

30th Anniversary!

Kids Arts Festival

SATURDAY, JUNE 1

12-4 P.M.

JAY STREET, OUTSIDE SCHENECTADY CITY HALL

PRESENTED BY



SPONSORED BY



NEIL GOLUB

FESTIVAL SHINES SPOTLIGHT ON ART FOR ALL AGES

For three decades, kids of all ages from across the Capital Region have converged on downtown Schenectady for an arts festival designed just for them.

June 1 celebrates the 30th anniversary of Schenectady's annual Kids Arts Festival, with the perfect formula of family fun for four hours. Participants may:

- Receive hands-on instruction from professional artists and arts educators in sculpting, painting, music, dance and more.
- Help create a community art piece or make their own art to bring home.
- Meet professional creatives and ask them questions about their work.
- Enjoy performances by professional and student musicians.

More than 40 artists, 12 arts educators, 30 stage and street performers and one award-winning illusionist will fill the streets around City Hall. This year, the festival area includes the new Jay Square, a family-friendly public space across from City Hall.

FUNDING CUTS SPURRED COMMUNITY ACTION

The festival idea was born in 1993 after years of budget cuts to arts and music programs in schools across the region. That December, former Schenectady mayor Karen Johnson contacted Eli Taub, a Schenectady Family Court judge, Joan Gould, director of the Scotia-Glenville Children's Museum and Janet Hutchison, owner of The Open Door Bookstore. They had two goals: to encourage families to spend time downtown and to provide them with free access to arts of all kinds. "We wanted kids to be able to experience and directly participate with art," said Hutchison. "And we all knew how art and music programs in schools had been gutted."

Tom Della Sala, an English teacher at Schenectady High School, was president of the Schenectady Federation of Teachers at that time. "Because art and music are not required at the elementary level, those programs are often the first to be cut in a budget crisis." Della Sala, who retired in 2006, noted that while much has changed, the need to fight for school funding continues every year.

Launching the festival the first Saturday in June 1994 was a challenge met by many partners. "The first year there were no funds, no reimbursements for anything," said Miki Conn, former executive director of the Hamilton Hill Arts Center (HHAC). "But Karen knew we had artists and supplies and would bring something that was both educational and fun."

They didn't even have a brochure, Karen Johnson recalled in 2019. "We were way too busy just trying to make it a reality. The first time you do something, you don't know if you're doing it right or wrong, but you hope for the best."



Karen Johnson posed with the Smile Monster at the 2018 festival

Valerie Lewis, a Hamilton Hill artist, recalls bringing “God’s Eyes,” the technique of weaving yarn of different colors around crisscrossed sticks, to the first festival. HHAC has been a partner every year since. Lewis likes to explain how different colors can complement or contrast. “For the youngest kids, it helps them with their fine motor skills.” This year, she returns with materials for kids to create a Father’s Day card, a key chain or a beaded bracelet.

MOST MAGICAL FESTIVAL YET

Kids Arts Festival is presented by The Electric City Arts and Entertainment District, a non-profit whose mission is to foster cultural presentations in the public spaces of Schenectady and unite the region through the collaborative power of the arts.

“We’re presenting our most ambitious and magical programming ever,” said Philip Morris, who chairs the non-profit, which also runs the Jazz on Jay concert series and the Art in Bloom workshops at the Schenectady Greenmarket. “The festival planning committee has done a great job of making sure that children and families in our community experience the incredible diversity of arts and artists. There is something for everyone.”

All activities, performances and entertainment are free, thanks to sponsorships ranging from individual donors to state and county agencies and corporations like MVP Health Care, which has been an event sponsor for decades.

“This unique event provides families across the Capital Region an opportunity to enjoy fun and creative activities that support both physical and mental health for children,” said MVP Health Care’s Chief Marketing and Sales Officer, Deborah Brundage. “We’re proud to again sponsor this event. MVP will be on Jay Street throughout the day with games and giveaways that kids and families of all ages will be sure to enjoy.”

FORMULA FOR SUCCESS

What has made Kids Arts Festival such a long-running event? The secret ingredient, said Colleen Merays, who served on the planning committee from 2002-2018, is coming up with activities that anyone from any age would enjoy. “I especially remember when the moniker for adding the arts into the science, technology and math programs (STEAM) came around and we got General Electric volunteers to host a slime table,” Merays said. “It was so great for kids to learn not just the science of how mixing compounds of borax and glue could make this thing, but that you could create some art from that.”

Merays has shared many different experiences with festival attendees over the years. Her family moved to North Carolina in 2019, but she’s delighted that both bubbles and butterflies will be featured at the 30th anniversary. “I helped kids make their own butterflies or fairies out of coffee filters in 2017, and the idea that kids are helping to create a butterfly selfie station, and they can then go to the greenhouse in Central Park and get their picture taken and know they played a part in creating it is truly special.”

Kids will also get to create their own butterfly wands by visiting the Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) station. CCE of Schenectady County is one of 37 groups participating in the festival, and is helping to fund a butterfly selfie station, combining community art with science. Visual artist Ubu will direct students in completing a station featuring a monarch butterfly, caterpillars and milkweed. The finished piece will then live in the children’s garden at the Greenhouse in Central Park. Butterflies are also featured in the mural Steve Kowalski will oversee at the festival, with participation from attendees.

ART FOR ALL AND ALL FOR ART

In addition to Ubu, other artists helping participants work on pieces the public can enjoy include musician Matt Saleh, fiber artist Sarah Boink and sculptor Matthew Bartik. Saleh will help children create new, original songs that will be performed June 23 at the Schenectady Greenmarket's Art in Bloom. Boink will direct participants in weaving bands. Once completed, those bands will wrap a variety of locations to bring colors and textures to unexpected places downtown. Bartik will teach people how to create chain mail in a community art piece.

Along with those activities, children will also be able to try out a wide variety of musical instruments at different stations. Schenectady music educators oversee a herd of trombones, trumpets, violins at the instrument petting zoo, while musicians Mikey Baish, Alec Lewis and Matt Malone bring a Guitar Hero vibe to their station, focusing on ukuleles and percussion.

Other groups involved in the Kids Arts Fest include CREATE Community Studios, the Electric City Barn, Electric City Puppets and the New York State Folklore Society.

TWO STAGES OF ENTERTAINMENT

Magician Leon Étienne will open the festivities with an interactive illusion performance at noon on the main stage in front of the new Jay Square. Chinese Community Center Performers and Dance with Narthanalaya will make their debuts at the festival, while the Hamilton Hill Arts Center brings back a fashion show with a twist. "We invite anyone who fashions their own clothes to take the stage with us," said Rachel Conn, HHAC director.

In addition to the main stage, The Puppet People will perform at the lawn stage, performing 30-minute shows at 1, 2 and 3 p.m. "We're thrilled to have The Puppet People return for our anniversary, as they and the Hamilton Hill Arts Center are the only two groups who have been involved since the beginning," said festival chair Betsy Sandberg. In 1994, Michelle and Mark Carrigan had just created The Puppet People, their Schenectady-based puppetry company. They have been with the festival ever since, though their work takes them all over the East Coast. "We love performing in our hometown and it's a great kick-off to the summer," said Mark Carrigan.

The Puppet People will also provide a puppet-making activity and are crafting a Naked Puppet as one of the prizes for the costume contest, which is also new this year.



Schenectady music teacher Robert Aronstein leads middle schoolers performing "When the Saints Go Marching In" to kick off the 2017 festival.



Mayor Gary McCarthy with the Electric City Puppets at the 2019 festival.

CONTESTS AND PRIZES

The Costumer is sponsoring a Character Creation Station, designed to help support the costume contest as people vie for prizes for best costume/character. “We’ve been around for more than 100 years and serve artists all across the country,” said co-owner Bonnie Johnsen. “But kids in the Capital Region never fail to wow us with their creativity. We can’t wait to see what they create.”

Three categories for the contest are: famous Schenectadians, famous events, objects or places, and best ensemble. Prizes include passes to the Aug. 10-11 Fandom Fest at Proctors, passes to the Schenectady County Historical Society and more.

30 YEARS OF INSPIRING CHILDREN

“The title might be Kids Arts Festival, but I’ve seen people of all ages enjoying themselves,” said Frances Giordano, a visual artist who has worked with the festival since 2009 and is also on the planning committee. Along with her husband Vincent and son Joe, the Giordanos have crafted large cardboard items to go along with themes in certain years.

“Many people tell me how they used to come as children and are now bringing their own kids,” Giordano said. “It’s a wonderful day not just for community to gather, but also to be inspired by artists.”

Co-founder Janet Hutchison looks back at the festival’s evolution, noting that more than 150,000 children and families have attended over the past three decades. “It is thrilling how it has grown and flourished, way beyond our original dreams,” she said. “I can’t wait to see what will happen next.”



2016 festival



Fran Giordano



2019 festival



Hamilton Hill Arts Center at the 2021 festival

CELEBRATE SCHENECTADY'S HISTORY WITH A COSTUME CONTEST

Halloween is still five months away, but costumed characters will be all the rage at the 30th annual Kids Arts Festival. All ages are encouraged to compete in the first-ever costume contest.

“As we celebrate our 30th anniversary, we want people to celebrate famous Schenectadians, both past and present,” said Betsy Sandberg who chairs the planning committee for the event.

The contest “is a wonderful opportunity for the community to celebrate Schenectady’s history while expressing their inner creativity,” said Bonnie Johnsen, co-owner of The Costumer, which is supporting the contest with gift cards to their store as prizes. Other prizes range from passes to the Aug. 10-11 Fandom Fest at Proctors, passes to the Schenectady County Historical Society and more.

The Costumer will also be on site for the festival with a creation station, a pop-up costume tent for dress up fun and selfies.

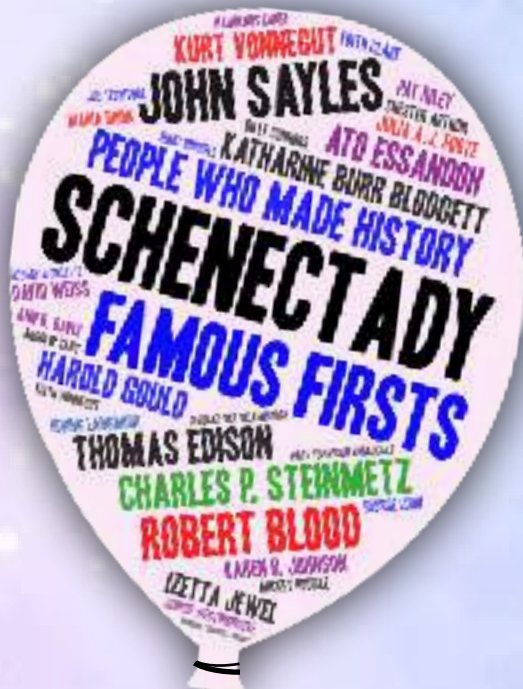
THERE ARE THREE CATEGORIES:

Famous Schenectadians: Consider those who have made history by being the first to do something, whose ideas helped make Schenectady famous, or who were born here but became well-known elsewhere.

Famous Event, Object or Place: If this seems overly broad, that is on purpose. We think it will be cool to have lots of folks dress up like a train, or the Yates dollhouse, or the Erie Canal, or the Nott Memorial or General Electric and if you need more hints, go visit the Schenectady County Historical Society’s Mabee Farm or Washington Avenue building.

Best Ensemble: Consider getting friends and families to join you in either of the above categories!

All those wishing to enter the costume must assemble at the main stage by Jay Square at 104 Jay Street at 3:30 p.m. to be judged.



A busy bee at Kids Arts Fest



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See how MVP treats you like our Most Valuable Person.
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Health benefit plans are issued or administered by MVP Health Plan, Inc.; MVP Health Insurance Company; MVP Select Care, Inc.; and MVP Health Services Corp., operating subsidiaries of MVP Health Care, Inc. Not all plans available in all states and counties.

PIECING IT TOGETHER

“Schenectady + Me” has grown since its 2018 debut at the festival. In the early 1990s, Peg Foley worked as a presenter for the Scotia-Glenville Children’s Museum, which Joan Gould directed. Gould told her about the idea for a festival to help get art supplies and instruction to schools across Schenectady County.

“Joan always had such great ideas for various projects,” Foley said, recalling that for the first year, the museum made origami fold books with kids and then collaged covers for them.

Working with Joan and the museum inspired Foley to get a master’s degree so she could teach kids art in school full time. And 23 years after that first Kids Arts Festival, Foley had no idea she would have a big hand in bringing collage to another Kids Arts Festival.

“As CREATE was forming in 2017, Peg and I brainstormed on a number of ideas to begin a true community art project,” Hutchison said. “When I was in college, I also worked as an instructor for the Scotia-Glenville Children’s Museum. It gave me a spark of how kids needed outlets to be creative beyond art instruction in schools, where they weren’t graded or judged for their creativity.

“Peg’s idea of ‘Schenectady + Me’ really encompassed what we were building with CREATE: a true community space where everyone’s creativity is valued. The project really kicked-off many of CREATE’s community-based programs and allowed us to introduce ourselves to a larger audience.”

“Schenectady + Me” debuted at Kids Arts Festival. Foley and CREATE brought the project to other outdoor events during 2018 and 2019. Then in 2019, Foley received individual and art education funding from ACCR to develop the process to turn the collages into outdoor tiles to adorn benches.

Funding from The Schenectady Foundation’s Thriving Neighborhood Challenge and additional sponsors paid for some of the collages to be turned into outdoor tiles to adorn benches in four locations. This year, another bench will be installed at the Sycamore urban farm off Brandywine Avenue and a piece featuring “Schenectady + Me” tiles will be erected at the Sankofa Sculpture Park off Schenectady Street.

The project expanded even further as CREATE brought in Kristi Isabella as a ceramic’s instructor. She also received a grant from the Arts Center of the Capital Region to use the same model of bringing the project to numerous events, agencies and schools by having participants sculpt individual tiles out of clay.

“That allowed us to introduce a new art medium to many who have not been able to use clay,” Hutchison said. These tiles will be used create a true community mosaic in the ALCO Tunnel that will reconnect Erie Boulevard to Jay Street.

The entire project is “a win, win, win for all,” Foley said. “Any time we can expose both children and adults to hands-on art making activities and temporarily draw them away from the addictive use of screens we help to create both confidence and joy.”



Samples of collages that will be turned into tiles to adorn the interior of the ALCO Tunnel.

FAQS ABOUT KIDS ARTS FESTIVAL

How to get here:

If you are using GPS, enter 432 State St. or 105 Jay St. Schenectady, NY 12305 to help guide you to the general event area. Most activities will be on the two streets around City Hall and in the new Jay Square gathering space.

Where to park:

All parking is free on Saturdays. The Broadway Garage at 220 Broadway is your best bet if the festival must move inside Proctors due to rain or air quality. From the garage, walk to State Street and then to the Jay Street Pedestrian walkway toward City Hall.

Also try these nearby parking lots:

- Liberty and Franklin Lot: 422 Liberty St.
- Clinton North Lot: 128 Clinton St.
- Center City Lot: 425 Franklin St.
- City Hall Lot: 407 Liberty St.
- Broadway North Lot: 102 Broadway

More information may be found on www.parkSchenectady.com.

Two streets around City Hall, Jay and Franklin, will be closed. Participating agencies will still be able to set up for the event until 11 a.m. when the streets will stay closed until 5 p.m.

What's the schedule:

More than 50 activities will be ready at noon. If there's a long line at one, just go find another! Entertainment at the Jay Square stage will begin at noon. The Puppet People will begin the first of three performances at 1 p.m. on the Lawn Stage. See the list of activities at kidsartsfestivalschenectady.com.

Where are the bathrooms?

The first floor of City Hall will be open for restrooms.

What if we are hungry or thirsty?

There are many coffee shops and restaurants along the Jay Street walkway and by City Hall. They all support our festival and we hope you will support them. Kona Ice will sell Hawaiian ices.

What if it's going to rain?

A few drops of rain in the morning while we're setting up doesn't worry us. But if it's really going to rain then we'll move 95 percent of the activities inside Proctors at 432 State St. The Kona vehicle will be outside on Stratton Plaza. A couple activities will move to under the Proctors marquee at both the front and rear entrances because they are just too messy to have inside a historic building.

When will we know?

We'll post the decision on social media if we're moving inside by 9 a.m. on June 1.



— AT THE —
**SCHENECTADY
GREENMARKET**
10:00 A.M. TO 2:00 P.M.

Every Sunday starting May 19
come experience a different art activity

Song lyrics written at the June 1
Kids Arts Festival will be performed
at the **JUNE 23** Schenectady Greenmarket!
Matt Saleh will bring a band of musicians
for you to see how your words can be
transformed when set to music.

PRESENTED BY



Council on
the Arts



This series is made possible by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature.



1-3 p.m. on June 1
Open house at 418 Liberty St.



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JAZZ ON JAY

JAY STREET
NOON-1:30PM

Presented by **ELECTRICITY**
ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT

June 6 Killdeer Trio

June 13 Cliff Brucker & New Circle

June 20 Michael Benedict Jazz Vibes

June 27 Matty Stecks & The 518

July 11 MC^2 *Featuring special guests
Andrew Hearn on drums and
Dave Shoudy on bass*

July 18 Brian Patneau Quintet

July 25 Awan Rashad Quartet

Aug. 1 Joe Sorrentino

Aug. 8 Terry Gordon Quintet

Aug. 15 Joe Finn Trio

Aug. 22 Bossamba

Aug. 29 Joe Barna

*Rain location for all concerts:
Robb Alley at Proctors*

Sponsored by



CREDITS

Most photographs in this special section are by Vincent Giordano Photography. Other photos have been provided by participants at previous festivals or found online.

Graphic design by John Patacsil and marketing promotion by Kelly Auricchio.

Kids Arts Festival Planning Committee 2024:

Oscar Alberto Bogran, McCauley Cannizzo, John Deaton, Erin Eckler, Frances Giordano, Kristen Holler, Heather Hutchison, Ellen McHale, Anne Rappaport, Matt Saleh, Betsy Sandberg, MaryJane Shave, Dan Sheehan, Amy Sonder, Keisha Renee Stovall, Kaela Wallman, Barbara Ward and Laura Winter.