



ANNUAL REPORT
2024 - 2025

OCTAGON STAFF

Heather Johnson
Executive Director

Casey Bridgham
*Gallery Director &
Communications Director*

Katie DuVal Mihelich
Gallery Assistant

Terrie Hoefler
Octagon Shop Manager

Laura Teske
Outreach Coordinator

Theresa Warren
Office Manager

Beth Weninger
Education Director

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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Our Mission:

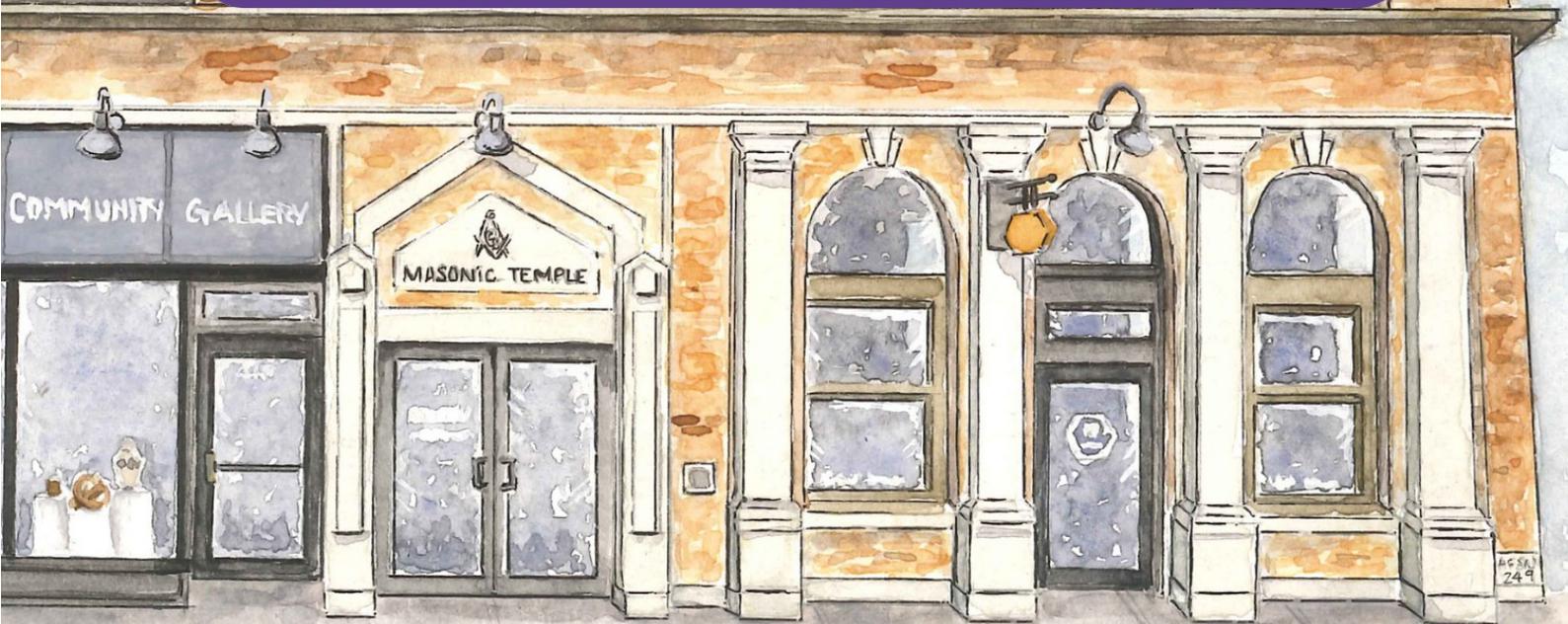
The Octagon Center for the Arts encourages interaction and creative self-expression by providing inclusive opportunities and spaces that bring people together through art.



Front Cover Art by Christian Vandelaar
Page 1-2 art by Brooke Hartmann

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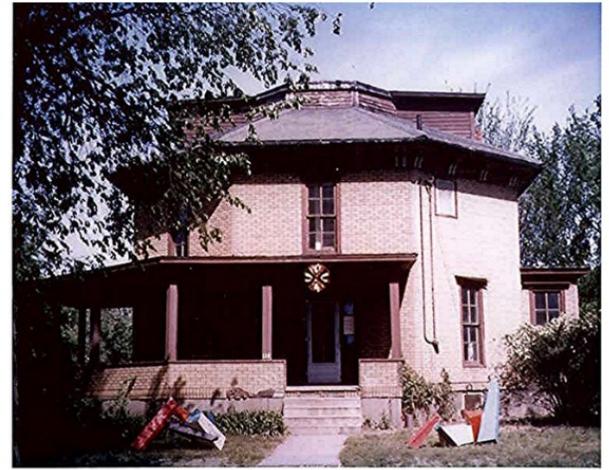




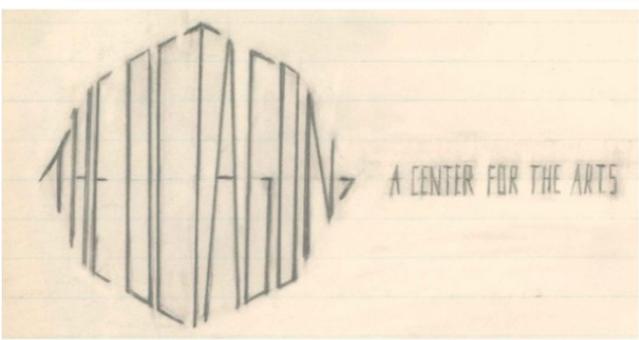
Our Incredible Founders

Pictured left to right:
Veronika Ruedenberg, Marth Benson,
Priscilla Sage, and Janet Harris Squires

The Octagon Center of the Arts began as four women's dream for a special home in Ames, IA to foster the arts. With their husbands' support (and signatures), they soon rented a quirky, but rickety, octagon-shaped house. Not long after, on January 23rd, 1966, freshly renovated by volunteers and artists, their brand new art center opened its doors to a crowd of over 500.



It's now 59 years later, times have changed for both women and the arts, and the Octagon continues to strive to support our local artists, provide integral arts education, and create spaces that bring people together through art.



We're working towards increasing the variety of our gallery exhibits, creating more new and free community outreach events, and welcoming more artists into our co-working and private studios.

**As we head into our 60th year,
we will continue to provide impactful and
engaging programs for our community!**

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

One of our goals at the Octagon is to use art as a way to connect with people and create community. We are enjoying the additional creative energy from the artists in the co-working and private studios located on the newly renovated third floor of the Octagon. This past May we held our second Art from the Attic 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 2026.

The Octagon receives many requests for art outreach opportunities. With a grant from Rotary Club of Ames, we are excited to be able to offer new outreach opportunities with 60 Forward and a few additional events 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.

Next fiscal year, in January of 2026, the Octagon Center for the Arts will celebrate its 60th Anniversary as a community art resource. We are so thankful for the vision of the founders who made the Octagon happen with a lot of dedication: Veronika Ruedenberg, Martha Benson, Priscilla Sage and Janet Harris Squires.

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.

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



- Heather Johnson, Executive Director

The Co-working Studios!

Our Co-working Studio is currently home to five graduate students from the Iowa State University (ISU) College of Design Integrated Visuals Arts (IVA) graduate program as well as two private artists. It's been such a treat and honor to be able to provide this space for collaboration and growth for artists as they explore and strengthen their portfolios.



CARMEN CRUZ
Painting & Mixed Media



NATALIE DEAM
Printmaking, Book Arts,
Installations
2025 ISU MFA IVA Graduate

A Community Outreach Artist - in - Residence will find their home in Studio #5, in partnership with the ISU College of Design!

Their term will begin July 2025, and their main focus will be community engagement and be involved with leading and organizing programming and events for both the Octagon and ISU classes.



DONNA MOYER
Photography



ALEX ODORICO
Oil Painting & Mixed Media



MATTY PALAMARA
Painting & Mixed Media
2025 ISU MFA IVA Graduate

ARTIST STUDIOS



Private Artist Studios!

We can't believe that it's only been a year since we've been able to offer private studio spaces local artists! These studios started with fresh, white, floor to ceiling walls, which apparently has been an absolute must because they are now covered with incredible work by our four amazing private renters: Eliz, Carmen, Dan, and Donna!



ELIZABETH ERBES
Painting & Pastels



ELNAZ MASROUR
Interdisciplinary Artist
2025 ISU MFA IVA Graduate



DAN MOORE
Photography



RANA TIBA
Painting & Graphic Design
ISU MFA IVA Student



NICOLE SORIANO
Painting & Film
2025 ISU MFA IVA Graduate



STEVEN VORRATH
Multimedia Artist
2024 ISU BFA Graduate

ARTS EDUCATION

This year was full of energy, creativity, and connection! We welcomed several new instructors, launched new programs, and saw a full schedule of classes and camps for kids and adults. From papier-mâché animals to chain mail jewelry, Saturday Wheel Throwing to Sloth Camp, people of all ages came were able to make, learn, and have fun. Behind the scenes, we refreshed our studios, launched a new registration system, and deepened our community partnerships.



We have a lot to brag about this year, and are so grateful for our dedicated instructors, volunteers, and community members who continue to make the Octagon a space for creativity and connection. Looking ahead, we are excited to expand our class and workshop offerings, extend outreach, and continue building on the momentum of this past year!

- Beth Weninger, Education Director



ART CAMPS

- › Caricature Camp
- › Draw, Paint, Make!
- › Drawing & Painting Skills
- › Dream House Builders
- › My Very Silly Monster
- › Papier Mâché Animals
- › Sloth Camp
- › Treehouse Camp

CLASSES & WORKSHOPS

- › Botanical Painting
- › Chain Mail Jewelry
- › Charcoal Drawing
- › Cross Stitch Earrings
- › Expressive Oil Painting
- › Fall Leaf Trays
- › Kumihimo Bracelets
- › Monochrome Muse
- › Papermaking
- › Pysanky Egg Dyeing
- › Silver Stack Rings
- › Spring Clay Planters
- › Surface Design
- › Wheel Throwing

63

**Classes, Camps,
and Workshops**

673

Students of All Ages



***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 of our students of ceramics classes to practice skills and processes independently.

A Place to Mend

A free monthly gathering for all things fiber! Attendees can bring projects to work on in community and there is always someone that can offer advice.

Afternoon Watercolor

A recent addition, this newly offered class has students learning and practicing brush control, general principles, techniques and tricks using watercolors.

Beginner's Belly Dancing

Mirage Middle Eastern Dance Troupe, offers beginner-friendly Belly Dancing classes covering the basics of belly dancing designed for all bodies!

COMMUNITY GALLERY

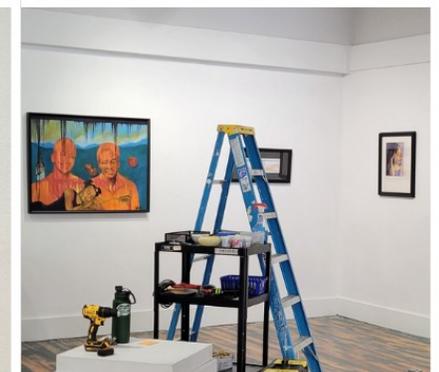
This has been a busy year in the Community Gallery! A whirlwind of exhibit openings, closings, receptions, artist talks, repainting the walls, and schedule changes. We've been so fortunate that Katie DuVal Mihelich has continued to be a part of the gallery team as our Gallery Assistant, we simply couldn't host the number of exhibitions we do without her!

We rolled out our new exhibition schedule in June 2024 and it has brought so much more variety and energy to the gallery. This includes the freedom within the calendar to allow for the Shop to extend itself into the gallery for both the Art in the Attic Sale in May and the Winter Market in November and December.

Our 2026–2027 Gallery Season is almost finalized, allowing both the exhibiting artists and the Octagon more time between shows for better marketing and setup. Which in turn allows us to begin plans for something special for the Octagon's 60th Anniversary in 2026. Mark your calendars for January 22, 2026 for our birthday party!

Thanks to everyone for pitching in and helping keep things moving with so much good momentum heading into the new year!

- Casey Bridgham, Exhibits 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 the
Community Gallery

328

Gallery Artists in
Solo & Group Exhibits

'24 - '25 COMMUNITY GALLERY SEASON

ARTIST(S)	EXHIBIT TITLE	OPENING - CLOSING DATES
Nick Gadbois	<i>American Oddities</i>	June 24 - July 20, 2024
Isaac Prior	<i>Composition of Line</i>	July 29 - August 24, 2024
Kelly Devitt	<i>Mixed Emotions</i>	September 3 - 28, 2024
Lisa Truax	<i>Demulcent Terrain</i>	October 7 - November 2, 2024
Karen Cooper	<i>The Faces I've Seen</i>	December 16, 2024 - January 11, 2025
Denice Peters	<i>Be Still</i>	January 20 - February 15, 2025
Octagonal	<i>Octagonal: The All Media Show</i>	February 27 - March 29, 2025
Annual K-12 Student Show	<i>The Annual K-12 Show</i>	April 7 - 18, 2025
"Rally Point" Artists	<i>Round Up</i>	April 22 - May 10, 2025
Various Member Artists	<i>The Annual Octagon Member Show</i>	May 26 - June 21, 2025
Raluca Iancu	<i>Over + Under</i>	June 30 - July 12, 2025

THE OCTAGON SHOP

Fiscal year sales have remarkably been above \$100,000 every year since the '20-'21 fiscal year. In the fall of 2020 the community here, and probably across the country, realized how important and cherished small businesses are, which has resulted in much stronger sales these last 5 years. With current economic challenges, we hope to continue to reap the support of our incredible community.

Each October we welcome a few new artists and the current nearly 170 shop artists are always dropping off new work, so the Shop's shelves are constantly rotating and changing. Of all of that work, the most popular items in the Shop is anything ceramic and stationary.



A patron said this last month that humans are shaped by their environment, "it's important to seek out positive environments, so that is why I go to the Octagon." Even when they do not make a purchase, visitors are still absorbing strength and beauty, focus and meaning, love and caring, just by visiting our spaces.

- Terrie Hoefler, Octagon Shop Manager



Winter Market 2024!

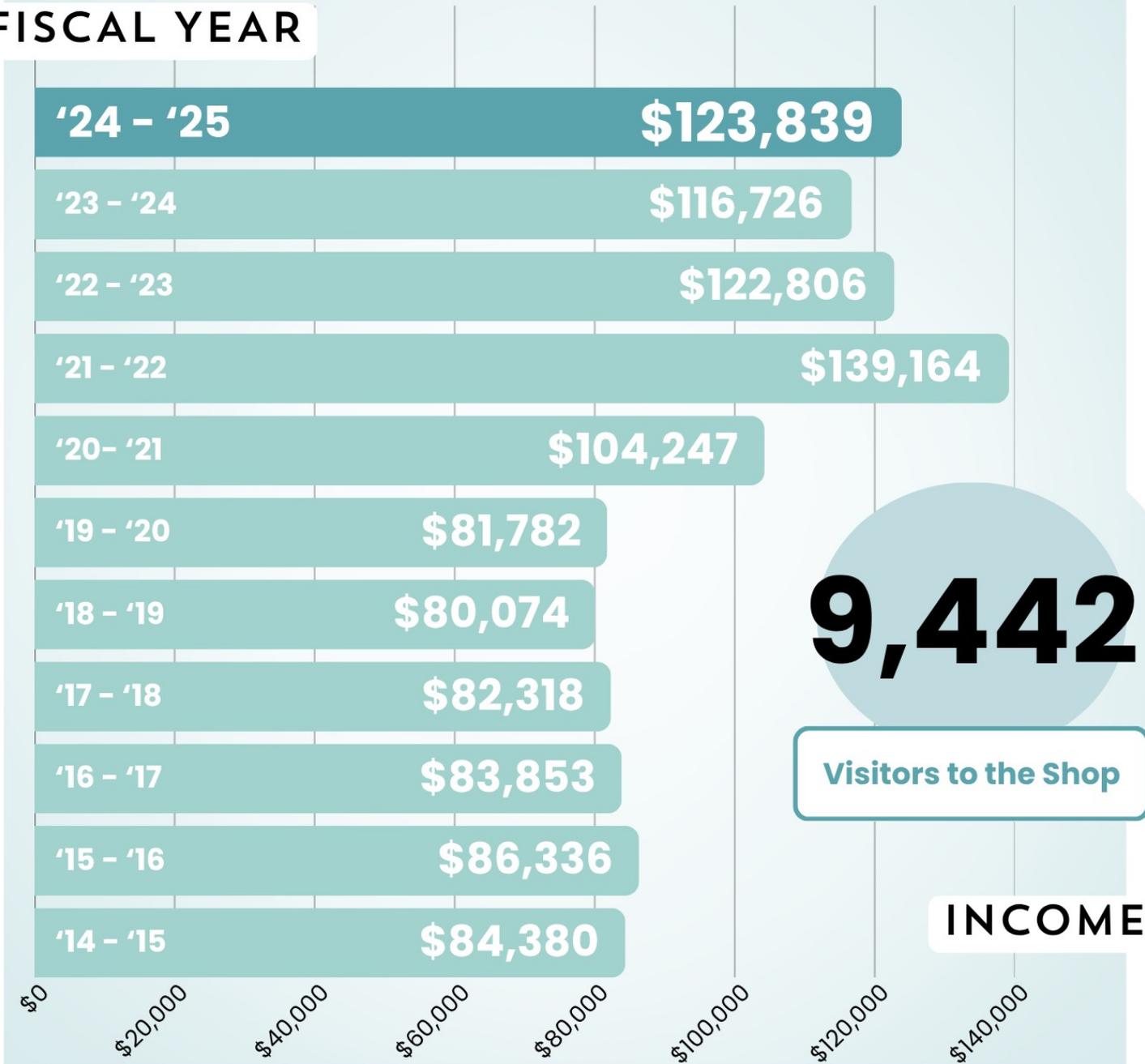
November 11 - December 7, 2024

The 2nd Annual Winter Market was yet another great success! As staff, we love that we can spread out into the Community Gallery and show off so much more of the amazing artwork from all of our talented artist. We had a constant stream of positive comments from patrons and the Octagon Shop won "Best Window Display" during the Ames Downtown Snow Magic!

SHOP SALES BY FISCAL YEAR



FISCAL YEAR



ART FROM THE ATTIC SALE

MAY 13TH - 15TH, 2025



The Art from the Attic Sale featured more than 300 donated and gently loved artworks, ready for new homes. The final sale displayed a large variety of works that could fit into any kind of styles and preferences.

Overall, the sale was a successful, totally about \$4,496 in sales, just over \$1,000 more than in previous. All proceeds went towards the Octagon's education and outreach, and we've already begun collecting more art pieces for 2026!



Special thanks for everyone who generously donated artwork!

Dawn Baldwin
Cathy Carlyle
Jordan & Jan Crawford
Patti Cotter & Peter Orazem
Carol Elbert
Amy Flattery
Collene Gaolach

Reggie Greenlaw
Clark Grinde
Marybeth Heikes
Jen Hem
Mike & Val Leedom
Phyllis & Larry Lepke
Nancy Lindsay
Ana McCracken

Gail Pace
Clint Petersen
Jorgen Rasmussen Family
Sue Ravenscroft
Robert Sunderman
Kathy Svec & Dorian Stripling
Roberta Vaun

as well as many anonymous donors!

OCTAGON EVENTS!



OUTREACH & EVENTS

This was my first full year with the designation of Outreach Coordinator and I have enjoyed it immensely. I still work one day a week in the shop, helping with inventory, merchandising, and other shop tasks, which I also thoroughly enjoy.

One of my main focuses this past year has been coordinating our volunteers. We continue to partner with the Sociology 134 class at ISU for student volunteers throughout the school term, as well as with Retired & Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) year round. We couldn't have asked for better volunteers! These have proven to be wonderful partnerships and we are looking forward to seeing how they continue to grow. The RSVP volunteers have been especially helpful during busy gallery receptions and Third Thursday events; and the student volunteers are so curious and willing to go along with all of our Octagon plans and shenanigans, no matter the tasks. We've felt very fortunate to have such a positive response and look forward to next year's group of volunteers!

- Laura Teske, Outreach Coordinator



We are able to do what we do because of volunteers! We are appreciative of everyone who gives their time to support the staff and events. We continue to look for ways to recruit and retain volunteers for a variety of tasks.

THIRD THURSDAYS

THIRD THURSDAYS



This past season of Parties on the Patio, we primarily hosted singer-songwriter performers, which were well received but low attended. By the October Patio Party, we started thinking about how we could appeal to a larger audience and revamp our events.

As we thought through the attendance factor, as well as the budget we have available for these events, it was proposed that we could continue events through the year on third Thursdays, not just in the warm months. Our goals were simple: to host regular events that our community could look forward to and to partner with other Ames businesses. We could feature musicians, a artsy activity, promote a business, or all of the above!

Though we weren't sure how these new events would be received, we jumped in feet first January 2025 with a full schedule. And to our great delight, and relief, Third Thursdays have so far been a huge success and there will definitely be more to come in 2026!

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THIRD THURSDAY EVENT SCHEDULE

2024 Parties on the Patio

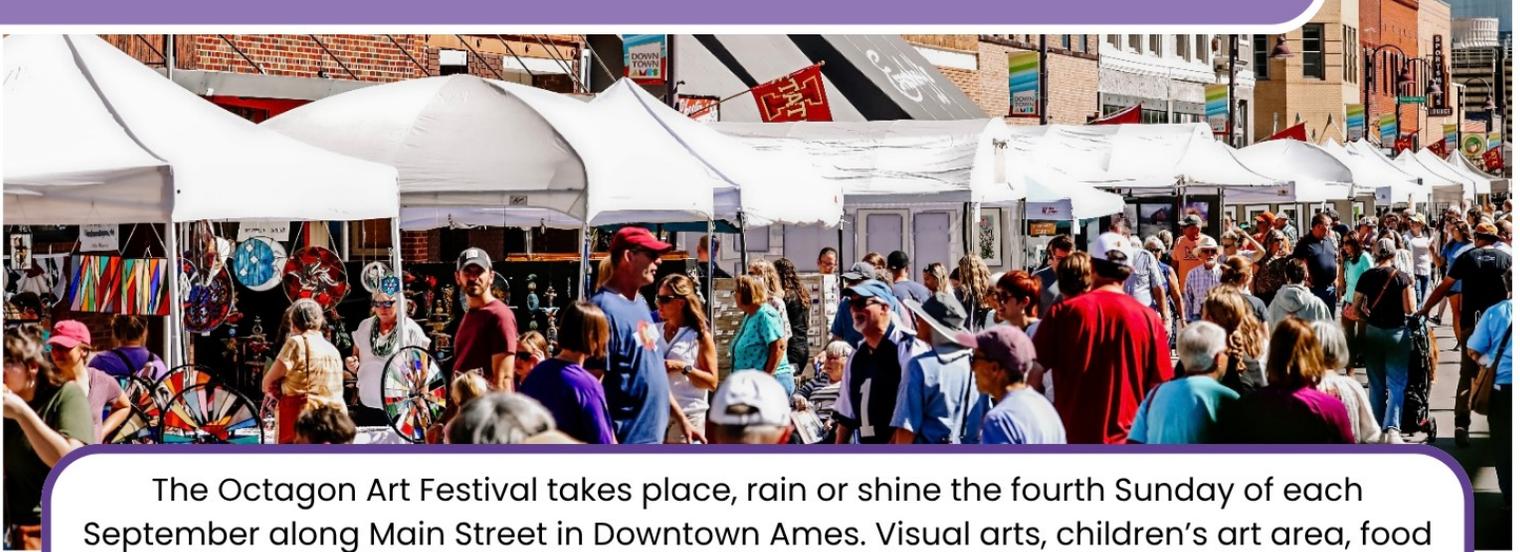
- June* – Ben Sanders (Jazz Piano)
- July* – Abdul Muhammed
& Phil Herbert (R&B, Funk)
- Aug* – Sweet Tater (Americana)
- Sept* – Marilyn Jerome (Guitar)
- Oct* – Paige Clouse (Acoustic Guitar)

2025 Third Thursdays

- Jan* – Winter Maker's Table
- Feb* – String Quartet in the Gallery
- Mar* – Board Game Night
- Apr* – Needle Night
- May* – Art from the Attic Sale
- June* – Paint & Plant

53RD OCTAGON ART FESTIVAL

SEPTEMBER 22ND, 2024



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 2024 Best in Show
Award Winner:**

Hannah Gebhart (*Printmaking*)

Honorable Mention Awardees:

Doug Adams (*Mixed Media*)
Megan Hammer (*Fiber*)
Jacque Hudson (*Painting*)

77

**Artists Participated
From 4 States**

10,000

**Estimated
Attendance!**

227

**Volunteer Hours
Went Into the Day**

OCTAGON ART FESTIVAL SPONSORS



7TH ANNUAL BUSINESS OF ART CONFERENCE MARCH 7TH - 8TH, 2025

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



BUSINESS of ART
CONFERENCE
2025

Our 2025 Keynote Speaker: Chris Vance

Friday Speakers:

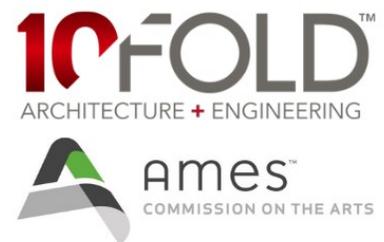
- > Sheri Benson
- > Megan Hammer
- > Leah Locke
- > Joseph Wallace

Saturday Speakers:

- > Chris Ewan
- > Claire Krüesel
- > Matthew McIver
- > Susan Norris
- > David Schmitz
- > Rhonda Scott
- > Lauren Tucci
- > Beth Weninger
- > Valerie Williams

BUSINESS OF ART SPONSORS

**HAND
OVER
HAND**



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!

Thank you, thank you, thank you!

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 quite simply keep our building open and free to the public. The Octagon staff is small and there are times that there aren't enough hands or hours in the day, but to have the community come together to help, we cannot say how much that means to us.

- Theresa Warren, Office Manager



LIFETIME MEMBERS

Lisa Avalos

Martha Benson

Gary & Carol Kline

Klaus & Ursula Ruedenberg

Priscilla & Charles Sage

GRANTS

3M Foundation

Ames Commission on the Arts

Discover Ames - Convention & Visitors Bureau

Iowa Arts Council - Iowa Economic Development Authority

Rotary Club of Ames

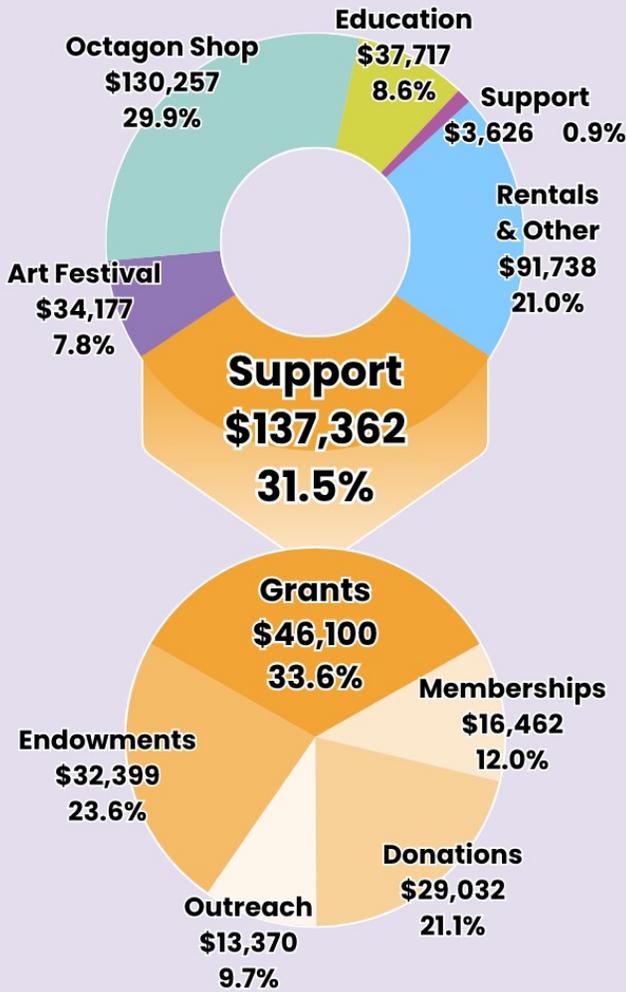
To the over 500 members, donors, and sponsors that generously gave,
we couldn't do what we do without you, Thank you!

OUR GENEROUS DONORS

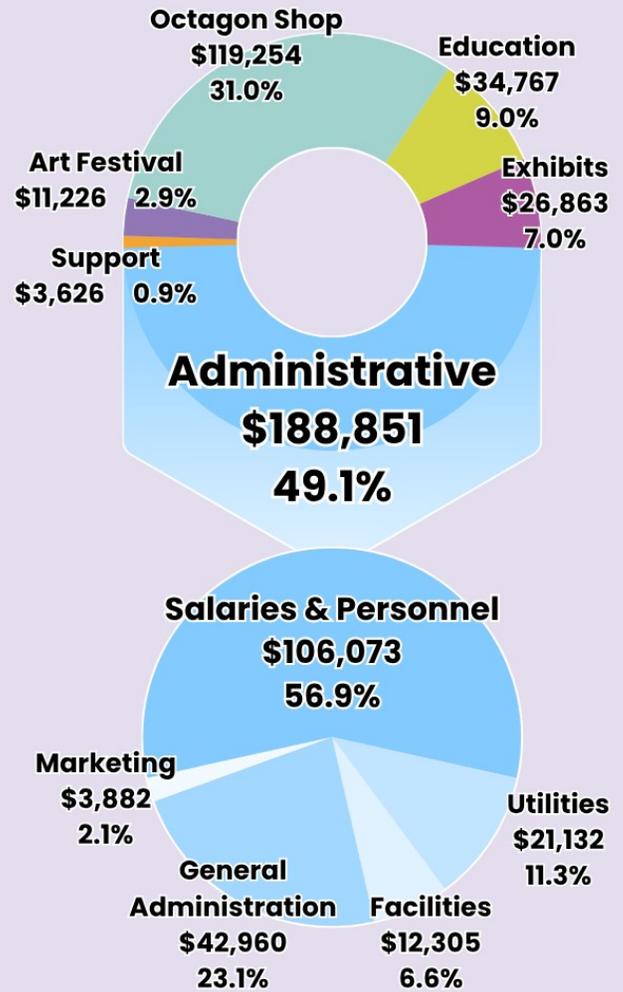
Penny & John Adam	Karl Gwiasda	Terry & Karen Murphy
Kathryn Aitchison	Emily Hager	Kathy Parsons
Ames Lincoln Ford	John & Mary Haila	Barbara Peterson
Ames Silversmithing	Florence Hamrick	Julia Pfeiffer
Christa Andersen & Terry Potter	Ruth Hill	Dot & Steven Prater
Marilyn Andersen	Gary Hoard	Stanley Rabe
Iver & Nancy Anderson	David & Judith Hoffman	Ellen Rasmussen
Claire Andreasen	Jack & Cecilia Horner	Sue & Al Ravenscroft
Elizabeth & Robert Angelici	Larry Jackson & Valerie Hinz	Rae Reilly
Tiffany Antone	Sally & Jerry Jones	Diane Rickerl
Dawn Baldwin	Catherine Jones-Davies	Danielle Robinson
William Barry & Lisa Banitt	Margaret Junkhan	Priscilla & Charles Sage
Jim & Carol Brannon	Gary & Carol Kline	Dirk & Lucinda Scholten
Charlie Bruner & Amy Welch	Sue & Larry Koehrsen	Suzan & John Shierholz
Terry & Karen Burianek	Owen Kolstad & Mary Wickham	Barbara Sibley
Melinda Buyck	Sally & Harvey Lapan	Melinda Stahr
Cathy & David Carlyle	Lois Lehmkuhl	Lois Stoltze
Tiberiu Chelcea	Donald Lewis & Dorothy Ohl Lewis	Robert Sunderman
Community Choice	Lott Music Studio	Kathy Svec & Dorian Stripling
Buzz Coren	Olivia Madison & Gregory Palermo	Patricia Terrones
James Dickson	Kerry Martens	Vintage Cooperative of Ames
Pamela Douglas	Mary Jo & Peter Mattila	C.K. Skip Walter
Donald & Helen Drake	Marie Mayer	Barbara Walton
Jennifer Drinkwater	Ellen McIntosh	Wheatsfield Cooperative
Duck Worth Wearing	Ian McKilligan	B. Joan White
Kathleen Foster-Wendel & Jonathan Foster	Helen McRoberts	Bill & Toni Whitman
Ethel George	John Miranowski & Susana Goggi	Mark Widrlechner
Cindy Gordon	Kim Moss	Galen Wilke
Greater Iowa Credit Union	Donna Moyer	Wilson Toyota
Kristen Greteman & Clark Colby	Margaret Munson	Dawn Wohlford-Metallo
James Gunning		J Yang

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

INCOME = \$408,825



EXPENSES = \$384,890



'24 - '25 FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Net Income:	\$32,728
Cash on Hand:	\$66,806
Endowment Total:	\$288,463
Total Assets:	\$658,750

SUPPORT IN A NUTSHELL

Number of Members:	407
Number of Gifts:	102
Volunteer Hours:	755

For our full Statement of Financial Position, please visit octagonarts.org/2024_2025_financialreport/



GET INVOLVED AT 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!

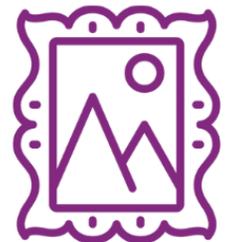


PURCHASE A GIFT

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

OCTAGON
CENTER FOR THE ARTS

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