

BIG PICTURE INITIATIVE

Changing the Face of Peoria



2024 Year-End Report

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

PROLOGUE

The Heart of Our Story

Since 2018, our journey has been shaped by the generosity of those who believe in the power of the arts to transform communities. Big Picture Peoria exists because of you—our donors, our volunteers, and our champions. Every brushstroke of the 36 large-scale murals across Greater Peoria, every art supply placed in the hands of an eager young artist, every festival that brought people together in creative celebration—none of it would be possible without your support.

As an all-volunteer organization, every dollar given and every hour volunteered has gone directly into building a more vibrant and inclusive arts community. Thanks to you, we have created spaces where art thrives, where underserved children have access to creative opportunities, and where culture is a shared experience that brings people together.

This annual report is more than a reflection of our work—it is a testament to your belief in the power of the arts. Together, we are painting a brighter future for Greater Peoria.



PROLOGUE

Sponsors & Partners

A very special thanks to our 2024 sponsors, donors, and supporters, we appreciate you more than we can express in words.

Sponsors



Partners

Jehan Gordon-Booth (with funding from the State of Illinois)
Peoria Riverfront Museum
Greater Peoria Leadership Council
Sharon and John Amdall
Doug and Eileen Leunig
Laura and Allen Cullinan
Mark and Maggie Misselhorn
Staley and Mike Krause
Roberta Parks
Heather Brammeier
Tracy and Rick Fox

Lori Timm
Paroma Banerjee
Rick Melby and Michelle Funk
Dave Wood
Jody Dickerson
Marilyn Leland
Reuben Cummings
Harland Clarke
Alice Vernon
Star Commanday

OUR MISSION



Big Picture Initiative's mission is to build a thriving and vibrant community for all by using 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. We work to ensure:

- Artists have the support, opportunity, and financial security to thrive;
- The arts are prioritized in local and state decision-making; and budget dollars are allocated in support of public art
- People feel a sense of belonging, connection, and community pride;
- Every person, no matter their age, ability, or background can participate in and find expression through the arts.

WHO WE ARE

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—artists, architect, marketing professional, engineer, curator, designer—we are drawn together by our love for community.



Doug Leunig
President, Co-Founder



Eileen Leunig
Treasurer, Secretary,
Co-Founder



Mark Misselhorn
Vice President



Maggie Misselhorn
Board Member



Paroma Banerjee
Board Member



Jessica Bingham
Board Member



Jamie Wunning
Board Member



Jillian Woodward
Intern

You can learn more about the board at bigpicturepeoria.org

WHAT WE DO

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:

PUBLIC ART

Increasing community vibrancy through arts.



ART FESTIVALS

Uplifting and showcasing artists.



WORKING TOGETHER

Collaborating for community enhancement.



ARTS OPPORTUNITIES

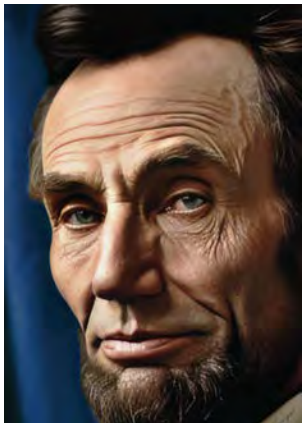
Empowering students through arts.



PUBLIC ART

Public art is vital for a healthy community. Public art improves the walkability of areas, has proven economic benefits, and shows the vitality of our community.

Peoria is rich in cultural diversity and history, and its murals serve as a vibrant reflection of the community's collective spirit. Since our inception in 2018, Big Picture Peoria has proudly contributed to the creation of over 36 murals across Greater Peoria. These works of art not only enhance navigation throughout the city but also stand as landmarks of creativity, unity, and local pride.



PUBLIC ART

“LIVE GREATER” by Alex Carmona

Our commitment to transforming buildings and public spaces into sources of inspiration led to the creation of Peoria’s newest mural, “Live Greater”, by Alex Carmona. Bringing such a large-scale artwork to life required a collaborative effort, made possible by the generous support of the Gilmore Foundation, the City of Peoria, Discover Peoria, and the Community Foundation of Central Illinois. This striking mural celebrates the spirit of Greater Peorians, embracing the idea that living one’s best life starts right here in our remarkable community.



Photo credits: John Morris

The design features six distinct individuals, each representing a letter of the word “Peoria.” Every person depicted in the mural is a member of our community, each with a unique story about why Greater Peoria is such a special place to pursue their dreams.

“Laughter and smiling are some of the most powerful expressions of happiness and well-being,” said mural artist Alex Carmona. “We moved to Peoria from Greeley, Colorado, not knowing anyone, and we’ve found the people here to be incredibly welcoming, caring, and, most of all, genuine. This mural was created to visually represent what Peoria means to me and my family.”

With its bold colors, heartfelt message, and strong community ties, Live Greater beautifully captures Alex’s vision, leaving a lasting impact in Downtown Peoria.



ART FESTIVALS

FILM FESTIVAL

The 2024 Big Picture Peoria Film Festival transformed downtown Peoria into a vibrant cinematic hub, further establishing the city as a thriving center for arts and culture. The festival celebrated regional filmmaking talent, sparked engaging conversations, and showcased diverse voices on the museum's giant screen.



Organized by Big Picture Peoria in collaboration with Aluma Media, an all-women film production company based in Peoria, the two-day event took place at Distillery Labs and the Peoria Riverfront Museum. A total of 421 attendees, including 182 students involved in film production, participated in this dynamic celebration of storytelling. Venues were packed with audiences eager to support emerging talent and experience the creativity of filmmakers from within a 200-mile radius of Peoria.



FILM FESTIVAL GOALS:

Beyond showcasing outstanding films, the BPP Film Festival aims to:

- Highlight local talent to a broader regional audience
- Encourage amateur filmmakers to develop their craft
- Boost tourism and support local businesses in retail and hospitality
- Provide residents with an exciting reason to visit downtown
- Attract more visitors to the Peoria Riverfront Museum
- Strengthen Peoria's reputation as a national arts destination
- Lay the groundwork for Peoria as a future hub for film and television production

FILM FESTIVAL

OPENING NIGHT @ Distillery Labs

Distillery Labs hosted an exciting, sold-out opening night for the festival. Filmmakers and attendees had the opportunity to network before and after the screenings, fostering connections and sharing insights from their creative journeys. Guests enjoyed an evening filled with films, food, drinks, and a panel discussion, where filmmakers provided behind-the-scenes perspectives on their productions.



Pictured above: Festival Emcee: Blake Madigan Wirth.
Panelists: Rise Sanders-Weir, William Jacobs, Gio Gallindo
Pictured right: Jeremy Berkeley and the poster he designed.



FILM FESTIVAL

FILM SCREENINGS & FILM MAKER AWARDS @ The Peoria Riverfront Museum

The Giant Screen at PRM made a lasting impression on both filmmakers and attendees. A special student matinee showcased the talent of young filmmakers, leading into a sold-out main event in the evening. The night concluded with an awards ceremony, honoring the exceptional work of the participating filmmakers. The festival left audiences inspired and proud to be part of such a unique cultural experience



“ This festival is the coolest event I’ve been to in Peoria! It saved me tonight. ”



“ This was an excellent festival—well thought out and managed! ... You nailed it! ”



“ This is exactly what our local and regional filmmaking community needs. ”

FILM FESTIVAL



From left to right: Allison Walsh, Aluma Media; Mark Roberts, Community Foundation of Central Illinois; Eileen Leunig, Big Picture Peoria



Pictured: John Morris. President and CEO of the Peoria Riverfront Museum

Thank you to the Peoria Riverfront Museum for hosting the festival, and to our sponsors for making it a reality.



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Illinois
ARTS
Council

WORKING TOGETHER

CLEAN WATER CELEBRATION

The theme for the 2024 Sun Foundation’s Clean Water Celebration was “Water Connects Us All,” and we were thrilled to once again collaborate with art students from Peoria High School. Leading up to the event, students designed two murals that would be painted by the 2,000+ attendees. They also prepared Natural Fiber Welding canvases with organic primer and mixed eco-friendly, sustainable paints to ensure everything was ready.



WATER
CONNECTS US ALL
31st SUN FOUNDATION
CLEAN WATER CELEBRATION

APRIL 22
9:00 am - 2:00 pm
Peoria Civic Center

Looking for a
Fun Earth Day
Field Trip?

IT'S FREE!
OPEN TO ALL!
Schools & Groups
Must Register!

Peoria High truly knocked it out of the park! A special shoutout to teacher Meredith Popp, who always embraces opportunities that expand her students’ horizons, and a big thank you to Joe Orteza, who designed the stunning artwork and worked tirelessly with students to complete the piece before the school year ended.

At the event, students were invited to help paint the large community murals designed by Peoria High. We also hosted a rock grinding station, where students ground up rocks, mixed in a plant-based acrylic medium, and created their own paint—a hands-on activity that was a huge hit!



WORKING TOGETHER

GO DAY 2025

“There’s More Here.” That’s the tagline for Choose Greater Peoria, and Go Day 2024 on September 15 proved it true. This free family event was packed with interactive fun for all ages—sports and arts activities, incredible performances on the Go Day stage, free admission to the Peoria Riverfront Museum, and mouthwatering food trucks.



Big Picture Peoria board members and volunteers spent the day helping guests paint fabric frisbees before testing their creations on the frisbee golf course along Water Street. We wrapped up the day with “Painting with Preston,” as renowned artist Preston Jackson put his signature touch on our pickup truck, affectionately named Jackson (a nod to Jackson Pollock). Now, when you see the Big Picture Peoria team cruising around town, be sure to wave—we’ll be rolling in Jackson on Jackson!



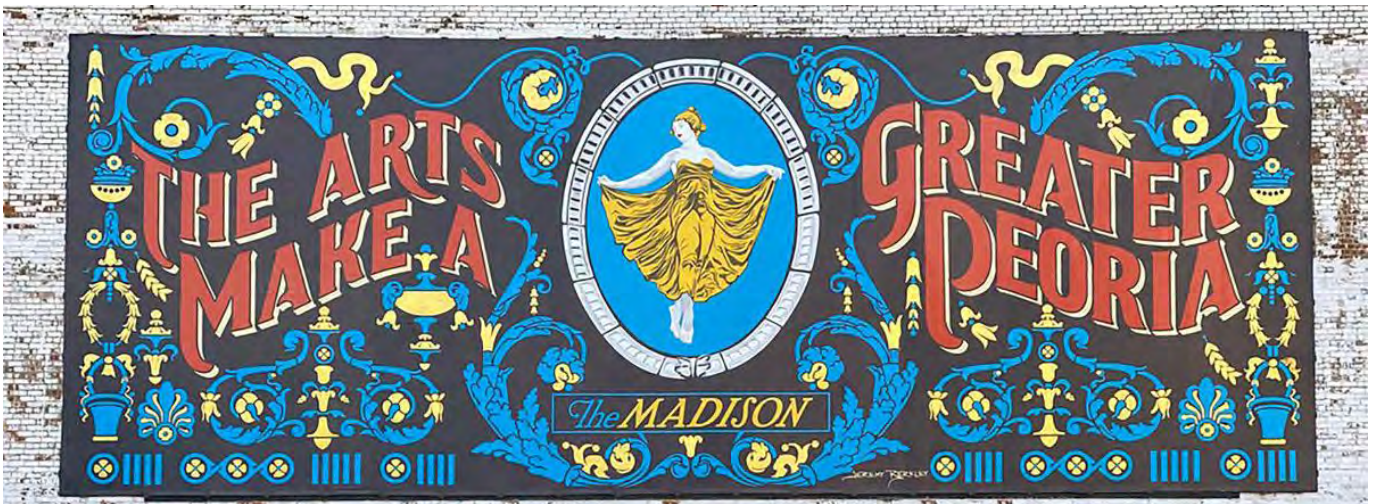
WORKING TOGETHER

GUIDED MURAL TOUR with OLLI Osher Lifelong Learning Institute of Bradley University

Peoria's public arts renaissance is in full swing, and excitement is growing around the city's expanding mural scene. Each year, board members Doug and Eileen Leunig lead a guided mural tour for OLLI members, offering a deep dive into the stories behind the art. With two vans packed full of curious minds, we hit the streets, exploring more than 20 murals, uncovering the artists' inspirations, and celebrating the creativity transforming Peoria's landscape.

OLLI

BRADLEY UNIVERSITY

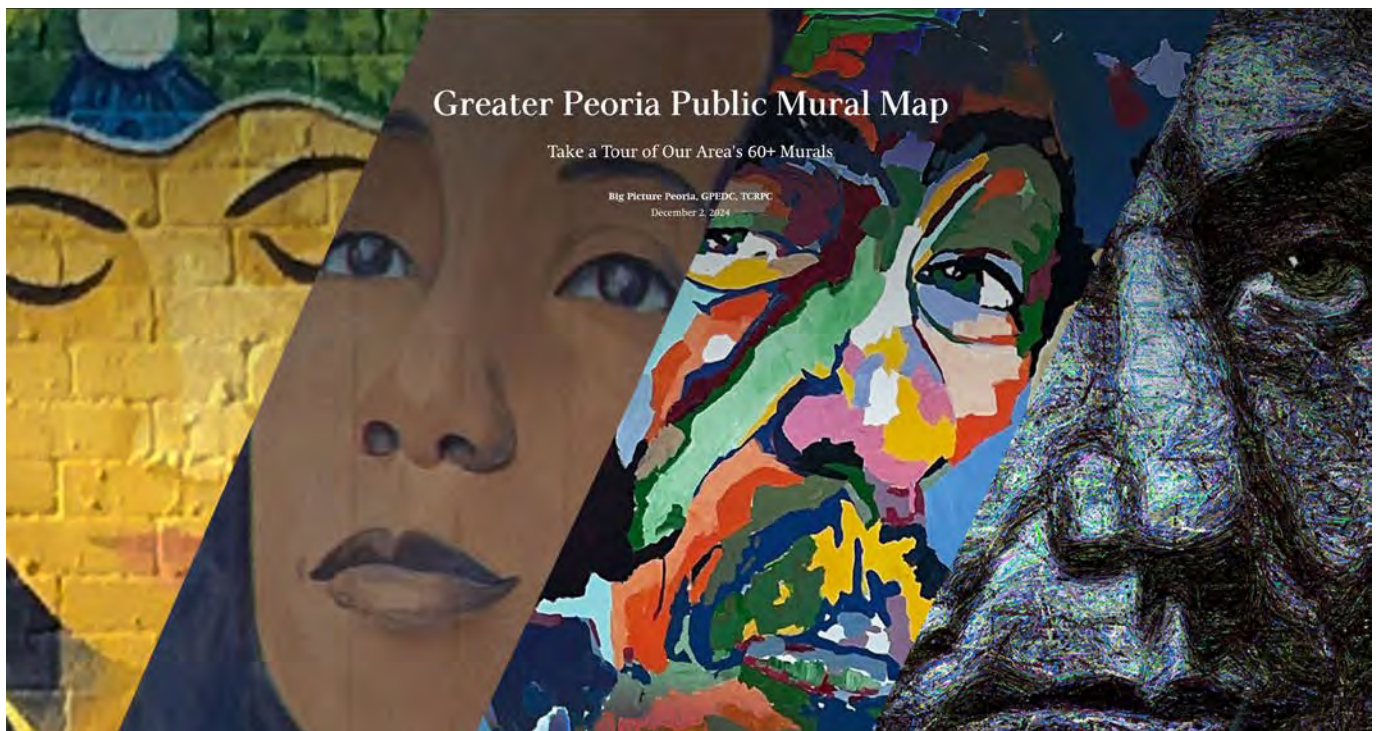
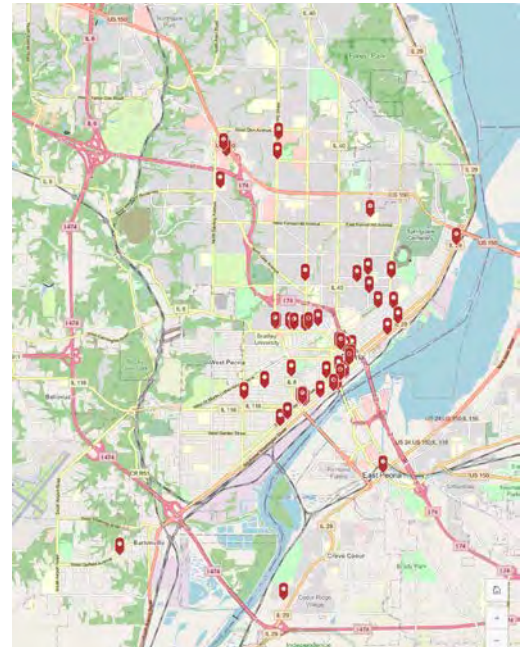


WORKING TOGETHER

MURAL MAP

You don't need a guided tour to explore Peoria's vibrant mural scene—just a sense of adventure! With over 60 murals brightening our city (more than half created by Big Picture Peoria), there's always something new to discover. To make it easy, we've partnered with the Greater Peoria Economic Development Council and the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission to create a self-guided mural tour map.

Whether you're strolling downtown or cruising through the neighborhoods, this map helps you find incredible public art and learn the stories behind it. Start your journey today at bigpicturepeoria.org/murals!



Visit map at the link below:

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/5e7c7bc7c8fc446f8124f67f77150cbb>

WORKING TOGETHER

PROJECT 1612

We are proud to support Project 1612's Artists-in-Residence Program, a dynamic initiative founded in 2016 by our board member Jessica Bingham and Alex Martin. Twice a year this program provides artists with a dedicated, weeklong residency at Project 1612's space in Morton, allowing them to fully immerse themselves in their craft. The 2024 featured artists, Liu Yang and Jaci Musec, spent their residencies creating new work, engaging with the community, and sharing their creative process. Each residency includes an artist talk at the Peoria Public Library and a public showcase, offering a glimpse into the artists' journey and final creations.

PROJECT
1612



From left to right Qingjun Huang, Jessica Bingham, Liu Yang, Alex Martin



Guests gather in the Project 1612 space to learn about Liu Yang's artistic process.

WORKING TOGETHER

ABE BLUE BAGS

From 2018-2023 the first edition of “Abraham Blue,” a 50-foot-tall portrait of Abraham Lincoln, hung on the Peoria County Courthouse. When “Abraham Blue 2” was installed in Nov 2023, the original mural was sent to Peoria Production Solutions to produce commemorative bags.

The BPP team sold “Abraham Blue” bags at the Peoria Riverfront Market in the summer of 2024. If you are interested in owning a piece of Peoria’s history, look for the us at the market this summer.



Pictured above: The original “Abraham Blue” at Peoria Productions before production.



ARTS OPPORTUNITIES

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.

ART KITS

Kids need art in their lives—not just because it’s fun, but because it nurtures self-expression and problem-solving skills. Engaging in art helps students develop the four Cs—creativity, communication, collaboration, and critical thinking—essential tools for future success. Creating art fosters curiosity and a sense of accomplishment, shaping well-rounded, innovative thinkers. That’s why we began assembling art kits during the pandemic—to ensure children had access to creative opportunities. In 2024, we continued this mission by donating art kits at the Peoria Riverfront Association’s Bunny Hop and Peoria’s 137th Annual Santa Claus Parade, putting art supplies directly into kids’ hands.



**1,000+ Art Kits
assembled and
distributed in 2024**



ARTS OPPORTUNITIES

SHARED BLESSINGS DONATIONS

Shared Blessings, founded by Darlene Violet, is dedicated to supporting those in need throughout Peoria, and we were honored to be their December recipient. With their generosity, we connected with four local schools—Manual High School, Peoria High, Pleasant Valley, and the Lincoln After School Art Program—to fulfill their wish lists. Shared Blessings made their dreams a reality, providing gift cards, drawing pads, paint, clay, colored markers, and more.



Peoria High School of Art students thank Shared Blessings.



The joy was unmistakable! “Thank you so much! The kids are acting like it’s Christmas! It means so much to us,” shared Meredith Popp, Peoria High art teacher



From left to right: Eugene Maison, Lincoln After School Arts Program; Colleen Ryan from Pleasant Valley School with BPP’s Maggie Misselhorn; BPP founder Eileen Leunig, Mary Newman-Evans from Manual High School, and BPP President Doug Leunig.

\$8000+
spent on art supplies for local schools.

ARTS OPPORTUNITIES

MURAL CLASSES

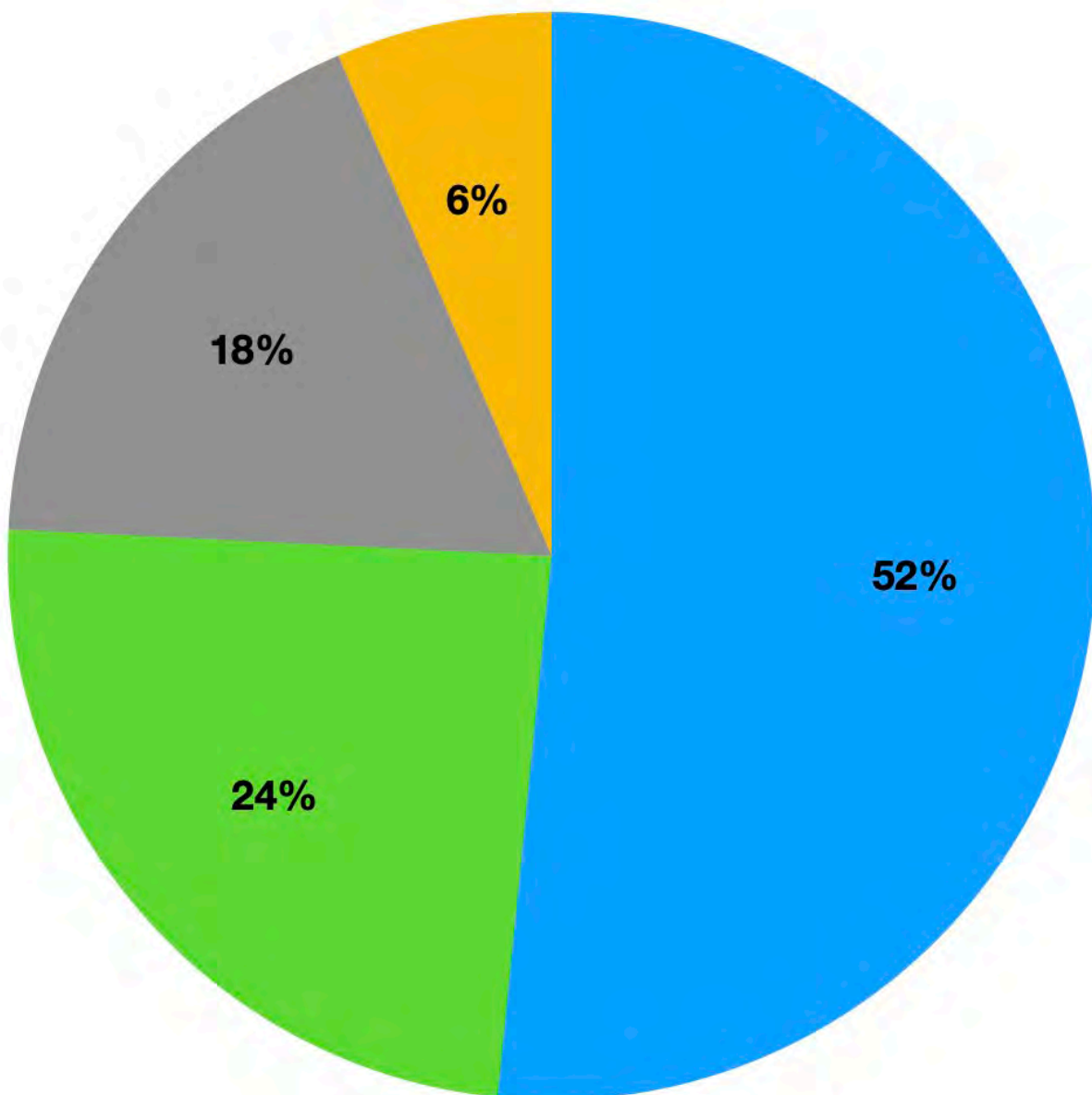
In the summer of 2024, we teamed up with Peoria Public Schools to offer a dynamic two-week mural class for high school students. Under the guidance of artists Eugene Maison and Brenda Gentry, students explored the creative process from start to finish—brainstorming themes, transforming ideas into visual stories, and bringing their vision to life. The result? Two vibrant murals now proudly displayed at Glen Oak School, adding color and creativity to the halls.



INCOME SOURCES

- Grants
- Sponsorships
- Private Donors
- Gifts in Kind

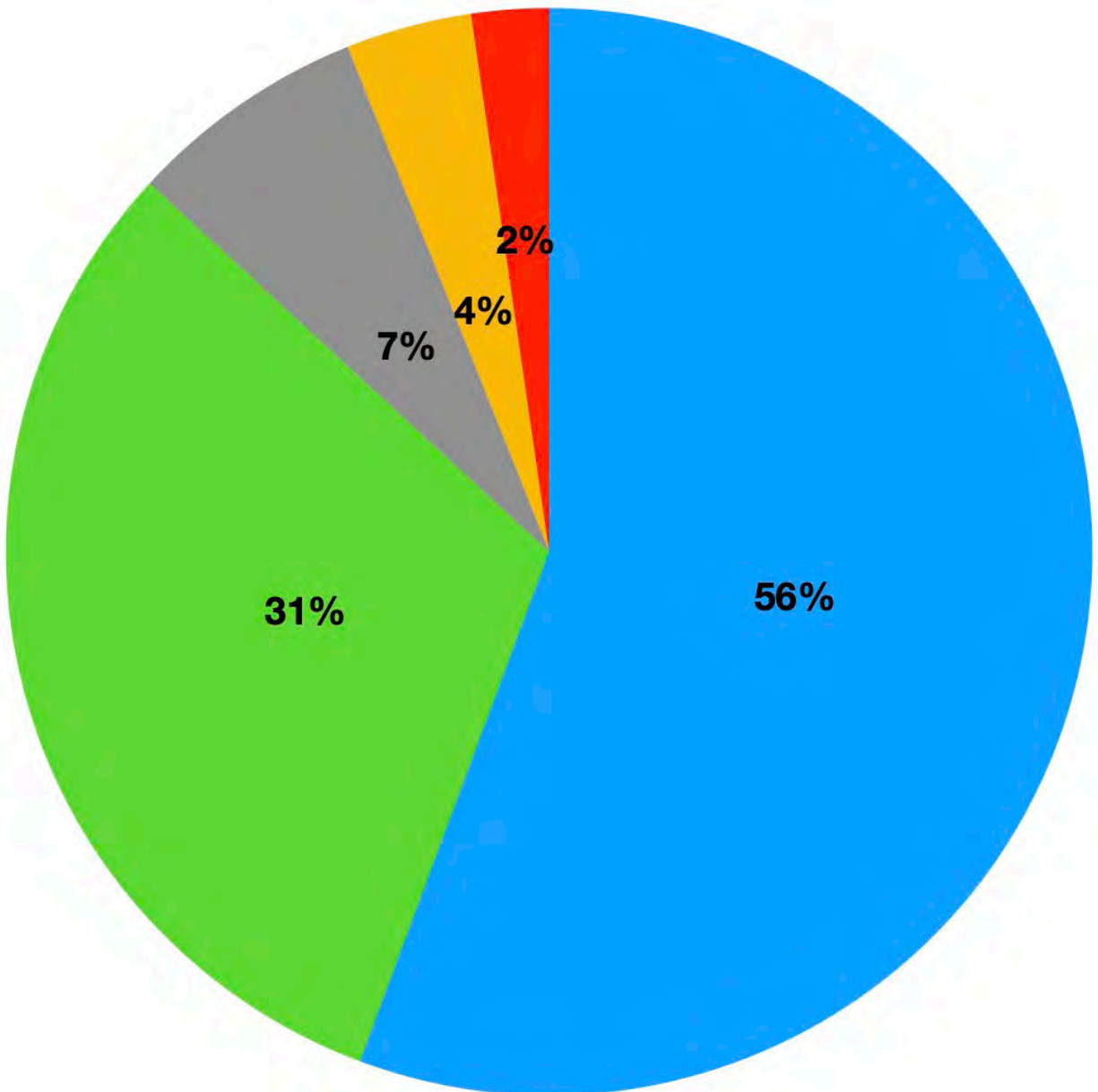
2024 was an amazing year! We welcomed new sponsors and private donors, and received a grant from the Community Foundation of Central Illinois that helped support the Big Picture Peoria Film Festival. We greatly appreciate all of the support we have received by sponsors and donors throughout the year!



ALLOCATION OF FUNDS

- Public Art
- Art Festivals
- General
- Arts Opportunities
- Working Together

As an all-volunteer, grassroots nonprofit, the funds we received in 2024 were fully invested in programs that directly benefit our community. We take great pride in giving back and ensuring that every dollar entrusted to us by our sponsors and grantors is used to its fullest potential.



OUR ASK

JOIN US IN CHANGING THE FACE OF PEORIA!



Pictured with BPP Folks: PNC's Brian Ray and Jenna Cicciarelli Wiesner

Be a Film Festival Producer and participate in the **2025 Big Picture Peoria Film Festival!**
Save the Date - November 21-22, 2025

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

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.

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

Follow us on Facebook and Instagram
[@BigPicturePeoria](#)

Contact us
info@bigpicturepeoria.org

If you'd like to make a donation, please visit bigpicturepeoria.org

WHAT'S NEXT



All New Murals at the Washington Street Gallery



The Big Picture Peoria Film Festival



Arts Opportunities for Kids!



The Big Picture Peoria Street Festival and GO Day!



“Play Greater“ Mural in Downtown Peoria

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