



Big Picture Initiative
Changing the
Face of Peoria

2020 *End of the Year Report*



Overview

If 2020 had been a normal year, Big Picture Initiative would have hosted mural classes with Peoria Public Schools, videomaking classes at the Romain Center, art classes for guests at the Ronald McDonald House, and the second annual Little Big Picture Student Team Painting competition. We would have held our 3rd annual street festival with collaboration from with nearly 100 artists and arts organizations in our community.

We don't get to choose what challenges we face in life, but we do get to choose how we deal with them. As we realized that 2020 wasn't going to be a normal year, we did what creatives do. We adapted. Our efforts to help raise up our community through the arts looks quite different than our previous 2 years, but we think you will be proud of how your contributions to Big Picture Initiative were put to use.

The Team

2020 Board of Directors Officers:

Doug Leunig	President and Co-Founder
Mark Misselhorn	Vice President
Eileen Leunig	Secretary/Treasurer, Co-Founder

2020 Board of Directors:

Heather Brammeier
Heather Ford
Maggie Misselhorn
Nikki Romain

2020 Interns:

Jamie Wunning, Bradley University
Trent Miles, Richwoods High School



We made progress in each of our pillars:



Arts Education

to empower children through the arts and help them achieve skills in the four Cs—critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration

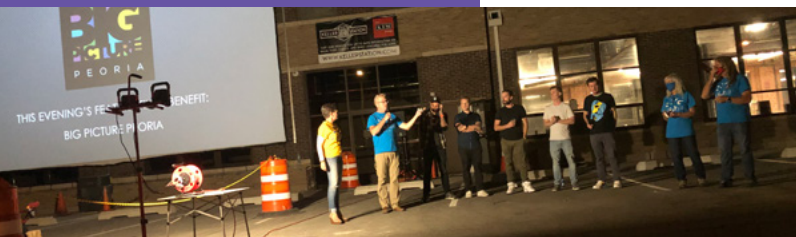
- 1000 Imagination Starter Kits for children ages 6-13
- Giving Voice—a digital magazine written and created by students



Public Art

to increase community vibrancy by visibility showing the pride we feel in our community

- 1200 square feet of painted murals by Bradley students
- 1100 square feet of new mounted murals



Street & Film Festival

to celebrate the creativity of our arts community

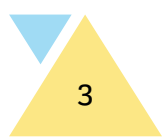
- Drive-in Theater fundraiser showcasing the 2019 Big Picture Film Festival's People Choice Winner and a feature-length Peoria made film



Collaboration

to raise up all of us by joining hands and efforts for the common good

- Ongoing relationships with Peoria Public Schools, the Ronald McDonald House, and ART Inc.
- New collaborations with Discover Peoria, Bradley University Art Department, Peoria Grown
- Worked with 30 artists on arts education, public art, and film



Since our inception in 2018,
we've accomplished a lot.

1000

Imagination Starter Kits

33%

of Peoria Public Schools have
participated in a Big Picture Peoria
mural making program

7

schools participated in our first
Little Big Picture Student Team
Painting Challenge

100

students have participated in
mural making

25

students in filmmaking classes

11

student writers and

3

artists

publish monthly in our
digital magazine

40%

of our annual budget goes toward
arts education

Arts Education

To empower children through the arts and help them achieve skills in the four Cs—critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration.



Internships

As a nonprofit, Big Picture Initiative is able to benefit from being part of Bradley University's internship program offered through the Smith Career Center. Since March 2020 we have had the satisfaction of working with Jamie Wunning. Jamie has an impressive background and from the onset of working with us she has excelled at creating newsletters and promotional pieces, managing our socials, creating a new website that will be unveiled in 1Q 2021, and serving as the art director for our newest endeavor, Giving Voice (which is covered on page 8).

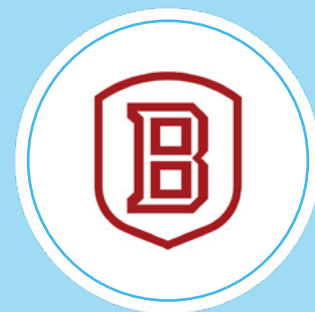
Big Picture Initiative is also working with a high school intern, Trent Miles, on Giving Voice. Trent is instrumental in building the team of student creators for Giving Voice.



Jamie Wunning, a junior attending Bradley University, has been an intern for Big Picture Initiative since April of 2020, and serves as the art director for Giving Voice. She is a student in Bradley's highly recognized Interactive Media department and Honor's program majoring in Animation with a minor in User Experience Design. Along with interning with Big Picture, Jamie is the media specialist at C.T. Gabbert Remodeling and Construction and a freelance website and graphic designer. She eagerly shares her talents with Ronald McDonald House and as a mentor to students attending Peoria High School and Lincoln Elementary School. At Bradley, Jamie serves as the President of Adventure Club, Digital Arts Team, and is the social media chair for Bradley's NERF Club. She is also a member of the National Society for Leadership and Success, Bradley's Basketball band, and Rock Climbing Club. Jamie is passionate about creating art for others in the form of animation, video editing, traditional art, photography, design, and any other way she can.



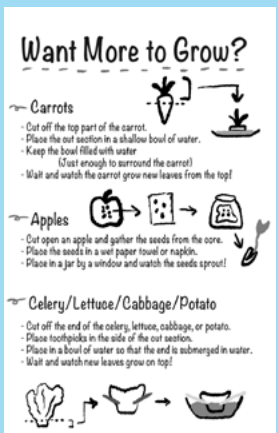
Trent Miles is a rising senior at Richwoods High School and has been working for Big Picture Initiative since May 2020. He is academically competitive and a well rounded student. Trent is the co-founder of his Richwood's climate action club, Vice President of the Minority Academic Advancement Project, and a varsity tennis player. Outside of school, he is involved in Jack and Jill of America, where he served as the Central Region Teen Vice President in 2018. In his chapter he served as Vice President, Legislative Chair and Foundation Chair. Trent also runs his own environmental blog called "EnviroWrite," which is a youth-run blog that seeks to innovate how we discuss and inform ourselves on environmental concerns. He has won 1st place in a Regional Best Hobby Exhibits competition and two Regional Alexander Pushkin writing competitions. He has contributed more than 800 hours of community service through various service projects including a winter wear drive, collecting toiletries, and even an educational African-American museum.





Imagination Starter Kits

In the summer without students being able to participate in camps, Big Picture Initiative created 1000 Imagination Starter kits. We made kits for two age ranges—grades 1-5 got art supplies for process-based art activities.



Process-based art allows children to be fully creative and use art supplies to make whatever they want and give them an experience that is uniquely their own. Children focus on creatively exploring materials, tools, and techniques. We offered a few tips to help get them started in our Idea Starter booklet.

Super Ball Slide

Make ramps and tunnels for a super ball out of cardboard recycling.

Tip: Pizza boxes work great for the wall and another box or toilet paper rolls work great for the ramps/tunnels!

There are a few things to consider:

- If the ball gathers too much momentum, it will fly off the wall.

Momentum is dependent on mass and velocity:

- If the ramps are steep, the ball will go faster.
- If the ramps are shallow, the ball will go slower.

Tip: A little momentum goes a long way! And adding bumpers to the side of the ramps may help keep the superball from falling off!

Try out different combinations to see what works best!

Students in Grades 6-8 received an art kit with materials, supplies, and instructions to tie-dye a bandana. This was a product-focused project that produced a wearable piece of art and in the process students learned how to follow multistep instructions and illustrations. The older grades Imagination Starter Kits also included ideas for additional art projects written by our board member Heather Brammeier and illustrated and produced by intern Jamie Wunning.

Crystal Cave

1) Fold a small piece of paper back and forth so it could open up again like a fan or accordion.

2) Put it under a clean sheet of paper and make a rubbing (photogal).

Tip: Keep your pencil almost parallel to the paper to pick up the folds in your rubbing without getting unintentional lines.

3) Now compare your rubbing to the original fold. It looks like an X-Ray!

Folds that you can't see on the original object are now visible in the rubbing. Artists are good at making visible what was hidden and imagining things that might exist that we can't see!

4) This transparent effect looks like crystals. By making more folded shapes you can create a whole landscape of organic caves!

Tip: Draw darker lines on an outline and erase sections to create highlights to really make your crystals come to life!



Gummy Worm Maze

In textile design, vermicular patterns wind around like the tunnels worms make through the soil.

1) Fill the picture plane with gummy worms, making sure they touch each other.

2) Trace the space in between (the negative shapes).

3) Take away the gummies and you will see the paths that will become your maze!

4) Highlight a path that you would like to be your maze. You can change or add to the maze as you wish.

5) Trace your finished maze path onto a fresh sheet of paper. You can use a window to be able to see through the paper.

6) Fill in the space between the maze paths with whatever design you can think of!

7) Add a "Start" and "Finish" spot on your maze and you are ready to play!



Pierced by Light

1) Gather items to trace such as circular caps.

2) Trace the objects onto a piece of paper.

3) Place your paper on top of a fresh piece of paper. Then place both of those on top of a pillow or a stuffed chair.

4) Use a needle or safety pin to punch holes along your traced lines.

Notice that the pinholes suggest lines from your original drawing. This is the principle of continuity - our brains fill in the blanks.

5) After punching the outlines, you can punch more holes inside the objects, or outside the objects.

6) Tape your artwork to a window and observe how it changes throughout the day.

Extra: Try this with other shapes and characters!



Giving Voice

Giving Voice is a digital magazine created and written by students with the vision of connecting people through their stories to foster empathy, equity, and community collaboration.



Giving Voice is made possible through a charitable contribution from the Gilmore Foundation.



A Note From Our Publishers

A Love Letter

Giving Voice is a love letter to our community. Everything we do at Big Picture Initiative, we do out of love. We believe in arts education opportunities for all, spanning in age from children in our schools and community centers to folks in retirement communities. From the 50-foot tall 'Abraham Blue' mural on the Peoria County Courthouse to enhance the visual vibrancy of our city, to our new endeavor, Giving Voice, we are showing what we love about our community. It's all the nooks and crannies, the highs and lows, and the diversity that makes us who we are. We also know in our hearts that the people of Central Illinois can make our community a home with a bright future, and our youth are an essential part of building that future.

We believe the arts give students a voice—a voice that is often hidden in the quest for test scores and metric achievements. The arts fill a void for students to give them a platform for self-expression and contribute to their environment. Big Picture Initiative's first arts education programs were based on visual arts, and the team has decided that now is the time to expand into communication arts. By gaining experience in being more effective communicators and having a public audience, we help prepare the next generation for their place in the future.

Through Giving Voice students will cover subjects that young people are passionate about: social justice, racial equity, the environment, living during a pandemic, adapting to the virtual world, finding employment during a job drought, learning to be influencers, and pitching in to improve to our community. Giving students a voice to address our community's most pressing needs gives them an opportunity to experience real-world situations where learning is relevant and applied.

The writers in our first issue were selected because they care about community, too. We posed the question "What does our community need?" Unlike many of the voices that are broadcasted every day, the students didn't comment on potholes or taxes, but on concepts of kindness and understanding. We are proud to feature their voices in our first issue.

Please join us in this act of building community.

Doug Leunig, Eileen Leunig, Mark Misselhorn, Maggie Misselhorn,
Heather Ford, Nikki Romain, Heather Brammeier



The Giving Voice student contributors cover subjects that concern young people today: social justice, racial equity, environmental issues, living during a pandemic, adapting to the virtual world, and finding employment during a job drought. By asking students to address our community’s most pressing needs, they gain experience in real-world situations and learning becomes relevant and applied.

One key aspect of Giving Voice is providing students guidance and growth and Big Picture Initiative selected Dr. Mae Gilliland Wright to be the mentor and editor for our student contributors. Dr. Gilliland Wright creates development opportunities for the students as well as working with them one on one to improve their communication skills.

Giving Voice released its first issue in October with a team of 6 writers. By our January 2021 issue, we had expanded to include 10 writers and 3 artists. Student contributors are paid for their published work. We continue to seek new contributors including “vloggers” (video bloggers) and podcasters.



Mae Gilliland Wright holds a Master’s Degree and Doctor of Philosophy in the digital humanities field from the University of Edinburgh, Scotland. She is the Director of Business Development at Peoria Magazines and Director of Marketing and Communications at the Peoria Symphony Orchestra. Mae is also a freelance writer, ghostwriter, and consultant, and has a teaching background in the sciences and humanities. She is the Editor-in-Chief for Big Picture Initiative’s Giving Voice online magazine. Mae sits on the ART, Inc. Board of Directors and the Public Relations Association of Central Illinois Board of Directors. In the past, she served on the ArtsPartners of Central Illinois and Acorn Equality Fund Board of Directors. Mae is a member of Americans for the Arts.



Ronald McDonald House

In early 2020, Big Picture Initiative continued their relationship with the Ronald McDonald House by hosting art classes for the guests of the House. We had teaching artists lined up for classes in painting, guitar, drumming, meditation, and cartoon creation. We were able to hold only a limited number of classes before COVID-19 set upon us.


We have plans to resume the classes at the House as soon as health restrictions allow.



Comic Life Classes

Comic Life is a software that allows users to create their own comics. Jamie Wunning was scheduled to teach classes on the Comic Life software at the Ronald McDonald House when the pandemic forced the cancelation of classes. In lieu of being able to be there in person, Jamie created an instruction sheet so guests of the House could check out on the Big Picture Initiative laptops provided at the House so young patients could create their own comics. In late fall when Peoria Public Schools began in-person classes, Jamie taught Comic Life to students at Lincoln School.





Ever wanted to create a cool comic like **Charlie Brown** or **SUPERMAN**? Now You Can! **HERE'S HOW!**

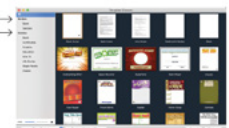
Sponsored by Ronald McDonald House and Big Picture Peoria

STARTING:

STEP 1 Find the **Comic Life 3** icon on the Task Bar at the bottom of the screen. The icon will be the same as the icon at the top of this page.

STEP 2 The **Main Screen** offers many options for all skill levels!

- Want to write your story first and easily transition it to an action packed comic? Choose either a **Blank Script** or a **Template Script!**
- Already have your story, and want to get started? Choose any of the available **Comic** templates provided that best suit your story or start with a blank slate!



CREATING A SCRIPT:


STEP 1 Navigate to: **Scripts > Blank > Blank Script**
Select this option!

STEP 2 Begin writing! Here are some tips on how to format your script:

Type this:	For this result:
Title: Epic Comic!	
Caption: It all started when...	
Bob: Hi my name is Bob.	
Bob (whisper): SHHHHH!	
Bob (thought): I think this is cool!	
SFX: BAM	
Page 2	


Remember to start a new page!

STEP 3 After you have finished your amazing script, click the **Start Comic Button** to bring your story to life!




ADDING A SCRIPT TO A COMIC:

Simply **Drag the Icon** down to where you would like it placed in the comic!



NAVIGATING THE COMIC PAGE:

- To **Add a Page Layout**, drag and drop one of these layout icons into the middle section of the screen (the workspace).
- To **Add Words/Text/Boxes**, drag and drop the object of your choice from this menu.
- To **Add a Style**, select the object you wish to stylize in the workspace and then select the style of your choice from this menu.
- To **Add/Take a Photo**, search the computer library or choose camera to take your own photos. Then drag and drop the photo into the panel you choose.
- To **Change The Orientation of an Object**, click these buttons.
- To add a **New Page**, click this button.
- To **View Pages**, select the page you want to see from this menu.
- To **Print Your Comic**, click the Print Button and ask for assistance to connect to the printer.





The Arts for Lincoln School

Soon after COVID-19 caused the cessation of in-person classes, Big Picture Initiative reached out to Lincoln School to discuss ways we could help. The outcome was the following:



We hired a local seamstress to make face masks and purchased fabric paints for kids to decorate their own masks.



We worked with a local artist to supply materials for students to make Mother's Day cards—an activity normally done in school.



We provided a celebratory backdrop for graduation photos.

8

Washington St. Murals

Public Art

Big Picture Initiative believes that public art plays a vital role in re-envisioning the future of Peoria. For too long our community has accepted the labels given to us by outside sources and news while not publicizing the efforts underway to raise up our community and bring about economic prosperity and equity. Public art humanizes the built environment and invigorates public spaces. It provides a connection from the past to the future and reflects and reveals our culture. Public art is freely accessible giving everyone the opportunity to enjoy. We began our public art efforts in 2018 with "Abraham Blue," 50-foot portrait of Abraham Lincoln that is proudly displayed on the Peoria County Courthouse.



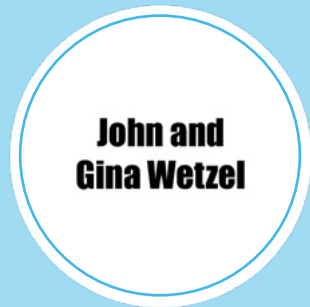
Washington Street Gallery

In early 2020, Mayor Jim Ardis connected building owners John and Gina Wetzel with the Big Picture Initiative team to carry out the Wetzels' vision of adding public art to their building at 926 SW Washington.

The Wetzels shared with us at our initial meeting that they wanted to support local artists, celebrate Peoria's past, and honor the roles their grandparents and family had in the Peoria community. From their vision and sponsorship, Big Picture Initiative created the Washington Street Gallery featuring 7 local artists plus a Minnesota artist who has worked with the Peoria Art Guild.

"Big Picture is thrilled to be taking yet another step toward making Peoria a national arts destination," said Doug Leunig, co-founder and board member of Big Picture. "With the help of business owners like John and Gina Wetzel, our community can express our creativity and do the important work of amplifying the arts. This isn't just about pretty pictures; this is about showing residents and visitors alike that the arts are essential to a vibrant and engaging community."

John Wetzel added, "Gina and I are so proud of Peoria and we wanted to show that pride in our community in a unique way. The Warehouse District has so much potential and we hope this installation can add even more momentum to the district's development. We would be thrilled if other business and property owners were inspired to bring more public art to the entire downtown area as well."



The Gallery

The Washington Street Gallery is comprised of eight large-scale mounted mural reproductions representing the following diverse works:



Gipps Brewery Ad. Vintage Gipps Amberlin Beer ad from the Peoria Public Library



“Inspiration” One of a series of 14 hand-painted linoleum relief prints by William Butler

You can read more about these works of art at

www.bigpicturepeoria.org/washington-st-murals

The Washington Street Gallery has resulted in good news for several of the artists in addition to be included in the public art gallery. Three of the artists sold work to private collectors after the ribbon cutting ceremony on October 10 and Lori Reed said “The Washington Street Gallery project of mounted murals led to a canvas reproduction of ‘Field Notes’ for the building owners and that resulted in the request to liven up an office building’s lobby.”

The Wetzel’s sponsorship of public art is a gift for all to enjoy. Please take time to visit the mural gallery and enjoy the other murals around town using our [Mural Map](#).



“Leslie” Black and white portrait
photograph by Keith Cotton



“Corvette” Commissioned acrylic painting
by Brian Jensen



“Big Mag 2.0” Deconstructed landscape painting
by Steph Van Doren



“Chopsticks” Photograph/digital art
by Natalie Jackson



“Peoria’s Colorful Past” Surreal collage of Peoria history
by Doug and Eileen Leunig



“Field Notes” Mixed media landscape
by Lori Reed

Hello Peoria Buidling

Challenging times require innovative solutions and the COVID-19 pandemic forced educators across the country to find new ways to be effective teachers. Art & Design Professor Heather Brammeier at Bradley University and Big Picture Initiative board member was one of those teachers. With students enrolled in her painting class and classroom space limited, Brammeier sought a creative and safe solution. She chose a big public art project on an empty building in Peoria's Warehouse District as their art studio for the semester. With the support of Big Picture Initiative, Brammeier obtained permission to use the city-owned building to launch a major mural project at 1316 S.W. Adams.





With a partnership involving Bradley, the City of Peoria, and Big Picture Initiative, Brammeier’s students were given permission and supplies to paint more murals on the building that was first used by Big Picture Initiative during our 2018 street festival.



In an interview in Bradley University’s Hilltop Arts Brammeier said, “To have them [the students] being aware – a lot more aware – of the power of public art has been really rewarding because it’s not just about them anymore...it’s about how it impacts anyone in the vicinity.”



Brammeier and her students interacted with a variety of people and passersby as they worked on their public art project. “All those experiences helped students understand how appreciated public art is,” Brammeier said. “Also, as students they don’t get a lot of eyes on their work unless it is on social media so for them to have their work seen by a broad audience is a great experience and something they really value.”

Brammeier and her students will continue to create public art at the site. The class has been designing artwork for the parking lot pavement. They have also been designing artwork to go around the “Hello Peoria” artwork that has been on the building since 2018.



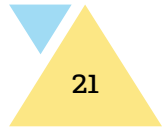
“Working on the building has given the students an opportunity that would not have been possible otherwise. Even though they jumped in and were ambitious from the beginning, the students were amazed in the end that they created something so large with so much visual impact,” Brammeier said with pride in her voice about the accomplishments of her students.

Stay tuned for more public art by Brammeier’s students in 2021.



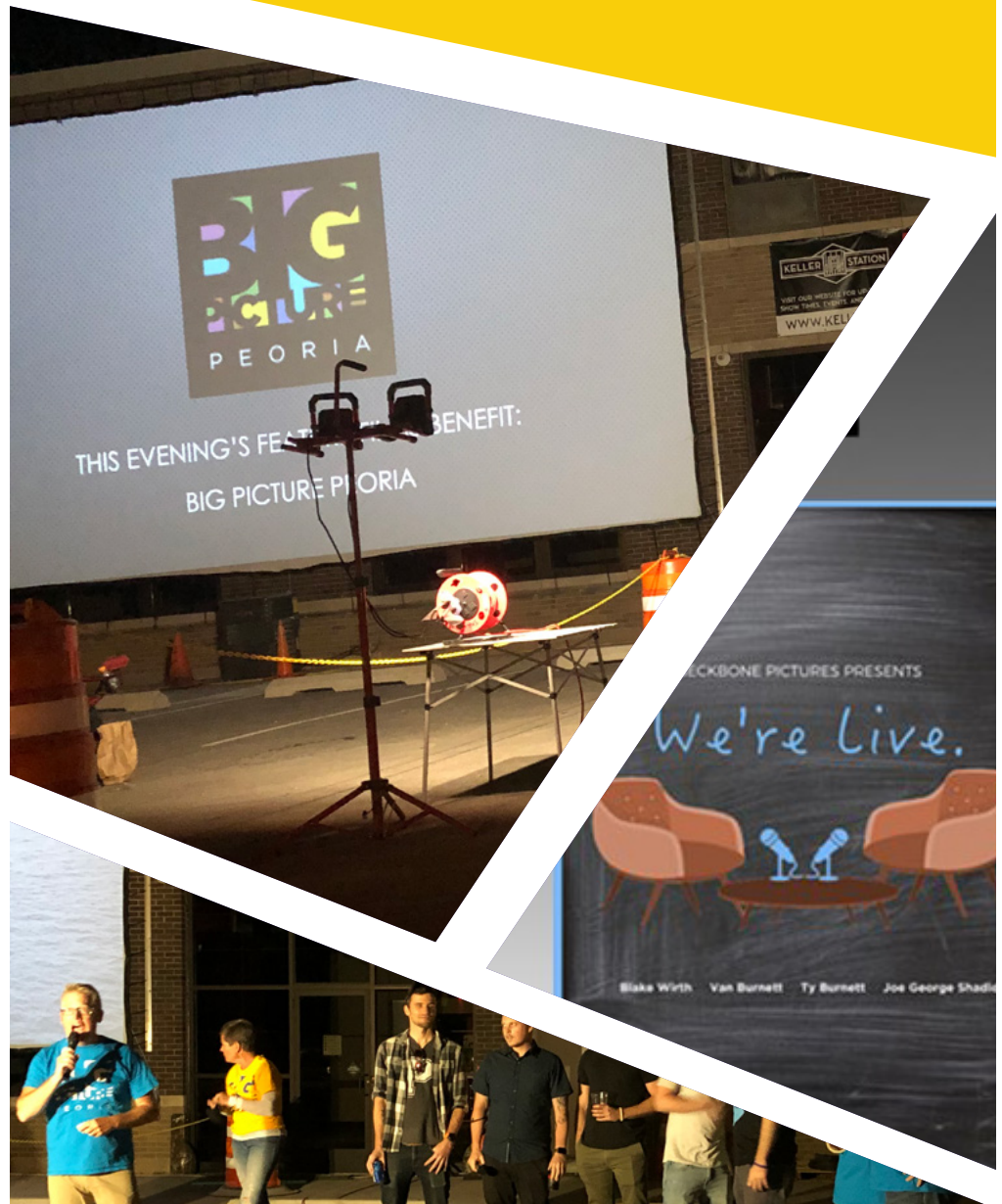
SkyArt

In collaboration with ArtsPartners of Central Illinois, Big Picture Initiative sponsored one of the SkyArt public art billboards in 2019. SkyArt, formerly known as ArtPop, puts the art of five local artists on billboards in Central Illinois. The program provides great exposure for local artists and includes a gallery show at Studios on Sheridan. Big Picture Initiative was proud to sponsor the work of Eliza Von Zerneck and will continue to work with her in 2021 in our upcoming Portraits of Peoria program.



Street Festival & Film Festival

To celebrate the creativity of our
arts community.





Street Festival and Film Festival

In the first two years of Big Picture Initiative's existence, we held a street festival in Peoria's Warehouse District and a film festival at the Peoria Riverfront Museum to celebrate the creativity of our arts community. For the street festival we joined hands with nearly 100 artists and arts organizations in our community to showcase our creative spirit. At the film festival, we hosted local filmmakers and provided a grant for one local filmmaker.

After careful consideration and discussion with the street festival volunteer team and leaders, we determined that it was unsafe to hold the street festival in 2020. In lieu of the event, we created the Imagination Starter Kits we discussed on page 6-7 for the children and assisted in the efforts to utilize the city-owned building in the festival area known as the Hello Peoria from our iconic public painting in 2018.

We were also unable to hold safely an indoor film festival so we held a celebration and fundraiser featuring two local filmmaking groups at the Keller Station Drive-In. The evening showcased "Mowing Man," a short film by the winner of the People's Choice Award at the 2019 Big Picture Film Festival, and "We're Live," a feature-length film written, film, and produced by three local filmmakers.





BIG PICTURE PEORIA & THE KIM GROUP
proudly present
Great Peoria Made Movies from 2019





We're Live

Movies remind us that we're never too old to dream. "We're Live." tells the story of old-school friends from Peoria who escape reality every Friday with their small film podcast. It's all fun and games, until a chance opportunity with a movie star puts their dreams and friendship on the line.

"...the most hilariously entertaining films I have ever seen made in Peoria." ~Doug Leunig

MowingMan



Big Picture Film Festival People's Choice Winner

"Mowing Man" is a short comedy film created by Connor Parkhurst and Jared De Roo. A young couple moves into their new home and start noticing that the neighbors are obsessed with lawn care.

Collaboration

Big Picture Initiative knows that wonderful things can be achieved in our community when there is teamwork and collaboration. Our fourth foundation pillar is the guiding principle that we raise up all of us by joining hands and efforts for the common good.





Peoria Public Schools

In the beginning of 2020, Big Picture Initiative co-founder's Doug and Eileen Leunig were invited to be part of Peoria Public Schools "Reinventing Education" initiative. The goal of the District was to identify what was working well for students, what could be improved with all the technologies available in the 21st century, and how to improve upon traditional classroom learning.

The Leunigs and other committee members were able to meet in person a few times before the pandemic and then subteams met virtually once shelter-in-place was in effect. The Leunigs were assigned to the Student Learning Experiences subcommittee and helped the team identify the need and opportunities for "beyond the wall" learning including internships, work experiences, job shadowing, field trips, and community based learning.





Ronald McDonald House Artwork —

One of the accomplishments of Big Picture Initiative in 2019 was to fill the Ronald McDonald House in Peoria with artwork that was purchased from local artists. We achieved our goal with the Art Gala in 2019 that raised \$200,000 and funded all the artwork.

In early 2020, Big Picture Initiative volunteers completed the job by securely installing over 200 pieces of art in the House's common areas and guest rooms. The team's work was immediately recognized by one of the young guests, Jonathan, who approached us as we were finishing hanging the last pieces in the lobby. Jonathan thanked us for the gift of art and felt it was helping him. He said, "My numbers have been going up since I moved into Ronald McDonald House."



Peoria Grown

Big Picture was proud to partner with Peoria Grown on the creation and beautification of veggie/fruit stands that will be used at Proctor Recreation Center, the Friendship House, and other locations to distribute fresh food to children in our First and Third Districts. Big Picture worked with a local woodworker to build the stands and then hired artists to decorate them.



Portraits of Peoria

Big Picture Initiative is excited to announce that what began as a seed of an idea in 2020 will realize fruition in 2021—our Portraits of Peoria public art project in collaboration with Discover Peoria (Peoria Area Visitor and Convention Bureau) and ArtsPartners of Central Illinois.

Portraits of Peoria will be launched in the first quarter of 2021 with two large-scale portraits of Romeo B Garrett and Betty Friedan by local artists Kevin Bradford and Eliza Von Zerneck. The public art will fill the windows of the former bank building on the corner of Main and Adams Streets in downtown Peoria.

Our goal is to grow the program to include other building owners and other influential Peorians. We are currently working with researchers at Peoria Public Library and Bradley University's library to identify a complete list of Peorians who can be honored in this program.

Donovan Sculpture Park

Members of Big Picture Initiative are also honored to be part of the Donovan Sculpture Park committee. Our core group believes in the vision of creating an inclusive, vibrant art scene in our outdoor public parks that serves our entire community. Big Picture Initiative's efforts will be spent on the art selection team with the goal of having sculptures in place in the summer of 2021.





In the Media

Donate

Listen Live - NEWS WCBU 89.9
All Things Considered

Big Picture Giving Youth A Voice Through Writing Initiative

By DANIEL MUSISI • SEP 25, 2020

PROGRAM Out and About Share Tweet Email



BIG PICTURE

This week on Out and About, Doug and Eileen Leunig (founders of Big Picture) and Trent Miles, join host Jenn Gordon to talk about "Giving Voice" an online magazine featuring articles, videos, and podcasts submitted by youth in our community. The students will work with a professional writer and mentor to hone their writing skills, and they will be paid for published articles. To find out more about this initiative visit [Giving Voice](#).

Listen 0:00

Doug and Eileen Leunig along with Trent Miles, join host Jenn Gordon to talk about "Giving Voice."

We're living in unprecedented times when information changes by the minute. WCBU will continue to be here for you, keeping you up-to-date with the live, local and trusted news you need. Help ensure WCBU can continue with its in-depth and comprehensive COVID-19 coverage as the situation evolves by [making a contribution](#).

Now Available!

50 YEARS OF HISTORY

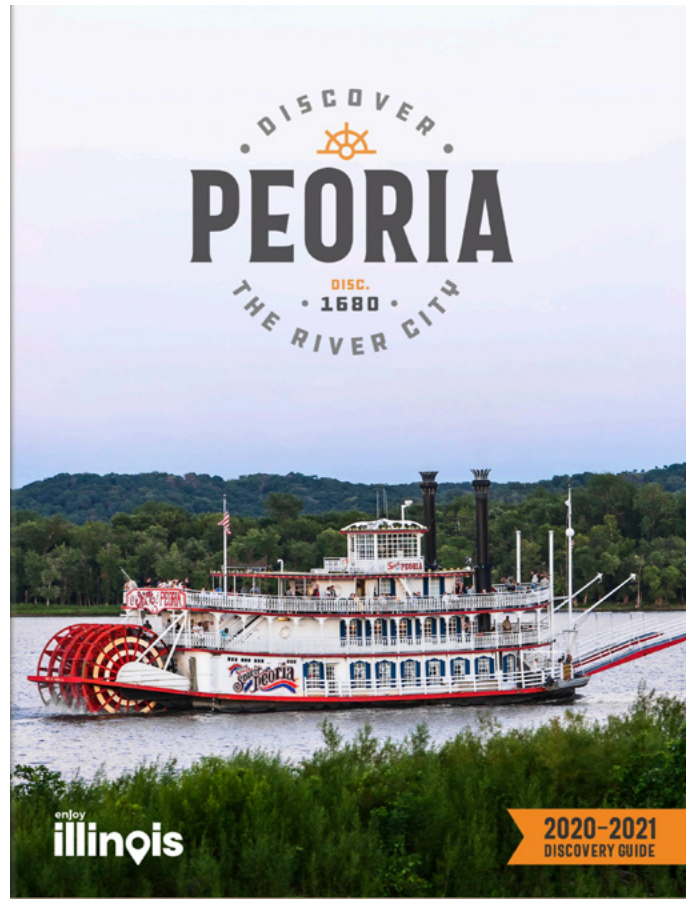
Cancer hasn't.

Get screened.

Out with the old and in with the new.

DONATE YOUR VEHICLE

Easy Process | Free Towing | Tax Benefits



USING THE ARTS TO
LIFT COMMUNITY
PRIDE & CHANGE THE
FACE OF PEORIA



The Big Picture Initiative was born of bureaucratic red tape. During an attempt to obtain a city permit to paint a mural on a building in the Warehouse District, Doug and Eileen Leunig discovered a historical landmark status prohibited painting on the actual building. So instead, the artist painted onto vinyl and by the grace of an ordinance change, mounted the mural to the building instead. And thus, the Big Picture Initiative was born.

Former employees of Caterpillar, Doug and Eileen are lifelong artists. Doug spent 30 years traveling the world as a photographer for Caterpillar. Following their shared passion to bring the arts to their community and specifically to include children in creation, the Leunigs co-founded the Big Picture Initiative in 2018.

“ Murals show visible pride in a community... a demonstration of how much we care about where we are... ”

With a combined love of Peoria, and the desire to get rid of “all the beige” in the region, the Leunigs, along with the Big Picture Board of Directors, aim to prove why murals and the arts are vital to communities. “Murals show visible pride in a community, if a city cares enough to put art on the outside of buildings, we are proud of where we live. This is a demonstration of how much we care about where we are.”

Inspired by the Festival Mural in Montreal, the Leunigs decided to bring their own version of a mural street fair to Peoria. By mounting the murals to the sides of buildings, they saw a perfect opportunity to change the murals out on an annual basis. The question became, how does this come to fruition? It would take a village of artists, volunteers and performers that create, perform, set up, tear down and all with a smile on their faces.

“The Big Picture Initiative is about changing the face of Peoria,” said Mark Misselhorn, Big Picture Board member. “Our volunteer organization works to enhance community pride and enhance the quality of life and quality of place through four key areas: empowering young people through exposure to the arts; hosting annual interactive street and film festivals; enhancing vibrancy and interest through large scale public art; and collaborating with other

Photo Credit: Brian Combs/Community

PEORIA **123 YEARS** PEORIA SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA George Sillman • Music Director **ROMANCE WITH THE ROMANIACS** FEB 13 • 8PM ON WTVP WORLD 47.3

Peoria Magazine ▾ Peoria Progress ▾ Best of Peoria ▾ Community Impact ▾ Local Legends ▾ 40 Leaders Under Forty ▾ Women of Influence ▾

Home / Peoria Magazine / November 2020



Expanding the Big Picture

In a year like no other, the Big Picture Initiative has found new ways to strengthen its programs.

by Mae Gilliland Wright



Big Picture board members Mark & Maggie Misselhorn; Big Picture intern Jamie Wunning; mural artists Natalie Jackson and William Butler; Big Picture co-founders Eileen & Doug Leunig. Photo by Beau Commanday

Just over a year ago, in October 2019, I was among the volunteers at the Big Picture Street Festival, welcoming and counting attendees who had come to Peoria's Warehouse District to check out local dancers and musicians, live mural artists, a chalk art competition, an iron pour, raku firing demonstrations, and an assortment of other creative activities. On this chilly and blustery Saturday, we struggled to keep up with the inflow of people as the wind repeatedly scattered our materials in every direction.

As a crane rose high over Washington Street, hoisting a bright yellow flag emblazoned with the Big Picture logo, I quickly snapped a photo—only to watch the winds whip it apart moments later. "Oh well," Doug Leunig shrugged with a grin. After all, the flag had little bearing on the fun and dynamic experiences that would mark our memories of that day.

As co-founders of the Big Picture Initiative, Doug and Eileen Leunig embody this positive and forward-thinking attitude daily. The "Big Picture," for them, is to shed light on our region's potential, particularly in the creative arts. Forced to cancel this year's street festival, they saw an opportunity to strengthen the organization in other ways: through public art murals and arts education. And thus, out of the turmoil of 2020 was born two new projects: the Washington Street Mural Gallery and *Giving Voice*, a new online magazine.

Investment in Community

Like so many other stories this year, I first heard about *Giving Voice* over a Zoom call—Doug and Eileen wanted to chat about expanding Big Picture's educational offerings. Their idea was to start an online magazine (or "zine") that would connect people through their personal stories in order to foster empathy, equity and community collaboration. It would also feature photo essays and video blogs ("vlogs"), focusing first on the voices of youth. The hope is that the students of Generation Z, now in high school and college, would learn to make their voices heard through professional outlets, leaping beyond the generational divide to influence key decision makers.

Smiling beneath their trademark locks of silvery hair, the couple sat together flanked by their faithful Alaskan Malamutes, Toby and Sami. After explaining the concept, they asked if I would serve as editor in chief, mentoring the students and helping them learn what it is like to work with a professional editor. A longtime supporter of Big Picture's work in the community, I quickly accepted—joining a team comprised of Doug, Eileen and the Big Picture board of directors, who together act as publisher; Jamie Wunning, graphic designer and art director; and Trent Miles, an intern with Big Picture.



The inaugural issue of Giving Voice, October 2020

Community Calendar

- January 27 Peoria Art Guild - Sewing Machine Crash Course
- January 27 Webinar - Starting Your Business in Illinois
- January 27 CWTC Online Trivia Challenge
- January 28 CWTC Online Trivia Challenge
- January 28 Wood Flower Heart Board

[View Calendar »](#)



The Power of Print
Contract Publishing Services Available!
Editorial • Design • Layout • Print

Recent Issues



From the Archives...



Peoria Magazine »
iBi [1989-2019] »



Britten Inc Website Features Peoria's Public Art

Britten, a veteran owned company, is producing isolation gowns and portable sinks. [Learn more](#)



855.763.8205 / [GET A QUOTE](#) / [Q](#) [☰](#)



MURALS IN PEORIA

WORK > MURALS IN PEORIA
PEORIA, IL / OCTOBER 17TH, 2020

situation

Since 2018, the nonprofit Big Picture Initiative has used art in a BIG way to improve the downtown community of central Illinois. The group made a huge splash two years ago with a towering, 30' X 50' Britten-made mural, *Abraham Blue*, that still adorns the Peoria's courthouse square. Striving to do even more for the second annual Big Picture Street and Art Festival held in the city's Warehouse District, they again enlisted Britten's unique expertise in printing and framing art that's larger than life.

solution

To kick off a goal to place 48 colorful, large-scale murals/prints all over downtown, Big Picture co-founder Doug Luening started with eight mural reproductions to adorn the outside of the Washington Street Gallery (formerly the Van Buskirk Steel Building). The giant, 15-ounce UV-resistant, seamless vinyl prints—each mounted on its own custom made, BannerStretch™ front-let frame—ranged from 5' x 10' to 30' x 10' in size.

impact

Many cities across America have discovered the power of art for helping transform blighted downtown areas into busy and vibrant cultural centers. In the Britten team—one of only handful of printer/manufacturers in America that can handle large-scale, specialty outdoor printing—Luening found a lasting partner to provide a cost-effective way to drive economic revitalization through education, job creation, higher real estate value, and increased tourism. "Together," he says, "we're changing the face of Peoria one mural at a time."


[Listen Live ▶](#)
[🏠 BROOKE & JEFFREY](#) [SCOTT WHEELER](#) [CONTESTS](#) [CORONAVIRUS INFORMATION](#)
[MORE ▼](#)

Get the picture: Warehouse District building receives facelift



Jeremy Scott/1470-100.3 WMBD

PEORIA, Ill. — "It's an outstanding day in the greatest art city in America, Peoria, Illinois!" exclaimed Peoria Riverfront Museum CEO John Morris on Saturday morning in the Warehouse District.

Morris was one of a few dignitaries on hand to take part in the ribbon cutting of the Big Picture Peoria Washington Street Mural Gallery in front of the former Van BusKirk building.

Eight 17 x 10 pictures are featured on the Washington St. side of the building, seven of which are the work of local artists.

One, titled "Peoria's Colorful Past," is a surreal collage of Peoria history, by Big Picture co-founders Doug and Eileen Leunig.

Others include "Inspiration," by William Butler; "Leslie," by Keith Cotton; "Corvette," by Brian Jensen; "Big Mag 2.0," by Steph Van Doren; "Chopsticks," by Natalie Jackson, and "Field Notes," by Lori Reed.

"These are artists we knew," said Doug Leunig.

"As we go forward on this, we hope to have a future of art all over Central Illinois that's not just local, but national and international, as well."

The one not produced by a local artist still pays tribute to Peoria's past. It's a donation from the Peoria Public Library, a vintage Gipps Amberlin Beer advertisement.

There's a family connection between Gipps Brewery and the owners of the building on which the sign is displayed, Gina and John Wetzel.



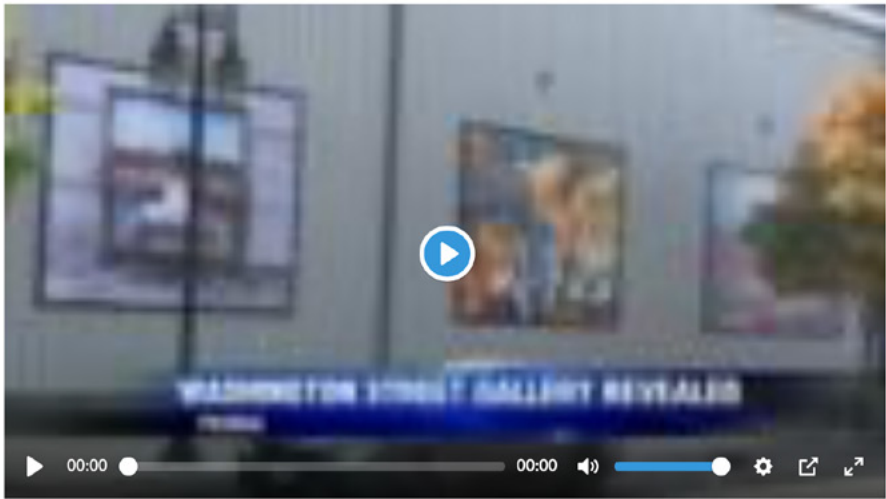
Peoria 22°

- HOME
- NEWS
- CORONAVIRUS
- WEATHER
- SPORTS
- COMMUNITY
- WATCH
- CONTACT
- Q

Unified search across common applications like Salesforce, Google Drive, Jira, Github etc. [LEARN MORE](#)

Buy Art Online

Gallery unveiled in Peoria's Warehouse District



Subscribe to HOI ABC emails!
Get daily headlines, breaking news and weather forecasts in your inbox!

Email Required

[SUBSCRIBE](#)

October 10, 2020 8:53 pm Jessica Cook

HOMEPAGE, NEWS, PEORIA NEWS, TOP STORIES



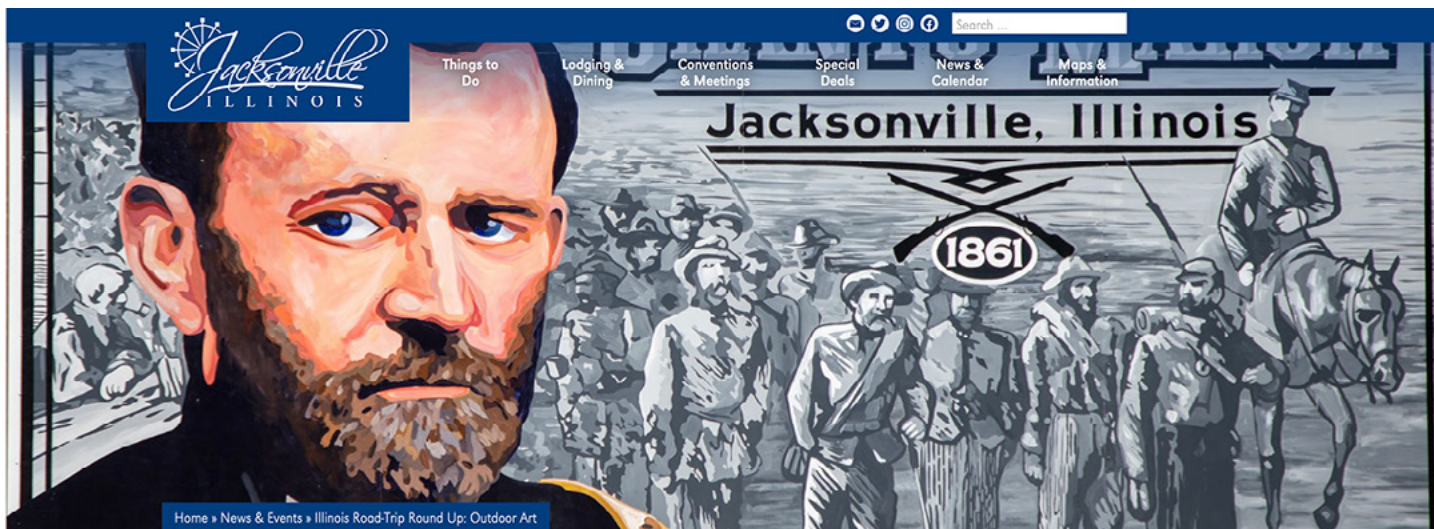
PEORIA (HOI) -- A section of Peoria's Warehouse District looks a little different.

The Washington Street Gallery was revealed Saturday.

It's at the former Van Buskirk Steel Building at 926 SW Washington Street.

The gallery is made up of 8 large scale mounted mural reproductions that represent a variety of work.

Residents John and Gina Wetzel bought the property less than 2 years ago and asked Big Picture Initiative to help bring their ideas to life.



Illinois Road-Trip Round Up: Outdoor Art

We've been "All In for Illinois" during the pandemic, but now that we're in Phase 4, we're ready to enjoy our state safely. Check-in every Tuesday for an Illinois Road Trip Round-Up on themed topics showcasing eighteen destinations across Illinois. This week, we're touring some of the state's must-see outdoor art! So pack up the family, bring your masks, and get ready for a road trip!

DISCOVER PEORIA



The Peoria area is filled with fantastic murals and sculptures by local artists that are not only beautiful to look at but also can make for some great pictures to up your Instagram game and spread positive vibes. [ArtsPartners of Central Illinois](#) brings nine large scale sculptures from artists around the country to downtown Peoria every year for the [Sculpture Walk Peoria](#) and the 2020 sculptures are officially here! Walk the walk and take a self-guided tour narrated by the artists explaining the inspiration behind their sculptures. [Big Picture Peoria](#) is changing the face of Peoria one wall at a time. Not only are they educating the community and youth about the arts but Big Picture is also responsible for the majority of murals in the central Illinois area. You can even check out the [Mural Map of Peoria](#) by Big Picture with pictures of the murals, descriptions of each mural, and the exact address of where the murals are located so you can hunt them down easily! Read [Discover Peoria's Mural Walk blog](#) to learn more about which murals we love to take pictures at!

PEORIA

123 YEARS
PEORIA SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
George Sellano • Music Director

ROMANCE WITH THE ROMANIACS
FEB 13 • 8PM ON WTVP WORLD 47.3



- Peoria Magazine ▼
- Peoria Progress ▼
- Best of Peoria ▼
- Community Impact ▼
- Local Legends ▼
- 40 Leaders Under Forty ▼
- Women of Influence ▼

Home / Peoria Magazine / June 2020



What If... An Envisioning

We believe Peoria can rebrand itself as a center of arts, innovation and healing.

by Doug & Eileen Leunig, Big Picture Initiative



Conceptual image of the Washington Street Gallery coming to 926 SW Washington this summer. The street gallery is a collaboration between building owners John and Gina Wetzel and Big Picture Initiative.

The world has hit the pause button, and life as we know it has come to a halt. Before we press the play button, let's think about the new future we are creating. There is no doubt that art will be part of that future. How could it not be? Art has been part of the human existence for 40,000 years. Seeing how Peoria arts organizations and artists immediately rose to the challenge of shelter-in-place with online offerings, it's clear the demand is as strong as ever.

The bigger question to consider is how artists will play a vital role in Peoria's future. Our community needs their creativity, innovation, passion and vision not only to survive, but to thrive.

Businesses know that a strong brand attracts and keeps customers. Branding Peoria as a forward-thinking cultural center means that a new generation of creative thinkers and problem solvers can come to Peoria, stay in Peoria, and thrive. The headlines will be filled with stories of renaissance in a city where public art thrives, artists flourish, and every child is given choices for opportunities to learn the arts. The name *Peoria* will be synonymous with creativity and innovation. We've reinvented ourselves in the past, and we can do it again. The good news is that some of this work has already begun. And with that, we offer our views of this future.

ArtCorps Mentoring

Think Peace Corps or PeoriaCorps, but in the context of art. With ArtCorps, veteran artists mentor emerging artists, who in turn work with children. Children not only gain self-esteem by creating something, they learn the 4 C's of art: *creativity, communication, collaboration* and *critical thinking*. These are both valuable life skills and transferrable job skills. The goal is not for every child to grow up to become a painter or musician, but to grow their ability to innovate and create. Through the arts, children develop the skills to critically think about and solve the problems that will arise in the future.

Peoria is fortunate that so many initiatives are already meeting these needs, including the Peoria Riverfront Museum's Every Student Initiative, Peoria Art Guild's Mentorship Apprenticeship Program, Romain Arts & Culture Community Center classes, and Big Picture Initiative's public art programs. Reinforce these opportunities with the 2016 Illinois Arts Learning Standards and Peoria Public Schools' current strategic planning to transform education, and we are poised to bring the arts alive.

What is needed to enhance the success of these efforts is a cohesive plan of how everything fits together. Arts organizations are working together to support each other, but there is also competition for funding. With a collaborative roadmap to the future, we will get there.

Community Calendar

- January 27** Peoria Art Guild - Sewing Machine Crash Course
- January 27** Webinar - Starting Your Business in Illinois
- January 27** CWTC Online Trivia Challenge
- January 28** CWTC Online Trivia Challenge
- January 28** Wood Flower Heart Board

[View Calendar »](#)



SUBSCRIBE TO OUR FREE E-NEWSLETTER

Peoria's premier source for local news and events



Brought to you by Peoria Magazine

Recent Issues



From the Archives...



Our Sponsors



**John and
Gina Wetzel**

**Sharon and
John Amdall**



**Chris and
Georgia Glynn**

**Sid and Flo
Banwart**



simantel





Our Donors



Pop-A-Shot



**Doug and
Eileen Leunig**



**Mark and
Maggie
Misselhorn**

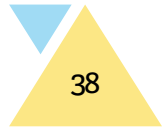
**Leaders
Change
Illinois**

**Denis and
Jeanie Cyr**

**Molly
Richmond**

**Will and Cathy
Williams**

Archie Lyons





Our Collaborators



PEORIA
GROWN



PEORIA
ART
GUILD

**Peoria Art Guild
of Black Artists**



ART INC
ARTISTS REENVISIONING
TOMORROW



PEORIA
public schools



ArtsPartners
of Central Illinois Inc.

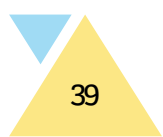


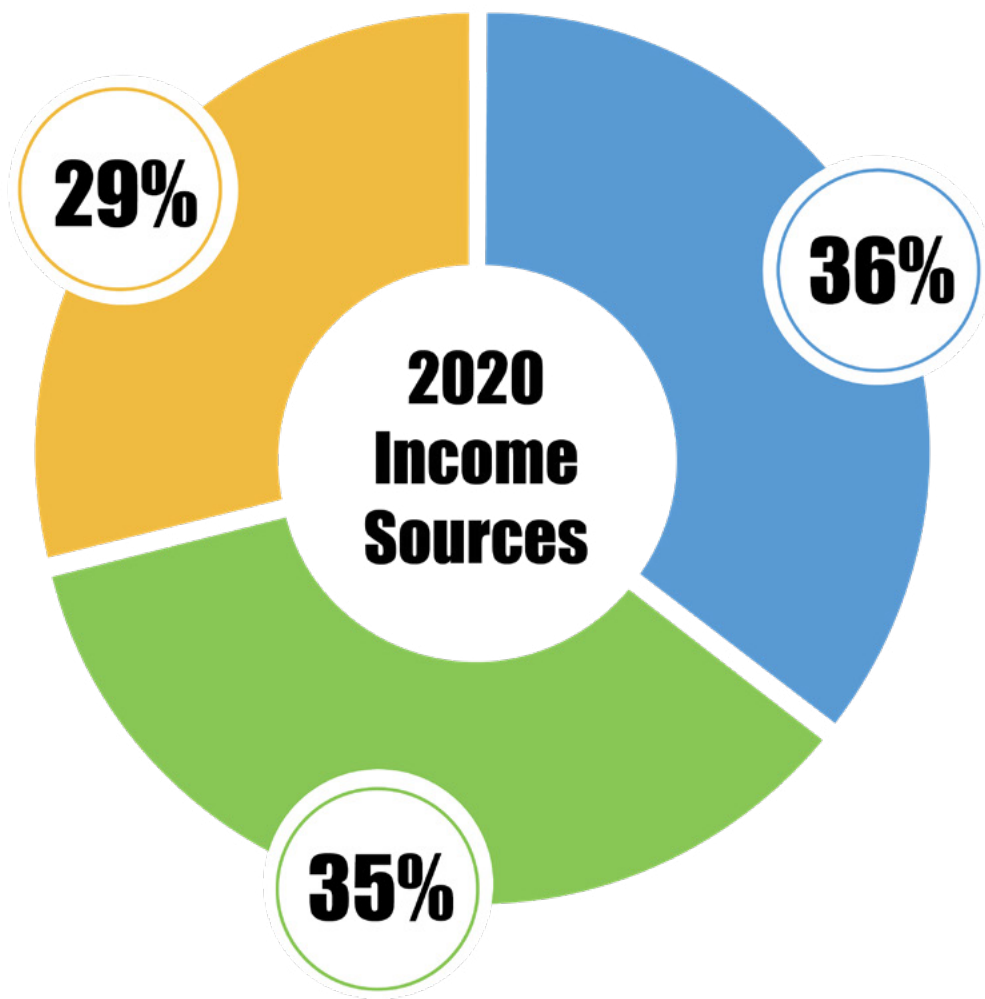
PEORIA
**RIVERFRONT
MUSEUM**

**Emerging
Artists
Cooperative**

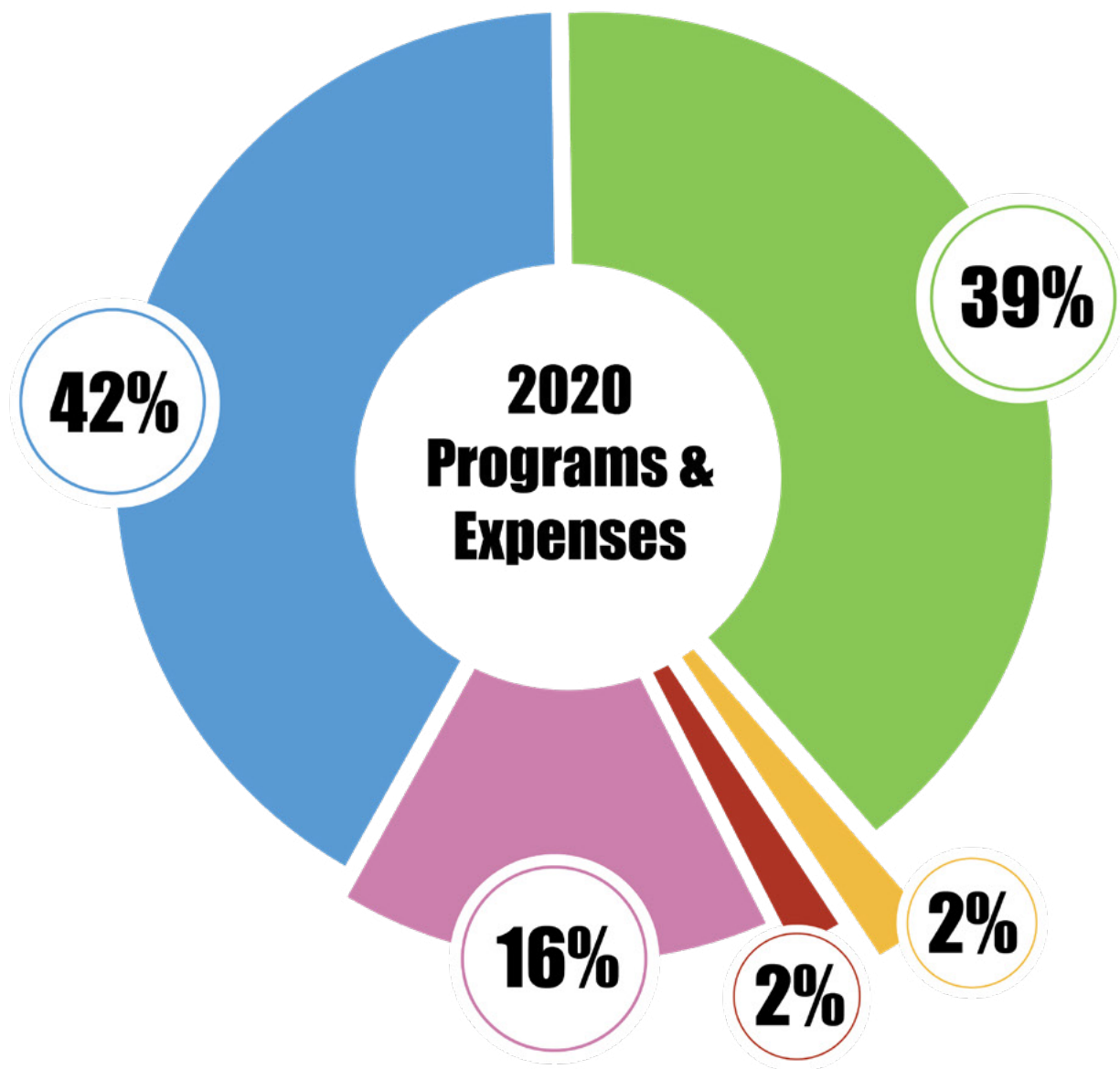


CONTEMPORARY
ART CENTER OF PEORIA

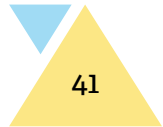




- \$31,000** ● **Private Donors**
- \$30,800** ● **Corporate & Business Sponsors**
- \$25,000** ● **Charitable Contributions/Grants**



- \$20,000** ● **Arts Education**
- \$18,500** ● **Public Art**
- \$7,500** ● **General Administration**
- \$1,000** ● **Film Festival**
- \$850** ● **Working Together**








Here's What Your Donations Support ---






Please consider donating what you can. You can pick the program that most interests you or donate to the general fund and let our board allocate the resources.



Arts Education Opportunities ---

-  Two-week Mural Creation Class
-  Semester-long Filmmaking Class
-  Ronald McDonald Guest Art Program
-  Year-long Internship for High School Student
-  Little Big Picture Student Team Painting Challenge

Public Art Opportunities ---

-  Portraits of Peoria
-  Giving Voice Spoken Word Events
-  Public Murals in Collaboration with Building Owners and the City of Peoria

Festivals ---

-  Big Picture Peoria Street Festival
-  Big Picture Peoria Film Festival

Sponsorship Levels ---

Platinum Legacy \$10,000-\$50,000





Bold Visionary \$5,000-\$9,999

Community Builder \$3,000-\$4,999

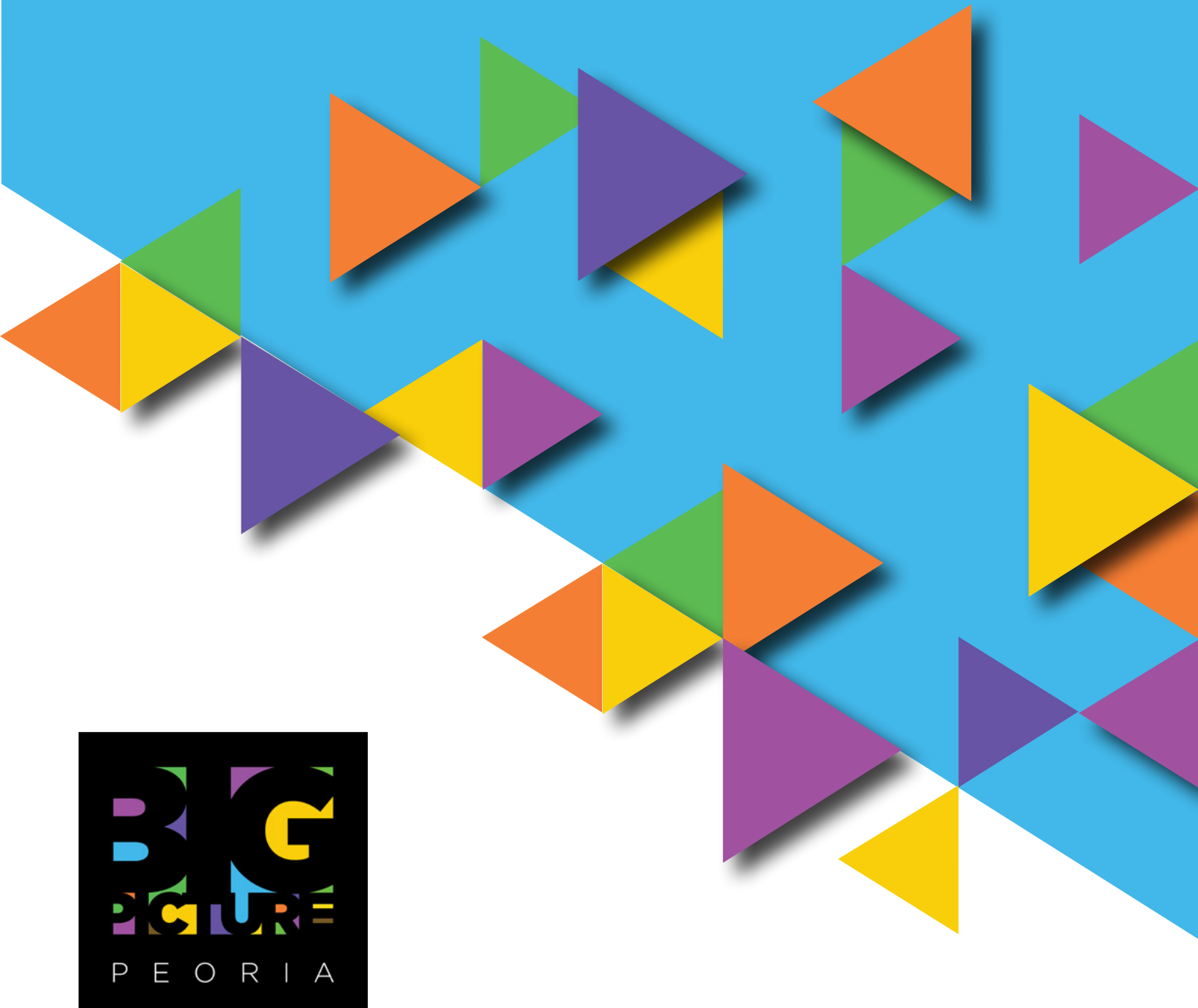
Community Canvas \$1,000-\$2,999

I'm In the Picture \$500-\$999

Sponsors & Donors Will Receive:

-  Recognition at Public Events
-  Recognition on the Big Picture Peoria website
-  Guest of Honor Invitations for Public Events
-  Platinum Legacy and Bold Visionary donors will be given additional, tailored-to-fit recognition opportunities that will be discussed with the Big Picture Initiative president

The Big Picture team is happy to provide you with more information about any of our programs.



Big Picture Initiative
Changing the
Face of Peoria

2020 *End of the Year Report*

www.bigpicturepeoria.org

  @bigpicturepeoria

Big Picture Initiative is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit