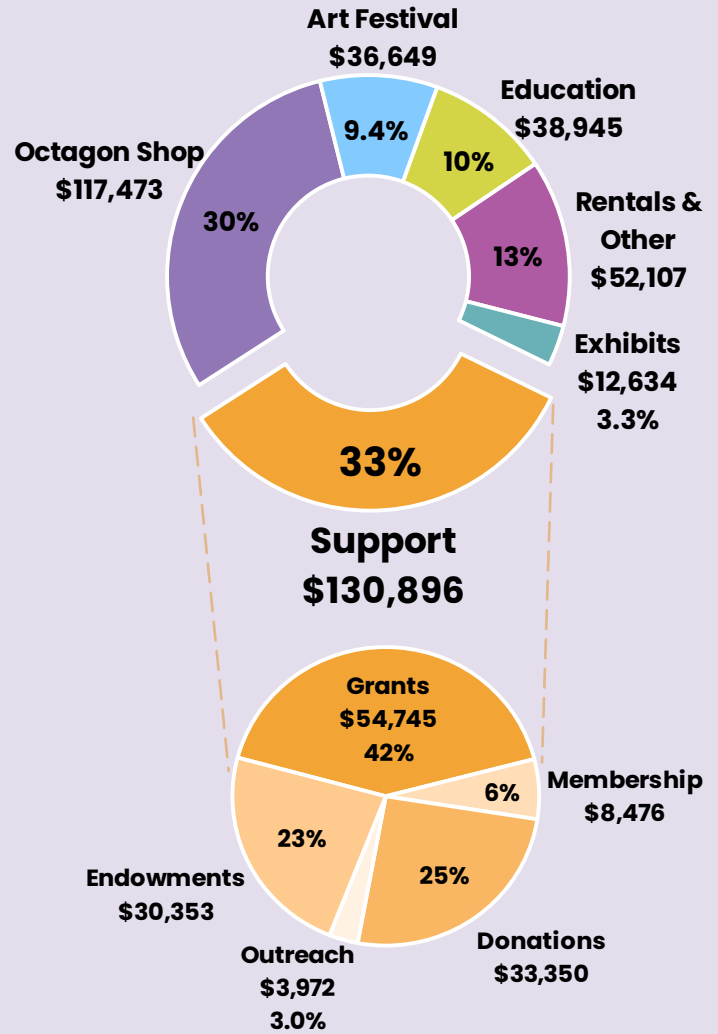
Rebecca Abarr	Tara Gartin	Ana & Ed McCracken
Carolyn Abbott	Ethel George	Joshua McCunn
Roberta Abraham	Lana & Don Gogerty	Helen McRoberts
Penny & John Adam	Cindy Gordon	Julia Minkler
Teresa Albertson	Greater Iowa Credit Union	Terry & Karen Murphy
Ames Lincoln Ford	Karl Gwiasda	Nicole & Christ Nevels
Ames Silversmithing	John & Mary Haila	Arlen & Carol Patrick
Christa Andersen & Terry Potter	Florence Hamric	Barbara Peterson
Dotti & Wally Anderson	Susan & Thomas Harrington	Wendy Phillips
Iver & Nancy Anderson	Rex Heer	Rebecca Poblete
Thomas Andre & Susan Hegland	Katharine & Jordan Hensley	Mary & D. Raj Raman
Elizabeth & Robert Angelici	Gary Hoard	Merry Rankin & Tom Anderson
Dawn Baldwin	David Hoffman	Sue & Al Ravenscroft
Lisa Banitt & William Barry	Mary Hulleman	Rae Reilly
Jim & Paul Beckwith	Judy & Tom Jackson	Mary Richards
Kay & Roger Berger	Gloria J. Jensen	Priscilla & Charles Sage
Carol & Jim Brannon	Sally & Jerry Jones	Dirk & Lucina Scholten
Charlie Bruner & Amy Welch	Catherine Jones-Davies	Laura Shanks
Maureen Burke	Margaret Junkhan	Shawn Smith
Ann Campbell	Leticia & Hugo Kenemer	Sam Stagg
Tiberiu Chelcea	Katherine Kerns	Lois Stoltze
James Cornette	Kinetic Edge Physical Therapy	Kathy Svec & Dorian Stripling
Patti Cotter & Peter Orazem	Gary & Carol Kline	Mark Taylor
Janet & Philip Dixon	Kendal Kline	Alice Tosi
Suzanne Draper	Fern Kupfer & Joe Geha	Lynne Van Valin
Stacy & Gene Dreyer	Phyllis Lepke	Daniel Wandling
Peggy Earnshaw & Paul Tanaka	Donald Lewis & Dorothy Ohl Lewis	George & Mary Wandling
Mary & Don Eichner	Steve Libbey	Bill & Toni Whitman
Linda & Tom Emmerson	Efstathia Lingren	Alicia Wilkinson
David Faux	Jill & John Lowman	Lee Anne & Steve Willson
Douglas & Faith Finnemore	Olivia Madison	Winkler & Sons, Inc.
Jan & Cornelia Flora	Sydney Marshall	Sharon & Donald Wirth
Aaron Foley	Chris & Tammi Martin	Dawn Wohlford
Jonathan & Suzanne Fox	Mary Greeley Medical Center	Beth Wunder

# FY23-24 FINANCIALS

**EXPENSES = \$356,234**



**INCOME = \$391,703**



## '23 – '24 FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Net Income:	<b>\$17,231</b>
Cash on Hand:	<b>\$73,921</b>
Endowment Total:	<b>\$218,053</b>
Total Assets:	<b>\$650,342</b>

## THE OCTAGON IN A NUTSHELL

Number of Members	<b>379</b>
Number of Gifts	<b>126</b>
Volunteer Hours	<b>730</b>

For our full Statement of Financial Position, please visit [octagonarts.org/2023\\_2024\\_financialreport/](https://octagonarts.org/2023_2024_financialreport/)





# LOOKING TO SUPPORT THE OCTAGON?



## BECOME A MEMBER

Members make it possible to keep our programming and events accessible to everyone in our community. Current members enjoy a 10% discount on all Shop purchases and classes!

## TAKE A CLASS

The Octagon offers all kinds of art classes, workshops and camps throughout the year for students of all ages and skill levels. Topics and media vary and we're always looking for new instructors too!

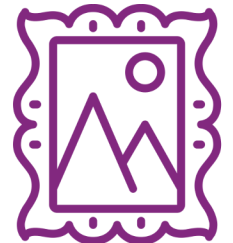


## PURCHASE A GIFT

The Octagon Shop is a consignment retailer for original works for 180+ artists. With something for every budget and every taste, you're sure to find something special.

## VIEW THE EXHIBITS

Our Community Gallery is totally free to the public and displays 10-12 exhibits each year, featuring a variety of artwork created by artists local, national, and international.



## ATTEND AN EVENT

Events are happening all the time! The Octagon Art Festival and the Business of Art Conference occur each year and are great opportunities to explore the art in our community.



facebook



instagram

Follow us on Facebook and Instagram, or sign up for our email newsletter to get the most up to date information on new events, classes, and exhibits!



octagonarts.org









4053  
249

Brooke Postmann 21





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