

# BIG PICTURE INITIATIVE

Changing the Face of Peoria

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Big Picture Initiative is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit.  
We are known in the community as Big Picture Peoria.





# OUR FOCUS

Founded in 2018 by a group of dedicated volunteers in Peoria, Illinois, who believe that art has the power to change our community. Our board members and dedicated volunteers focus our efforts in the following areas to make a difference in our community:

## Arts Education

Empowering students through arts



## Public Art

Increasing community vibrancy through arts



## Street Festival

The only interactive arts festival in the area



## Working Together

Collaborating for community good







# WHO WE ARE

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## Board of Directors

*From left to right above:*

Doug Leunig, President

Maggie Misselhorn

Jamie Wunning

Mark Misselhorn, Vice President

Paroma Banerjee

Jessica Bingham

Eileen Leunig, Treasurer/Secretary

Who are we? Folks who are passionate about the positive growth the arts bring to our community. While we come from different walks of life—marketing professional, artists, curator, animator, designer, engineer, architect, editor—we are drawn together by our love for community.

You can learn more about the board at [bigpicturepeoria.org](http://bigpicturepeoria.org)

## Our Mission

To build a thriving and vibrant community for all by using the arts and creativity as a driver for social change, economic development, and wellness. We do this by providing arts-based solutions, promoting and supporting artists and arts initiatives, and advancing arts education.

## Our Vision

Moved by our deep conviction of the economic, social, and cultural value of the arts, Big Picture Initiative envisions a community where:

- The arts are recognized as essential to the success and sustainability of our collective future;
- Artists have the support, opportunity, and financial security to thrive;
- The arts are prioritized in local and state decision-making;
- People feel a sense of belonging, connection, and community pride; and
- Every person, no matter their age, ability, or background, can participate in and find expression through the arts.





The folks who created this year's street festival.



Street Festival planning team.



From our five-year-old volunteer upward, we all do what we do because we love our community.

Volunteers who assembled 1500 arts kits in just 3 hours.

We are truly thankful for the love and support we receive from the community and all these wonderful people. We couldn't do it without all of you!

***Thank you!***





# ARTS EDUCATION

We work to empower children through the arts and help them achieve skills in the four Cs—Critical thinking, Creativity, Communication, and Collaboration—and enhance social and emotional learning

**1500**

art kits for children

This year's 1500 art kits were made possible with a grant from the Community Foundation of Central Illinois. Over 40 volunteers helped assemble the kits, which were distributed to grade schools and middle schools throughout Peoria County.







# ARTS EDUCATION

# 282

students participated  
in mural classes

Mural classes for students have been a staple of Big Picture Peoria since our inception in 2018. We have held summer school classes of 10 to 20 students for Peoria Public Schools and the Peoria Park District.

At St Thomas School, every single one of the 282 students had a hand in painting this mural. Preschoolers finger-painted stars while 8th graders did detail work. St Thomas School 8th grader Max Schmidt came up with the space concept for the mural, and artists Megan Couri and Connie Andrews created the design.

All of this was made possible by a generous donation from Laura and Allen Cullinan.

“WOW! What an amazing experience the St. Thomas students had while creating our Big Picture ‘Out of this World’ mural. Each student was able to paint a portion of the mural, so now they ALL claim ownership. It is so enjoyable to watch the students point at the mural and explain to their friends and family which part of the mural they painted. Working with Big Picture Peoria was a dream, St. Thomas School is so grateful to have had this unique and wonderful experience.” Trina Schmidt, Assistant Principal, St. Thomas School





# ARTS EDUCATION

15

students created a new mural for the PPS Admin Building

Under the leadership of teaching artist Megan Couri and teacher Joe Orteza, Peoria High School art students created a new mural for the Peoria Public School Administration Building. Titled "Unity," the mural has two hands joining together to form a heart and features the logos of all Peoria Public Schools. The mural was commissioned by the Peoria Public School Foundation with the support of a generous sponsor.



Student artists and Joe Orteza



Mural Dedication, May 8, 2023



# ARTS EDUCATION

**\$5000**

in art supplies for local schools

In December, the Big Picture Team received the amazing news that we were one of only 40 nonprofits nationwide selected for the US Cellular Gift of Connection program. Of the nonprofits selected, we were the one chosen to receive \$5000 in gifts.

Thanks to US Cellular, we were able to donate digital tablets, wireless mic headsets, and classroom art supplies to three local schools and an after-school art program. We still don't know who nominated us for US Cellular's Gift of Connection, but a big thank you goes out to whoever you are!





# ARTS EDUCATION

**31**

magazine issues  
created by students

From 2020 until May 2023, Big Picture Peoria published 31 magazine issues created by students who were paired up with mentors to foster their artistic abilities. The magazine focused on helping students find their voice, mentoring them in their passions, and paying them for their hard work. We thank the Gilmore Foundation for their generous support.



We believe the arts give students a voice—a voice often hidden in the quest for test scores and metric achievements. The arts fill a void for students by giving them a platform for self-expression and contributing to their environment. Big Picture Initiative’s arts education programs focus mainly on the visual arts, but during the pandemic we decided to expand into the communication arts. By gaining experience in being more effective communicators and engaging with a public audience, students are being prepared for their place in the future.

“The students of Giving Voice addressed everything from the societal impact of educating our community about different cultures, to how to tackle school stressors, to the therapy that comes from sharing a beloved story. These students have faced it all.” Jamie Wunning, Board Member and Giving Voice Art Director

Sponsored by







# PUBLIC ART

**5000+**

square feet of new murals

“Social offerings, openness, welcome-ness, and importantly, aesthetics of a place—its art, parks and green spaces ranked higher than education, safety, and the local economy as a driver of attachment to a city.”  
Knight Foundation, Soul of the Community Initiative (a year-long survey of 43,000 people in 43 US cities).

Big Picture Peoria, the Greater Peoria Economic Development Council, and TWM Inc. collaborated on creating an area mural map. Visit [bigpicturepeoria.org](http://bigpicturepeoria.org) to access the map and enjoy a self-guided tour of the area’s 60+ murals created by local artists.

Public art adds enormous value to the cultural, aesthetic, and economic vitality of a community. Public art contributes to a community’s identity, fosters community pride and a sense of belonging, and enhances the quality of life for residents and visitors.

Big Picture Peoria is proud to be a community leader in adding to our community’s vibrancy and identity by creating 5 new murals for the Peoria area in 2023.







# PUBLIC ART

## Quick Facts

"Abraham Blue 2023"  
by Doug Leunig

Peoria County Courthouse  
Adams St. Plaza

Enhanced with  
augmented reality

Thanks to  
**State Representative  
Jehan Gordon-Booth** for  
securing funding from the  
State of Illinois  
and to  
**Carle Health Greater Peoria**  
for their generous support  
and collaboration.

Big Picture's very first mural, titled "Abraham Blue," was unveiled in 2018 to a large crowd at the Peoria County Courthouse, the location where Lincoln made his historic speech against slavery in 1854. It was a proud day for the City of Peoria and mural artist Doug Leunig because the mural, with various blue hues, was much more than a beautiful portrait honoring this historic event. The 50-foot-high face of Abraham Lincoln, who himself suffered greatly from depression throughout his life, was a statement about the importance of removing the stigma surrounding mental health issues.

"Abraham Blue 2023" is a striking and realistic digital image created by using a variety of apps, including artificial intelligence, throughout the creative process. Abe is also now able to communicate with viewers through augmented reality about Lincoln's significance at this very place in Peoria, as well as the important role the community played in helping Lincoln in his ongoing battle with depression.

Viewers of the mural can download an augmented-reality app and experience Lincoln talking about the speech he made at the Peoria County Courthouse in 1854, his ongoing bouts of melancholia, and how the people in his life helped him address his mental health challenges and rise above adversity.

The reimagined Abraham Blue was made possible through a donation from The Carle Foundation and a grant from the State of Illinois, facilitated by Representative Jehan Gordon-Booth.



# PUBLIC ART

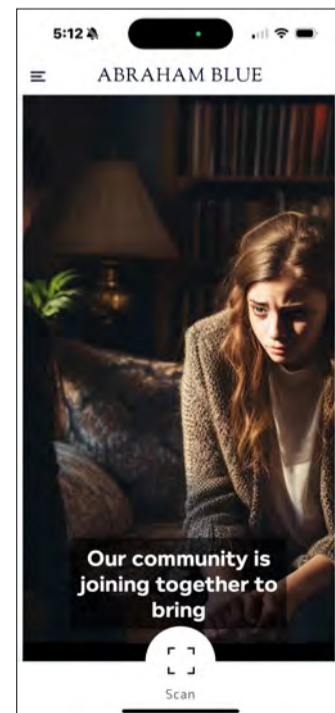
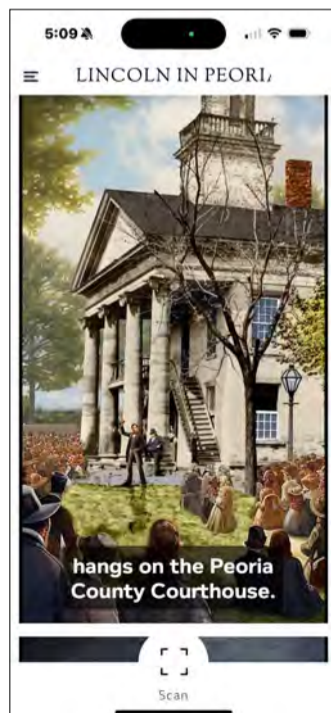
Get the App



Scan the QR code to get the augmented reality app. Once you have the app loaded, you can use the portrait to the right to launch the videos.



“Abraham Blue 2023” is enhanced with augmented reality that brings the portrait to life—well, almost. The app features videos that reveal Lincoln’s battle with depression and how he survived his darkest days with the help of friends and community. The app also highlights Lincoln’s historic Peoria 1863 antislavery speech. Together Carle Health and Big Picture Peoria are working to raise awareness and wipe out the stigma of depression.



Images from the AR App



# PUBLIC ART

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Speakers at the dedication include (L to R): Doug Leunig, artist and president of Big Picture Peoria; State Representative Jehan Gordon-Booth; James Dillon, chairperson, Peoria County Board; Maggie Misselhorn, board member, Big Picture Peoria; Saige Heelein, AR app designer, Grindstone Group; and John Morris, president and CEO, Peoria Riverfront Museum. Not shown, Mary Thompson, president, Trillium Place.



“There is no more appropriate place for Abraham Blue to be located than on the façade of the Peoria County Courthouse.”  
County Board Chairperson James Dillon and County Administrator Scott Sorrel

[Artist Statement](#) by Doug Leunig



# PUBLIC ART

ARTS

## New version of "Abraham Blue" mural installed on Peoria County Courthouse



**Matt Dayhoff**

Published 10:54 p.m. CT Oct. 18, 2023 | Updated 11:05 p.m. CT Oct. 18, 2023



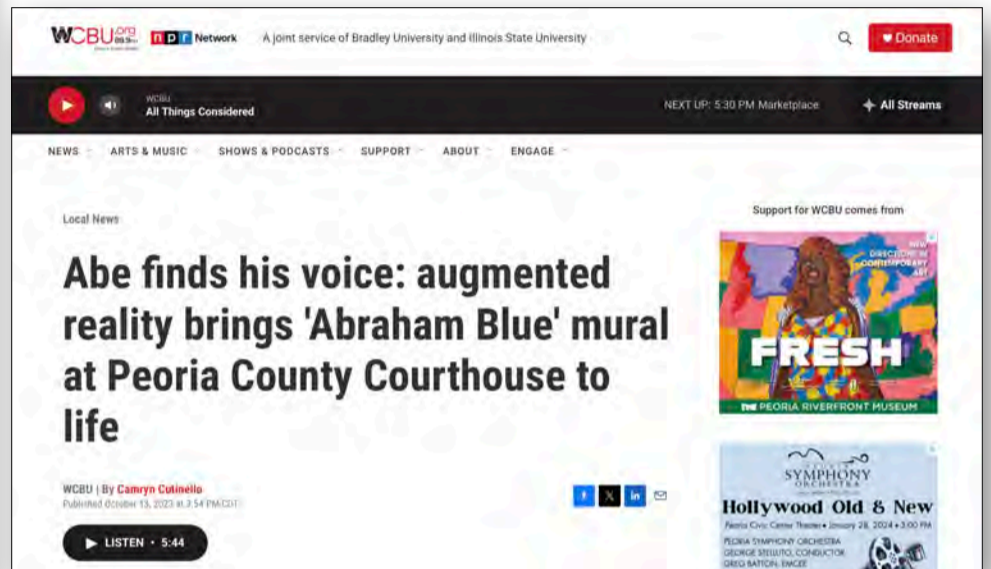
Charles Willis, lower left, and Mikey Elder of Britten Banners roll out a new and different version of Peoria artist Doug Leunig's "Abraham Blue" mural Wednesday, Oct. 18, 2023 on the back of the Peoria County Courthouse in downtown Peoria. The 50-foot tall digital image of the 16th U.S. president replaces a faded version that was erected in 2018 near the spot where Lincoln gave his first anti-slavery speech in 1854.

MATT DAYHOFF/JOURNAL STAR

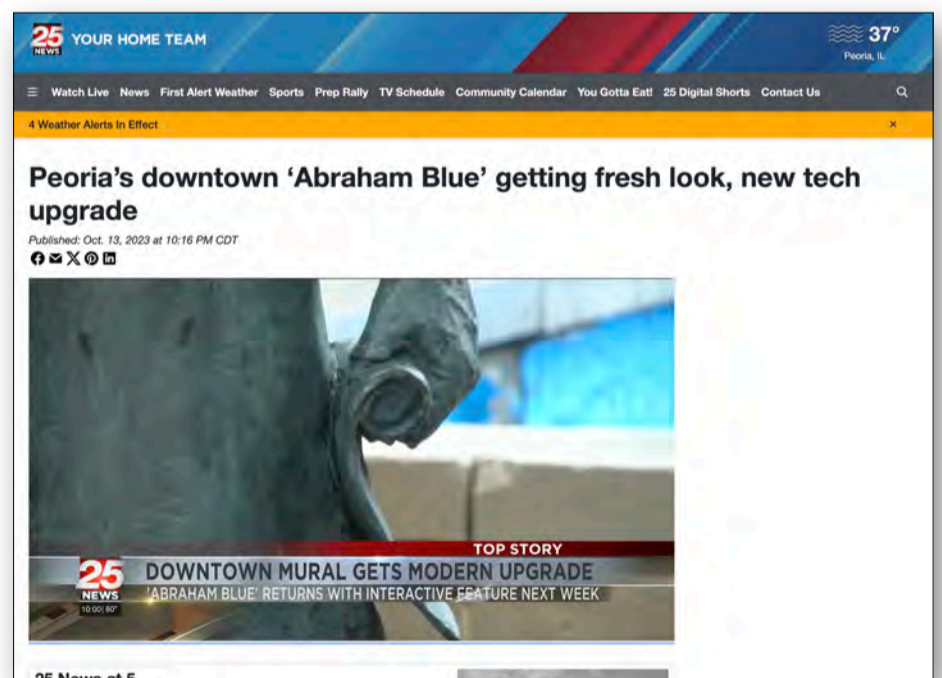


Charles Willis, bottom, and Mikey Elder of Britten Banners roll out a new and different version of Peoria artist Doug Leunig's "Abraham Blue" mural Wednesday, Oct. 18, 2023 on the back of the Peoria County Courthouse in downtown Peoria.

MATT DAYHOFF/JOURNAL STAR



[Click here](#) for the interview with Doug Leunig.



[Watch Here](#)

[See the full article](#) in the Peoria Journal Star.





## Quick Facts

“Building Each Other Up”  
by Bob Doucette  
and Brenda Gentry

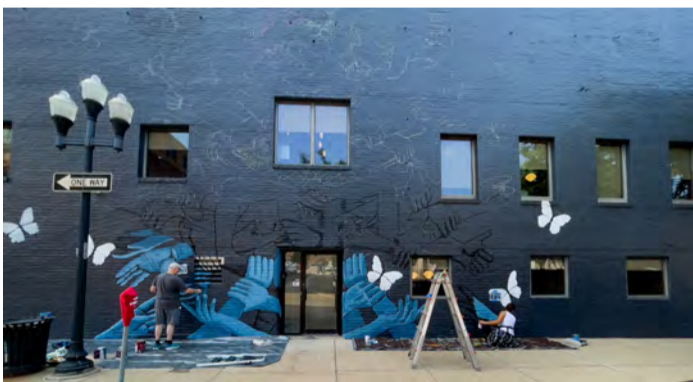
Simantel (back),  
321 Commercial St., Peoria

Commissioned by  
Simantel Group Ltd  
as a retirement gift for  
co-owner Maggie Misselhorn

“I loved how the mural turned out. It’s bold and creative and represents Simantel perfectly. I really believe that it takes businesses like us to step up and help build our community in ways that create excitement and conversations. Simantel is invested in seeing our community grow, so working with Big Picture Peoria to turn the back of our building into a large-scale mural was an easy choice for us. I hope other businesses follow our lead.” Tim Leesman, principal Simantel Group Ltd

[Learn More](#) about how the mural came to be.

Learn more about [Artist Bob Doucette](#)



Doucette and Gentry at work.



These three people do wonders to build up our community. (L to R) Tim Leesman, Simantel principal; Maggie Misselhorn, retired Simantel principal; and Misty Dykema, Simantel principal



Mural dedication





## Quick Facts

"The Arts Make a Greater Peoria"  
by Jeremy Berkley  
and painted by members of  
the public at the  
Big Picture Peoria  
Street Festival

Madison Theatre,  
502 Main Street, Peoria

Sponsored by



The 64'x24' mural was partially printed and then painted by the public at the Big Picture Peoria Street Festival. The finished mural now hangs on the Madison Theatre.



[See more](#) of Jeremy Berkley's art.





## Quick Facts

"Future Proof"  
by John Boylan

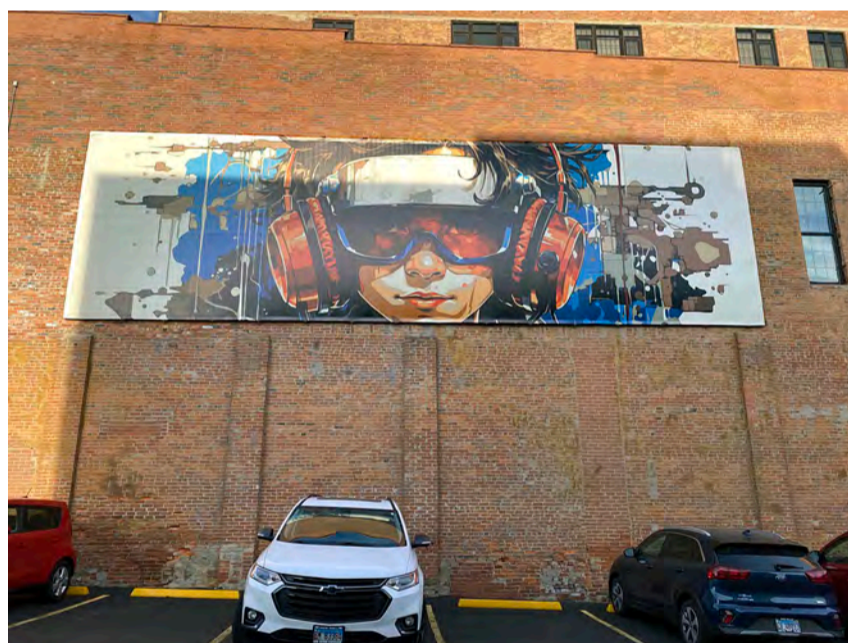
MAXAM Building,  
316 SW Washington, Peoria

Commissioned by  
MAXAM

"The opportunities Big Picture provides local artists both established and emerging are a breath of fresh air. There's never been a better time than now to be an artist or voyeur of art in the Central Illinois Region. A lot of this feeling can be attributed to the tireless work of Big Picture seeking out and providing new opportunities for all artists. I for one am personally grateful for the opportunities it's afforded me to expand my growth and impact in the region."

-John Boylan

The mounted mural hangs on the west side of the MAXAM Building.



"Thinking of Downtown Peoria as the frame as well as our buildings as the canvas, the beauty comes from the artistic efforts that are being led and encouraged by Big Picture Peoria. I, along with my ownership partners in The MAXAM Building, are thrilled to continue to use our canvas with their guidance and leadership to participate in the vital effort to make Downtown Peoria a place of beauty and vibrancy!" - Andrew Driscoll, The Waterhouse in the MAXAM





# PUBLIC ART

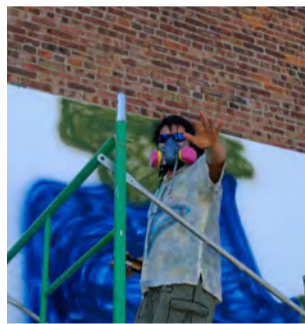
## Quick Facts

3 new murals created during the Big Picture Street Festival by local artists Aareon Boyd, Jaci Musec, and Krystopher Dudley-Brown

1323 SW Adams, Peoria

Sponsored by John and Gina Wetzel

Festival goes at the 2023 Big Picture Peoria Street Festival found that watching paint dry was actually quite exciting as three local mural artists created new public art in the 1300 SW Adams block.



Aareon Boyd and "Rise Up"



Jaci Musec and "You Matter" plus art above

Krystopher Dudley-Brown and Flower Selfie Spot







## Quick Facts

“Cerberus”  
by Eileen Leunig  
as envisioned by  
Hazel Fritch

Fritch Heating & Cooling, Inc.  
1004 NE Adams, Peoria

Sponsored by



What do “Cerberus,” an 1824 painting by William Blake of the three-headed monster guarding the underworld, and a family dog have in common? A lot when seen through the eyes of a young girl. Hazel, the daughter of the Fritch family, came home from fifth grade one day, opened her textbook to Blake’s “Cerberus,” and said, “This looks like Jack.” Jack is the family dog and Hazel wasn’t wrong. Jack does share some similar features with Blake’s painting (minus the two extra heads of course).

The revelation led the Fritches to reach out to Big Picture Peoria to transform Jack into the legendary guard dog. The finished mural features photos of Jack and Hazel as well as a digital photo collage of the gates of the underworld.

“Now, we have our own Cerberus, guarding the neighborhood!” said Angela Fritch-Milton when the mural was mounted in December 2023.



Cerberus by William Blake ©



Jack



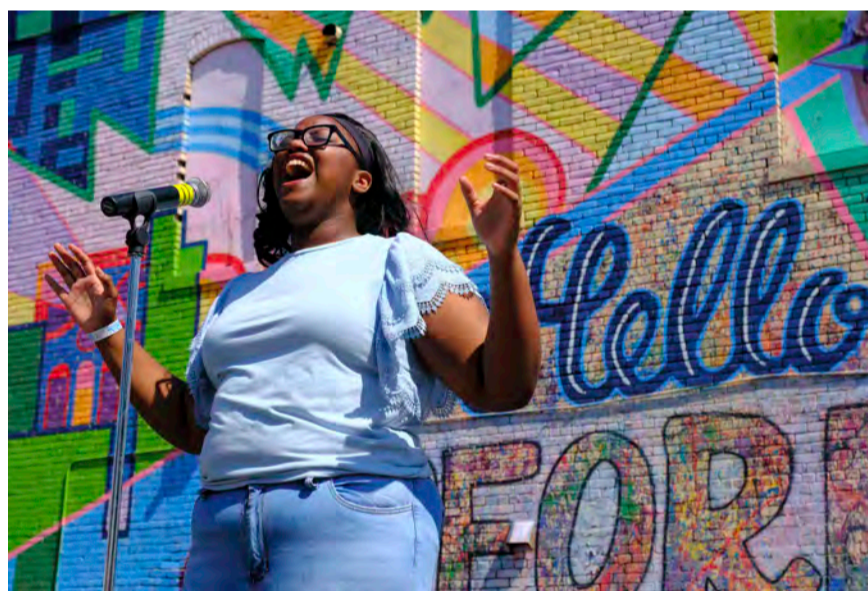


# STREET FESTIVAL

## Quick Facts

3000 attendance

- 60 local theater and student performers
- 30 chalk artists
- 18 visual artists
- 12 Peoria High School student artists
- 11 musicians on the acoustic-mic competition stage
- 11 breakdancers from Bloomington
- 7 favorite local professional musicians
- 4 professional mural artists
- A pottery artist, sculptor, drummer, jugglers, hula hoopers, and reclaimed-object and nature artists
- More than 40 day-of-volunteers
- PLUS a 25-member core team





# STREET FESTIVAL

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Street festivals throughout the US are a big tourist draw. 2023 was Big Picture Initiative's third street festival and we welcomed hundreds of Peoria's as well as people from surrounding communities. As the only interactive arts festival in Central Illinois, we bring together people from different cultures, parts of our community, and ages for a day of smiles and art making that builds community.





# STREET FESTIVAL

Nearly 30 chalk artists and chalk artist teams from throughout Central Illinois created works in 6'x6' squares during the chalk art competition. Artists were awarded cash prizes based on popular public vote.



Artists taught workshops and conducted drop-in art projects using a variety of media, such as nontoxic dyeing, collage, clay relief, phone photography, poetry writing, metal bending, and using found and natural objects for art.



Peoria High School art students painted two murals during the festival. The murals now hang at their school.



# STREET FESTIVAL

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A favorite public activity was helping paint the 64'x24' "Arts Make A Greater Peoria" mural sponsored by PNC. The mural now hangs at the Madison Theatre.



CT Gabbert Art Park drew a crowd with its Doodle Wall, where the festival attendees could freely add to a 20'x10' mural.





# STREET FESTIVAL

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The performance stage featured local theater and school performers, including Pleasant Valley School, Peoria Ballet, Peoria Players, Corn Stock Theatre, BCAI Cultural Arts, Nitsch Theatre Arts, V8Vastchange, and Eastlight Theatre.



Peoria Music Live and Jerry Kolb organized the Original Acoustic Showdown—an open-mic contest with 11 performers. Winners were chosen by popular vote and received cash prizes.




The afternoon was rounded out with four local favorite bands, all of whom were paid for their talents.





# FESTIVAL FEEDBACK

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"Peoria feels like one big neighborhood today."  
Young boy

"I haven't felt this relaxed in years."  
Teenage girl while painting

"This makes me fall in love with Peoria again."  
Retired woman

"I'm painting, music is playing, and the sun is  
shining on me. This is just beautiful."  
Young Woman

And from a social media post~  
"This past Saturday, thousands of people flooded  
the streets in the Warehouse District for the Big  
Picture Initiative Peoria Street Festival. You could  
feel the positive energy everywhere from all walks  
of life. From mural paintings to kids' art activities  
to the chalk art competition, our region's artistic  
talent was on full display.  
I felt proud to be from Peoria."  
Woman business owner





# WORKING TOGETHER

# 2200

students attended the Sun Foundation's 30th annual Clean Water Celebration.

Big Picture Peoria participated in the Sun Foundation's 30th Annual Clean Water Celebration by having two community murals. We started with two blank canvases made from NFW's CLARUS canvas and mixed all natural paints from powdered pigments and plant-based acrylic medium.

Students were invited to learn about the natural paints and CLARUS canvas and then help paint the murals.

CLARUS canvas is unique because the materials come from nature and can return to the earth as nutrients for future growth. Synthetic fabrics are a form of plastic that don't break down, so they are drowning the planet in textile waste.



The future of sustainable art is now, and we are honored to have strong partnerships in this movement. Thank you to the Sun Foundation, Natural Fiber Welding, Preston Jackson, Wild Routed, Connie Andrews, Brett Rhoades, Peoria High School, and our community for making this happen!





The Big Picture Peoria booth drew a crowd all day long.



Peoria High School art student volunteers

Thank you, Marilyn Popp (above), for supporting Big Picture Peoria's efforts to add vibrancy to our community through art. The Peoria High art student volunteers were great to have, and the final canvases the students completed are now on display at NFW's office in downtown Peoria.



The unfinished mural (left) was taken to Peoria High School where the art students finished the work and added their unique touch (right).



**Preston Jackson**  
is an internationally celebrated  
sculptor and painter.

He is painting the world's first  
100% circular paintings using  
NFW's new product **CLARUS CANVAS**.



Big Picture Peoria worked with internationally acclaimed artist [Preston Jackson](#) to create paintings on NFW's CLARUS canvas. Our two community murals and Preston Jackson's three paintings are the first ever works of art created on CLARUS canvas using all natural paints. No petroleum products or plastic were used in the creation of the art.





# WORKING TOGETHER

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Big Picture Peoria participated in The **YANI Collective's** 2023 Juneteenth Fest at John Gwynn Park. Community members worked together to paint a mural by artist Megan Riley that celebrated George Washington Carver Association's 100th anniversary. The finished mural is displayed at the Carver Community Center. Thank you to **Peoria Art Guild** for inviting Big Picture to partner on this great project!





# WORKING TOGETHER

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Project 1612 was founded in 2015 by Jessica Bingham, Alexander Martin, and Zach Ott. The project, a short-term residency program lasting 4-6 days, provides artists time and space to interact with community and create an ephemeral exhibition that is free and open to the public.

Project 1612 seeks to support historically underrepresented artists, including women, BIPOC, and the LGBTQIA community. Since opening, Project 1612 has hosted traditional and experimental art forms, including painting, photography, video, performance, installation, sound- and time-based work, and viewer participatory projects.



Tyanna Buie



Whitney Johnson



Hannah Songer



# WORKING TOGETHER



Once again the Big Picture Peoria team joined in ArtsPartners' annual makersfest, Ignite Peoria. Our table was busy all day with children of all ages creating their own sun-catchers.





# WORKING TOGETHER

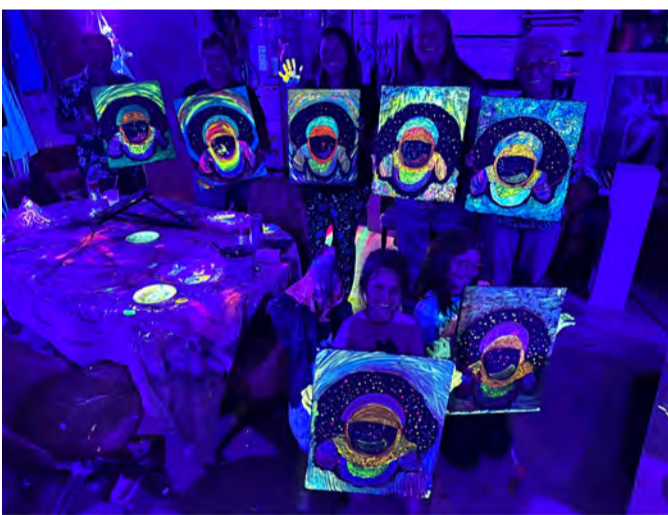
An odd thing happened after the street festival. Someone stole a porta potty! As a result of this crappy act, we were charged \$1000 as a replacement fee. But never fear—the artists are here! When word got out what happened, our arts community came up with creative ways to help by donating class fees and hosting events where we could get donations. Within a couple of weeks, we had paid off the porta potty and had a great time in the process. Thanks to those who came to our rescue!



Pottery Night with Cyndi Merrill



T-shirts by Jamie Pratt



Neon Paint Night with Megan Couri



Drumming Circle organized by Natasha Greene



Grill 'em All donated all tips



Eric Alan (shown here with Theresa Pfeiffer) gave us the last \$66 needed to pay it off.



# THANKS TO OUR SUPPORTERS

**State Representative  
Jehan Gordon-Booth**  
for securing funding from the  
State of Illinois



John & Gina  
Wetzel

Sharon & John  
Amdall



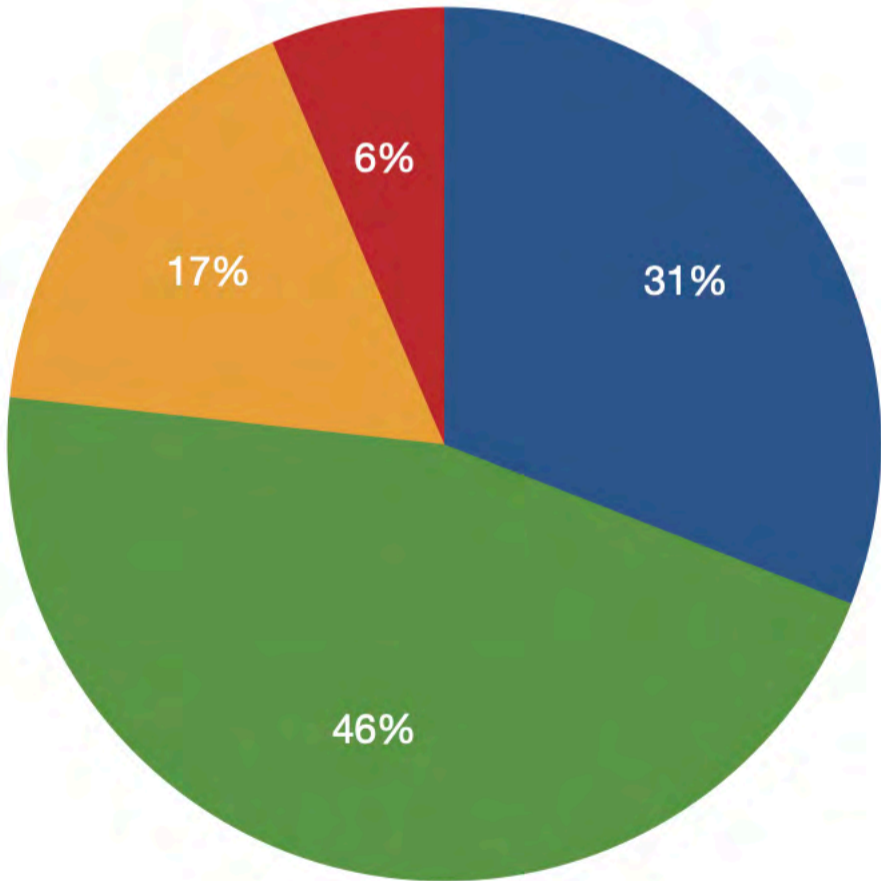
heartland **festival** orchestra  
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR / CONDUCTOR DAVID COMMANDAY



# INCOME SOURCES

2023 was a great year! We gained new sponsors and private donors, were again awarded with a grant from the Community Foundation of Central Illinois, and were thrilled to receive a grant from the National Endowment of the Arts to host our Street Festival. Life is good. Thank you all!

- Grants
- Sponsorships
- Private Donors
- Gifts in Kind

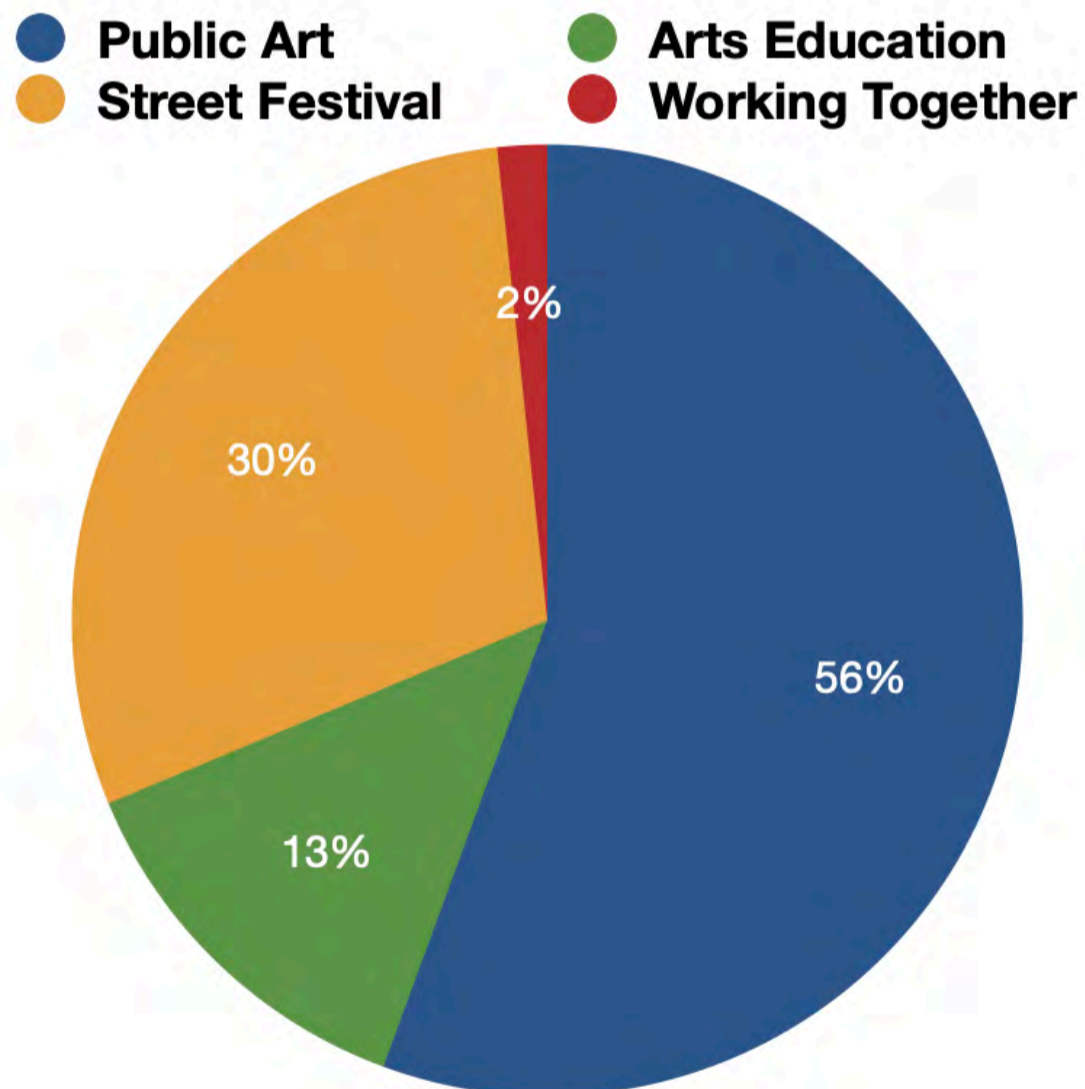




# ALLOCATION of FUNDS

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Because we are an all-volunteer, grassroots nonprofit, the funds we received in 2023 went directly into programs to benefit our community. We are proud to be able to give back to others and to make the best possible use of the money entrusted to us by our sponsors and grantors.





# WHAT'S NEXT?

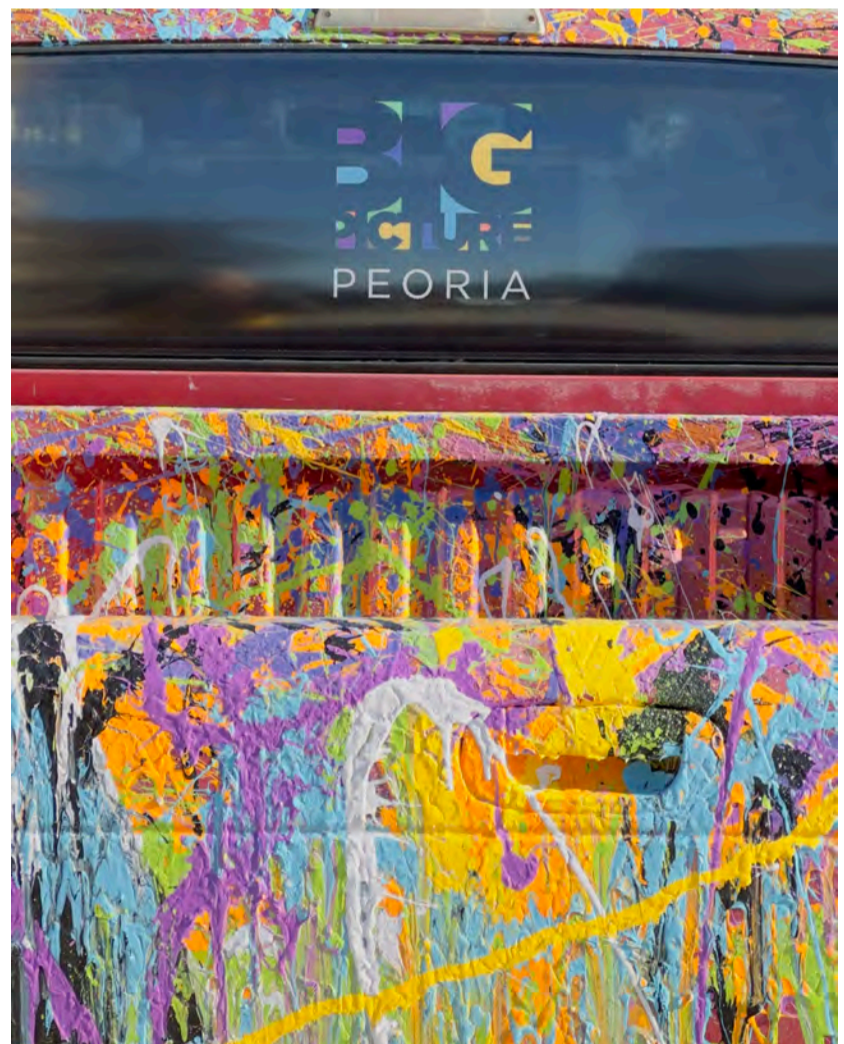
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3 New Large-Scale Mounted Murals in Downtown Peoria



Regional Talent On the Big Screen



Big Picture Peoria Experiences



# OUR ASK

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Join Us in Changing the Face of Peoria

Be part of the **Public Art Movement** in Peoria. We are always in need of sponsors and building owners to make space for more public art in our community.

**Volunteer.** Pitch in and make a difference. Our Big Picture Experiences always welcome helping hands.

Be a Film Festival Producer and participate in the **2024 Big Picture Peoria Film Festival.**

**Creatives.** If you are a mural artist, teaching artist, or filmmaker, keep in touch and watch for our call for entries.

[info@bigpicturepeoria.org](mailto:info@bigpicturepeoria.org)

309-692-9115

[bigpicturepeoria.org](http://bigpicturepeoria.org)