

# ANNUAL REPORT FY20 (2019 – 2020)





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# LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Illinois Art Station Community,

I would like you to take a moment to think back on your most memorable experience with art. Perhaps it was at an art museum or in an art class. Maybe you were with friends or family or maybe you were alone. Memorable experiences with art are as varied as the arts themselves. For me, my most noteworthy experiences have been looking at art with children. When I share a work of art with them and help them discover something unexpected. When they laugh at a funny observation or get quiet when they recognize sadness in the colors. I have always loved art, but it wasn't until I became an arts educator that I gained a sense of what art is and what it does. Art opens doors to new worlds but also reflects ours back to us. It creates a sense of belonging and understanding.

Now I would like you to think back on your first encounter with art. If you are like me you may have a harder time pinning this down. For as long as I can remember I have been surrounded by coloring books and crayons, paint and paper, sculpting dough and more. I was fortunate to have parents who were able to provide me with art supplies as I wanted them and to attend a school where art was a part of the curriculum. For many children and youth art isn't so readily available or accessible. The memorable moments that are built through a relationship with the arts aren't a given for everyone. Illinois Art Station is working to change that.

Illinois Art Station was founded upon the belief that art has a transformative power and the knowledge that children who engage with the arts develop key social-emotional skills and show academic improvement in other areas. Our mission is to bring this transformation and development to every child, youth, and teen in our community. As a fairly young organization, we have already made great strides toward achieving this goal.



2019–2020 was an eventful year for Illinois Art Station, in large part because we took an important step as an organization and made the decision to separate from Illinois State University in June of 2020. Illinois State is our founding partner and we are fortunate to have developed strong and lasting relationships with the campus community that I know will continue for years to come. However, as an independent, public nonprofit, we are better able to serve our community and fulfill our mission. As an independent organization we now have the flexibility to meet needs and challenges as they arise. In many ways, I see this separation as the natural development of Illinois Art Station. Similar to a child going off to school for the first time, Illinois Art Station is now standing on its own two feet and we are grateful for our solid foundation.

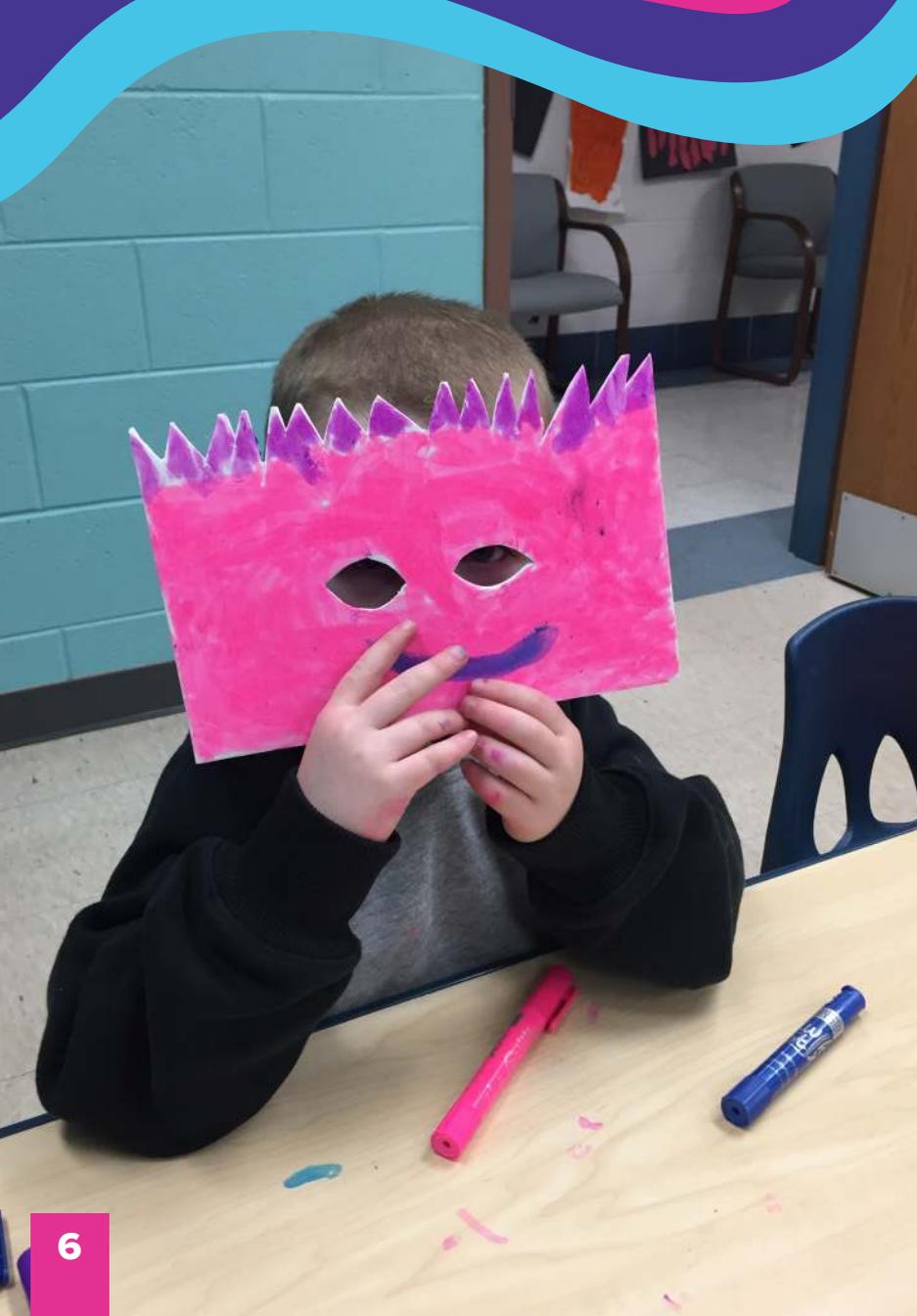
In addition to establishing ourselves as an independent entity, we increased our program reach by 19% over the previous year, developed new programs, and laid the groundwork for a permanent facility, all while navigating the challenges presented by COVID-19. As a new member of the Illinois Art Station family, I have been privileged to spend the past few months learning about the organization, overseeing our transition away from Illinois State University, and planning for the future. Looking back on a tumultuous year, I am proud to say that Illinois Art Station has risen to every challenge and is poised for a bright future.

With the addition of more than 1600 participants this past year, our total number of youth served—since we began programming—rose to over 3000, despite program suspension due to COVID-19. I look forward to bringing arts programming to even more children, youth, and teens in the year to come. 2021 will see us settling into a brand new facility. This will be the first time we have had a programming space of our own and we are excited to open our doors to the community and welcome them to IAS. We will continue to develop dynamic and thoughtful programs and strengthen partnerships that will help solidify IAS as a valuable resource and arts destination for our area.

Thank you all for your continued support!

Most sincerely,

**Laura K. Jaster, M.A.**  
Executive Director  
Illinois Art Station



# COVID-19 RESPONSE

Along with our community and the world, IAS faced significant challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic. After an initial scale back in early spring 2020, we eventually suspended all programming through summer 2020. While this had a debilitating impact on our ability to fulfill our mission, this time presented opportunities for us to redesign programs and re-imagine how art engagement can take place. I am proud to say that despite closures, IAS still saw an increase in participant numbers in 2019–2020 and, perhaps more importantly, we were reminded of the power of art for our community and have strengthened our commitment to providing transformative learning with the visual arts for our community's children, youth, and teens.

## MISSION

Our mission is to provide all children, youth, and their families with transformative learning through hands-on experiences in the visual arts.

## VISION

We envision a community engaged in and inspired by the visual arts.

# OUR WORK

## WHO

FAMILIES  
COMMUNITY GROUPS  
CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND TEENS

## WHY

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL GROWTH  
ENGAGEMENT AND SOCIAL JUSTICE  
FREEDOM AND MEANS OF EXPRESSION  
OBSERVATION, CRITICAL DECISION MAKING, INTERPRETATION

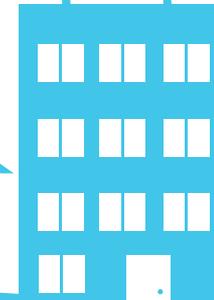
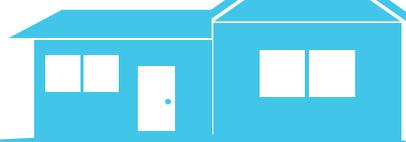
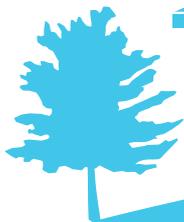
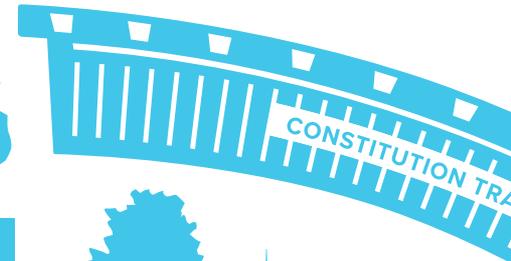
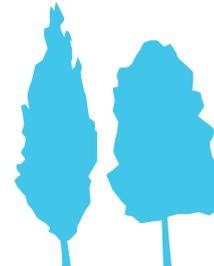
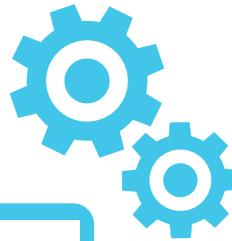
THOSE WHO LOVE ART  
THOSE WHO HAVE A NEED FOR ART  
UNDERSERVED AND UNDERREPRESENTED POPULATIONS



ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY FOUNDED 1857



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## HOW

OUTREACH  
PARTNERSHIPS

TALENTED EDUCATORS  
THOUGHTFUL GUIDANCE AND SUGGESTIONS  
AGE AND DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE INSTRUCTION



# OUR COMMITMENTS

Illinois Art Station remains committed to five central tenets: learning, creativity, dialogue, inclusion, and program evaluation. It is our belief that through engagement with the arts we can help our community's children and youth grow and flourish in each of these areas — providing them with skills and experiences that will serve as the foundation for future success.

1

## LEARNING

Inspiring a love for visual arts and creation that allows for making connections between one's lived experiences and the wider world, deepening understanding and ability to persist in future endeavors.

2

## CREATIVITY

Fostering creative practice, thinking, and expression.

3

## DIALOGUE

Addressing social issues and needs facing our community to cultivate an environment of respect, understanding, and social justice.

4

## INCLUSION

Bringing diverse groups and ideas together through high-quality and compelling visual arts programming.

5

## PROGRAM EVALUATION

Providing a setting for applied research, a site for professional practice, and a context for civic engagement.



# STRATEGIC GOALS

Despite setbacks due to COVID-19, 2019 – 2020 saw us making strides toward achieving the Strategic Goals we laid out in 2018 – 2019. As we reflect on the work we have done, we are continuing to build frameworks, develop action plans, and activate efforts to reach all of our Strategic Goals.

- 1** **Leverage** our location and presence within McLean County to foster creative place-making and immersive learning experiences in the visual arts.
- 2** **Demonstrate** leadership by presenting high quality and compelling programming in the visual arts.
- 3** **Build** capacity to deliver on our mission.



**1**

**LEVERAGE OUR LOCATION AND PRESENCE WITHIN MCLEAN COUNTY TO FOSTER CREATIVE PLACEMAKING AND IMMERSIVE LEARNING EXPERIENCES IN THE VISUAL ARTS.**

Through a collaborative partnership with and the generous support of the Illinois Art Station Foundation, this past year saw the procurement and beginning development of a permanent facility for Illinois Art Station. Located at 101 E. Vernon Ave. in Normal, IL, our new home will feature two art studios, a gallery space, library, and public making spaces. We are set to begin construction by the end of 2020 and welcome visitors to the facility in mid-2021.

**2**

**DEMONSTRATE LEADERSHIP BY PRESENTING HIGH QUALITY AND COMPELLING PROGRAMMING IN THE VISUAL ARTS.**

We are continually developing and refining programming to fulfill our mission and meet the need for arts engagement in our community. This past year our youngest artists participated in Itsy programs that focused on social and emotional development and pre-literacy skills. Youth artists enthusiastically joined us for the *After School Arts Club*, and the *Teen Collective* offered teen artists an opportunity to explore and address topics of importance and interest to them. Moving forward, we are continuing to develop programs that build on these successes and address current and future needs.

**BUILD CAPACITY  
TO DELIVER ON  
OUR MISSION.**

**3**

Throughout 2019 – 2020, IAS worked to develop and deepen relationships with community partners. We developed a dedicated and active Board of Directors and we are continuing to lay the groundwork for further collaborations, both programmatic and financial, that will allow us to fulfill our mission and extend our impact.



# PROGRAMMING

# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

## ITSY ARTS AND ITSY STUDIO

2019–2020 saw the advent of two new programs: *Itsy Arts: Emotions and Melodies* and *Itsy Studio: In the Community*. These programs built upon the success of our popular *Itsy Arts series*—a program for children 5 and under offered in partnership with the Bloomington Public Library. *Itsy Arts* and *Itsy Studio* focus on exploring how engagement with the visual arts promotes social and emotional growth. We have been able to gather data that shows this direct correlation through a partnership with Graduate Research Assistants from Illinois State University.





# ITSY ARTS: EMOTIONS & MELODIES

Through an award from the Illinois Prairie Community Foundation's Women to Women Giving Circle grant, we produced *Itsy Arts: Emotions and Melodies* in partnership with Children's Home & Aid and the Illinois Symphony Orchestra. Developed for children ages 3 to 5 and their caregivers, this program was delivered in two six-week sessions with one lesson a week. Illinois Art Station educators, Illinois Symphony Orchestra staff, and hired musicians collaborated to teach exciting and dynamic lessons that helped our young artists to musically and visually express six emotions (happy, sad, excited, surprised, angry, and calm) through various hands-on art activities.

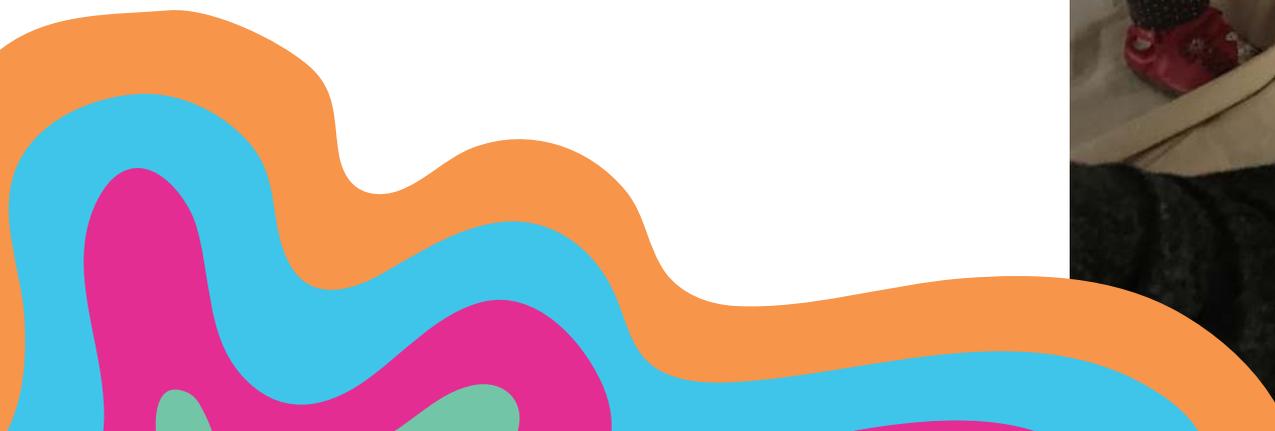
To gauge effectiveness we measured how accurately the child participants identified emotions. We found that:

- 75% could identify happy
- 70% could identify calm
- 60% could identify excited
- Over 50% could identify sad and angry
- 40% could identify surprise
- By the end of the program we saw a 27% increase in emotion identification.

Through post-program surveys, parents reported that:

- They and their child spoke about music and art at home
- Their child used art and music to talk about or express their feelings at home
- They thought the program helped with their child's social-emotional growth and well-being.

Additionally, surveys asked what positive impact parents felt *Itsy Arts: Emotions and Melodies* had on them as a parent/caregiver and on their child. Parents reported increased parent-child interactions, learning about and increased interest in visual art and live music, and experience with live music as positive outcomes for themselves and their children. They also reported family bonding and help with parenting skills and strategies as positive outcomes from themselves as caregivers.





# ITSY STUDIO: IN THE COMMUNITY

*Itsy Studio: In the Community* is made possible through the generous support of the PNC Grow Up Great® grant. *Itsy Studio* is delivered at three area early-childhood education centers for children ages 3 to 5. 2019–20 was year 1 of this 2-year program where IAS educators meet with students for 24 weeks over the fall and spring semesters. Like *Itsy Arts*, *Itsy Studio* centers on social and emotional learning through a focus on emotion recognition and expression. Through various art processes our young artists learn how to describe their own emotions and recognize them in others.

To more accurately assess the impact of this program, trained research assistants from Dr. Julie Campbell's Lab at Illinois State University recorded observational data on teacher-child interactions and peer-to-peer interactions. Surveys were used to gather information from caregivers and teachers regarding their perceptions of the program's results.

During the first year of *Itsy Studio*, students showed an increased ability to correctly identify emotions. Additionally, by the end of programming in spring

2020, 80% of students were using emotion language to express their feelings in relation to art, as compared to 66% at the beginning of the semester.

78% of parents surveyed reported that their children used art to express their emotions more often since participating in *Itsy Studio*. 85% reported improvement in their child's social skills and 81% saw improvement in their child's ability to express emotion. 86% of teachers reported improvements in social interactions among their students since the program began.

Both *Itsy Arts* and *Itsy Studio* provided critical arts engagement for our youngest artists. This engagement created opportunities for marked social and emotional growth and, after a year long hiatus due to COVID-19, we are looking forward to completing the second year of *Itsy Studio* in 2021–22.



## ITSY ARTS: AT THE LIBRARY

Offered at both Bloomington Public Library and Normal Public Library, *Itsy Arts: at the Library* provides children under five years of age with an imaginative visual arts experience. Our youngest artists participate in explorative play with art materials, learn about personal expression, and develop fine motor and pre-literacy skills.

## AFTER SCHOOL ARTS CLUB

In partnership with Normal Public Library, *After School Arts Club*, for artists ages 6 to 12, was one of our most well attended programs of the year. Meeting once a month, artists learned about various art periods, techniques, and concepts. They then practiced art making based on engagement with inspiration artworks.

## TAP SPROUTS

Once a week IAS educators visited Sprouts, an early intervention program, offered by Illinois State University's The Autism Program at the Milestones Early Learning Center. These artists explored different methods of art making, developed crucial communication and motor skills, and practiced personal expression as they worked to create many wonderful works of art.

## TEEN COLLECTIVE

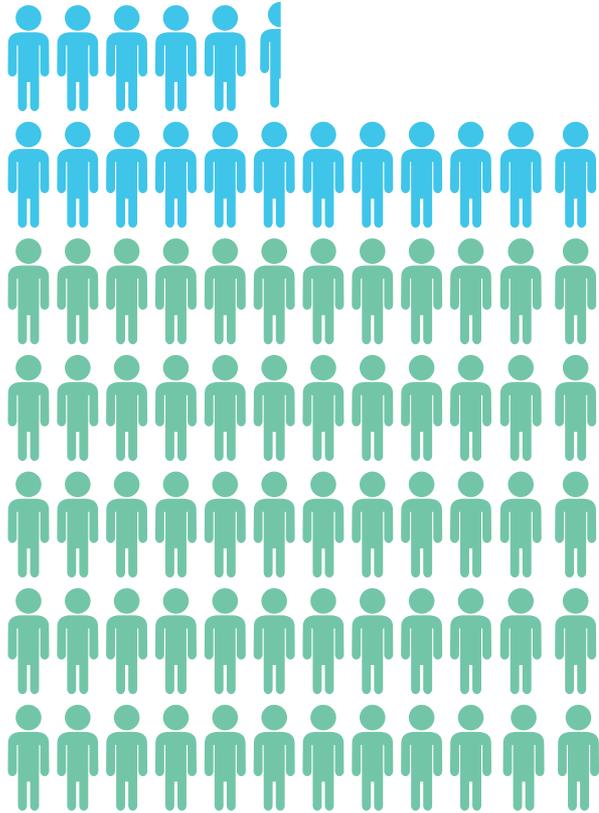
*Teen Collective* was a group of socially engaged teen artists who worked as individuals and as a whole to create original works of art for exhibition based on important issues in the community. Teen artists were active participants in group discussions and collaborated with IAS educators in determining what topics they wanted to address. *Teen Collective* artists created work that engaged with issues of mental health, LGBTQ+ rights, and racial injustice.

## FESTIVALS AND EVENTS

In addition to our recurring programs, IAS educators provided engaging and thoughtful art activities at a number of local events this past year, including: Sugar Creek Arts Festival, the Pisgah Palooza Fest, the Chinese Moon Fest, Children's Discovery Museum Day of Play, Books Alive at YWCA, India: Day of the Child, and the Illinois Shakespeare Festival.

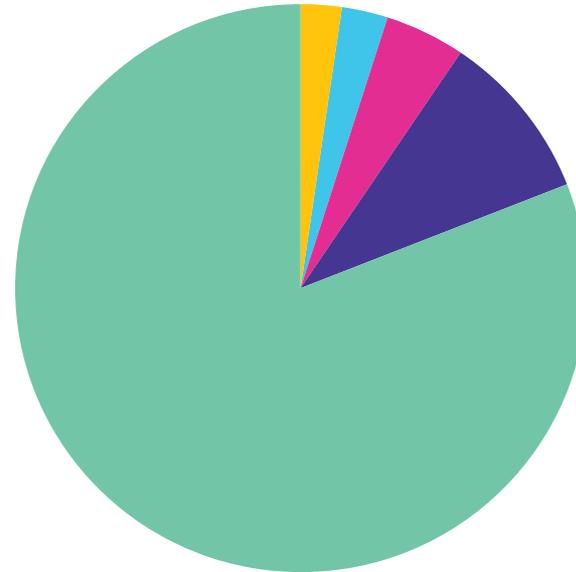


# OUR IMPACT — PROGRAMS BREAKDOWN



**7760**  
art making  
moments

**1654**  
individuals



ITSY STUDIO: 81%

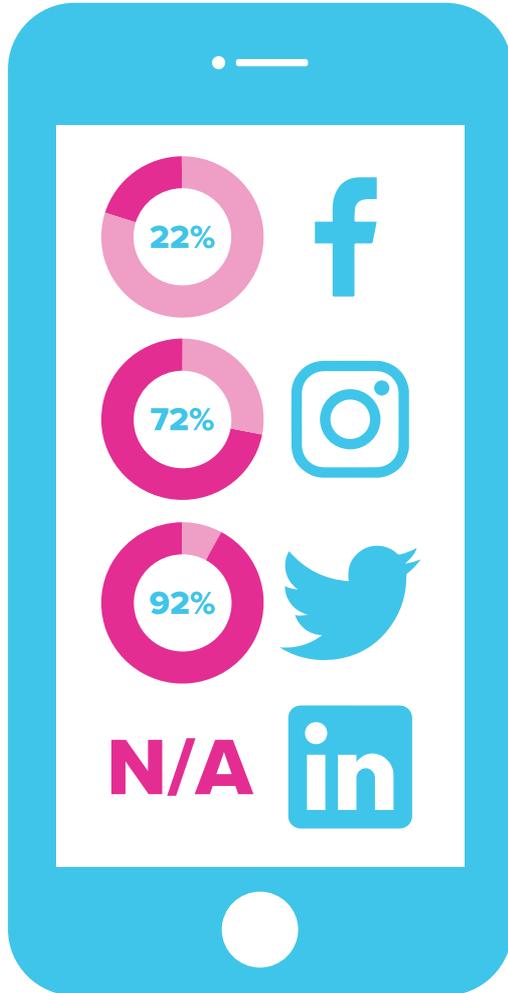
COMMUNITY EVENTS: 9.6%

YOUTH AND TEENS: 4.5%

ITSY: 2.6%

ITSY ARTS: EMOTIONS AND  
MELODIES: 2.3%

# OUR IMPACT – SOCIAL MEDIA



TOTAL SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWER COUNT  
AND PERCENT INCREASE OVER FY19

**1033 followers**

**837 followers**

**123 followers**

**17 followers**

# COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Advocate BroMenn Medical Center  
Artolution  
The Autism Place  
BCAI (formerly BCAI School of Arts)  
Big Brothers Big Sisters  
Bloom Community School  
Bloomington Public Library  
Bloomington High School  
Boys and Girls Club  
Brigham Early Learning  
Children's Discovery Museum  
Children's Home and Aid  
City of Bloomington  
City of Bloomington's Beautification Committee  
First Star Academy  
Girl Scouts of America  
Heartland Headstart

Illinois Shakespeare Festival  
Illinois Symphony Orchestra  
Inside Out Accessible Art  
Normal Public Library  
Marcfirst  
McLean County Arts Center  
McLean County Museum of History  
Milner Library, Illinois State University  
Prairie Pride Coalition  
Sarah Raymond School of Early Education  
Town of Normal  
Unity Community Center  
West Bloomington Revitalization Project  
Western Avenue Community Center  
University Galleries, Illinois State University  
YWCA





# IAS TEAMS

## ADVISORY COMMITTEE

### **AYSEN BAKIR**

Professor of Marketing, Illinois State University

### **JUDITH BRIGGS**

Professor of Art Education, Illinois State University

### **JULIE CAMPBELL**

Assistant Professor of Psychology, Illinois State University

### **PEGGY FINNEGAN-BOYES**

Curator of Education, Illinois Art Station

### **KELLY GROSS**

Assistant Professor of Art Education, Illinois State University

### **MEGAN KATHOL BERSETT**

Interim Director, Illinois Art Station

### **MIRANDA LIN**

Professor of Early Childhood Education, Illinois State University

### **TERRY LOWE**

Instructional Assistant Professor of Management and Quantitative Methods, Illinois State University

### **KENDRA PAITZ**

Director, University Galleries

### **MARLA REESE-WEBER**

Professor of Psychology, Illinois State University

### **CHANG SU-RUSSELL**

Assistant Professor of Family and Consumer Sciences, Illinois State University

### **MICHAEL WILLE**

Director, Wonsook Kim School of Art

## ILLINOIS ART STATION FOUNDATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### **LAURA E. BERK**

President

### **RICK LEWIS**

Vice-President

### **STEVE LANCASTER**

Secretary

## PROGRAM AND EVALUATION COMMITTEE

### **PEGGY FINNEGAN-BOYES**

Chair, Curator of Education, Illinois Art Station

### **JULIE CAMPBELL**

Assistant Professor of Psychology, Illinois State University

### **GREG BRASWELL**

Associate Professor of Psychology, Illinois State University

### **JUDITH BRIGGS**

Professor of Art Education, Illinois State University

### **LAURA FINAN**

Assistant Professor of Psychology, Illinois State University

### **KELLY M. GROSS**

Assistant Professor of Art Education, Illinois State University

### **MIRANDA LIN**

Professor of Early Childhood

### **CHANG SU-RUSSELL**

Assistant Professor of Family and Consumer Sciences, Illinois State University

## ILLINOIS ART STATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### **MARLA REESE-WEBER**

President

### **STEVE LANCASTER**

Vice-President

### **SHARI BUCKELLEW**

Secretary/Treasurer

# STAFF HIGHLIGHTS

## AARON CALDWELL

### Graduate Art Educator

“This past year at IAS has shown me a lot about myself regarding my interests and abilities as an artistic educator. Working with IAS has given me the opportunity to polish my skill set more often than I would have been able to had I not taken this position.”



## REBECCA BOVE

### Graduate Research Assistant

“My time at IAS has been such an amazing experience. When I first joined over a year ago, I was excited to see where it would take me. What initially drew me to IAS was the work they do. I love that different children from the community have the opportunity to do different forms of art that they normally would not get. I wanted to contribute to this organization in any way I could and I love that I got the opportunity to help through doing what I love, which is research. I have gained valuable experience with conducting research from the ground up. I am forever grateful to IAS and look forward to what they will accomplish in the future!”





## **ELISSA DOHERTY**

### **Graphic Designer**

“My time at Illinois Art Station has proven to be an invaluable experience. I’ve had the opportunity to work with a team of wonderful people in fields of both Graphic Design and Art Education. The work IAS does is extremely important to our community, and I’m so glad to be a part of it. I can’t wait to see what the future holds for IAS!”



## **ALICE BRANDENBURG**

### **Administrative Intern and Communication Specialist**

“Illinois Art Station helped me find my passion. With their powerful mission statement, they provide students and volunteers alike with an opportunity to make a difference where it matters. Illinois Art Station celebrates art and emphasizes the positive impact it can have on a community. My time at Illinois Art Station actually inspired me to seek out higher education in Community Arts Education and pursue a career in this field. I hope one day to work with an organization as inspiring and worthwhile as Illinois Art Station!”

# ILLINOIS ART STATION STAFF 2019 – 2020

## ADMINISTRATION:

**MEGAN KATHOL BERSETT**  
Interim Director

**PEGGY FINNEGAN-BOYES**  
Curator of Education

**LAURA KILIAN JASTER**  
Executive Director (June 2020 onward)

## COMMUNICATION:

**ALICE BRANDENBURG**  
Administrative Intern  
and Communication Specialist

**DELANEY SOMERS**  
Graduate Communication Specialist

## EDUCATION:

**BROOKE BALL**  
Graduate Art Educator

**MCKENZIE BIGLAZZI**  
Early Childhood Teaching Artist

**AARON CALDWELL**  
Graduate Art Educator

**JOEY HATCH**  
Graduate Art Educator  
and Program Coordinator

**ROSELLA HYLAND**  
Early Childhood Teaching Artist

**AJ KEPKA**  
Graduate Art Educator

**JILL KUANFUNG**  
Graduate Art Educator

**MAGGIE LESSER**  
Graduate Art Educator

**LUKE LOWERS**  
Graduate Art Educator

**ANYA ROWE**  
Equity and Accessibility Educator

## **DESIGN AND MEDIA:**

**ELISSA DOHERTY**

Graphic Designer

**ALANA GUGGENHEIM**

Media Assistant

**HANNA KIM**

Graphic Designer

**KRISTIN LOPEZ**

Media Assistant

**JIMMY PARELLO**

Student Web Designer

**REMI SWEENEY**

Graphic Designer

**DAVID ZENGE**

Graphic Designer

## **RESEARCH:**

**ASHLEY ADAMS**

Graduate Research Assistant

**REBECCA BOVE**

Graduate Research Assistant

## **STUDENT WORKERS AND VOLUNTEERS:**

**SPENCER CADMAN**

**GRACIE CHUNES**

**VICTORIA GOMEZ**

**MYA HILDRETH**

**KELLY KERRIGAN**

**ANNELISE LEBER**

**VICTORIA MILES**

**GIANNA MIRITELLO**

**ERICA NEAL**

**ROSY PAULSON**

**JAQUELINE ROBSON**

**DIANA TUNGU**

**SAVI VALLE**



# FINANCIALS

## CONTRIBUTIONS

Thank you to all our donors for your continued support of Illinois Art Station's mission and outreach. It is through your generosity that we can produce quality arts programming and continue to develop and deepen our impact on our community's children, youth, and teens. Please consider supporting our mission!

### \$10 – \$50

NICOLE MOORE

KEVEN AND MEGAN BERSETT

### \$100 – \$500

STATE FARM COMPANIES FOUNDATION

JOHN AND KAREN ANDREW

### \$500 – \$1000

MYRA AND GEORGE GORDON

### \$5000 – \$10,000

ILLINOIS PRAIRIE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

WOMEN TO WOMEN GIVING CIRCLE

### \$20,000 – \$30,000

PNC FOUNDATION GROW UP GREAT®

FOUNDING GIFT AND CONTINUED GENEROUS  
SUPPORT FROM DR. LAURA E. BERK



# LETTER FROM OUR FOUNDING DONOR

As 2020 draws to a close, it has been thrilling for me to keep abreast of IAS's impressive accomplishments. Despite the challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic, IAS has continued to bring hands-on visual arts experiences to thousands of children and teens in our community through outreach programming. I have observed first-hand IAS's amazing staff of art educators as they delivered innovative programming in school classrooms, in public libraries, at arts festivals, and in other community settings, along with their flexibility and efficiency in shifting to online teaching mid-year. And just over a year ago, I witnessed youth from different neighborhoods—who collaboratively designed and painted the IAS-sponsored mural at the corner of Market Street and Morris Avenue—join hands with their new “art friends” to accept a City of Bloomington Beautification Award for their vibrant depiction of what our community means to them. IAS is energetically realizing its mission of enabling children and youth, in all their diversity, to reap the powerful personal, cognitive, and social benefits of transformative, self-expressive experiences in the visual arts.

As I write this message, construction of IAS's new facility is under way, on a historic, beautiful wooded property close to the Constitution Trail and Uptown Normal. Once IAS settles into its permanent home in mid-2021, Bloomington–Normal will rank among just a handful of U.S. cities with a community arts space dedicated to serving children, youth, and their families through high-quality visual arts education. It is an indescribable privilege and pleasure to have played a pivotal role in the realization of Illinois Art Station. I am deeply grateful to many others—at Illinois State University, in the Bloomington-Normal community, and elsewhere—who have contributed to this endeavor over the past four years.

## LAURA E. BERK

**President  
Illinois Art Station Foundation**

**Distinguished Professor Emerita  
Illinois State University**



**ART**  
**ILLINOIS**  
**ART**  
**STATION**