

BIG PICTURE INITIATIVE

Changing the Face of Peoria



2025 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 work has been shaped not only by generosity, but by participation. Big Picture Peoria exists because of a community that shows up—our sponsors and donors, our volunteers and artists, and the countless residents who lend their hands, ideas, and voices to what we create together.

Across Greater Peoria, we have completed nearly 50 large-scale wallscapes—expansive printed and framed installations that transform everyday walls into shared works of public art. These projects are rooted in community pride and made possible through collective support, collaboration, and belief in the value of creative placemaking.

Community involvement is at the heart of everything we do. From painted palms covering our Bicentennial Bison, to community art boards at Fulton Plaza, to volunteers who give their time and energy at our festivals, public art with Big Picture Peoria is truly created by the community. Our annual street festival exemplifies this spirit—an interactive celebration where the public helps make the art, families create side by side, and children leave with artwork of their own. Art here is not something to simply observe; it is something to take part in.

As an all-volunteer organization, every dollar donated and every hour volunteered goes directly into our programs. Because of this collective effort, we are expanding access to the arts, activating public spaces, and ensuring that underserved children and families have meaningful opportunities to create, connect, and belong.

This annual report is more than a record of what we've accomplished—it is a thank-you to our entire community. Your support, participation, and belief in shared creativity are what make Big Picture Peoria possible. Together, we are building a more vibrant, inclusive, and imaginative future for Greater Peoria.



PROLOGUE

Sponsors



The Woods Foundation

CHOOSE GREATER >
PEORIA



Illinois
ARTS
Council



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PROLOGUE

Sponsors

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Mary Venzon

Greg and Candy Walters

Tom and Joyce Walz

Alyssa Waters

John and Gina Wetzel

Donald Wolcott

Terri and Mark Zotz

Partners

Bradley University

Choose Greater Peoria

City of Peoria

Crew 309

EnVision

JiMax

Peoria Music Live

Peoria Public Schools

Peoria Riverfront Association

Sun Foundation

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.



Maggie Misselhorn
Board Member
Co-Founder

Eileen Leunig
Treasurer, Secretary,
Co-Founder

Jessica Bingham
Board Member

Paroma Banerjee
Board Member

Jillian Woodward
Intern

Jamie Wunning
Board Member

Mark Misselhorn
Vice President
Co-Founder

Doug Leunig
President,
Co-Founder

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.



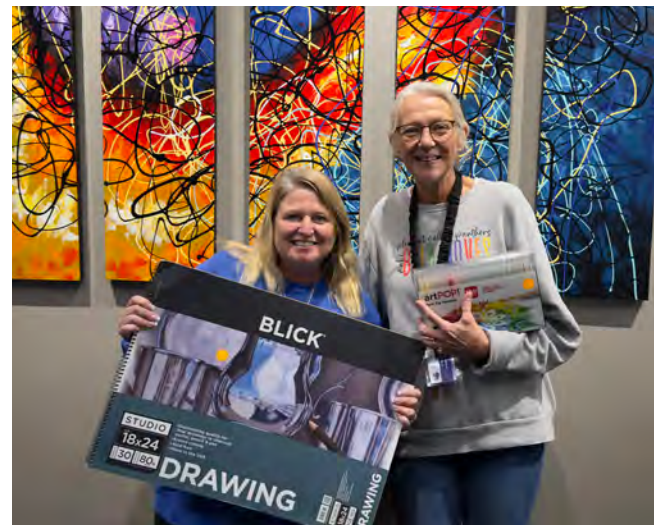
Working Together

Collaborating for community enhancement.



Arts Opportunities

Empowering students through arts.



PUBLIC ART

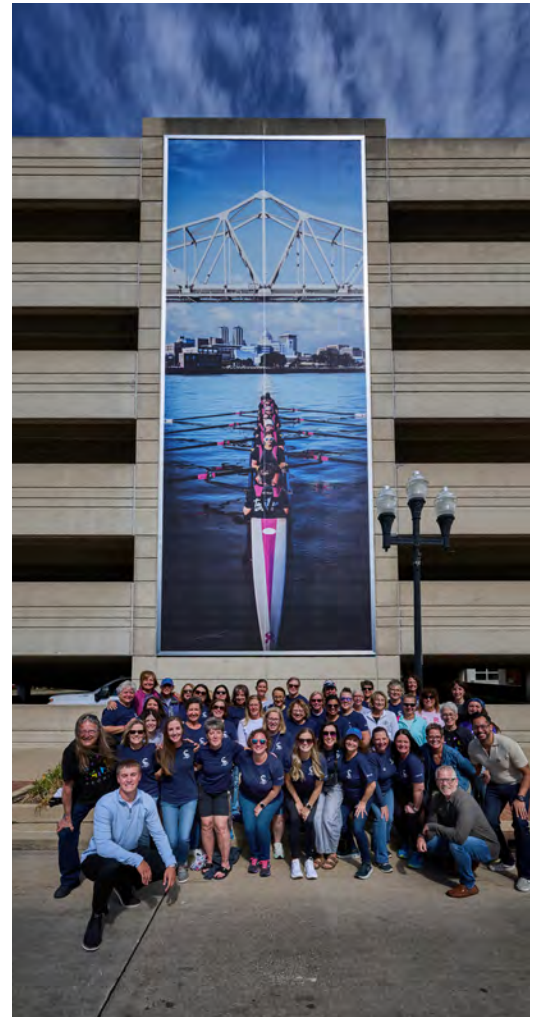
Public art is vital for a healthy community. Public art is welcoming and encourages people to get out of their cars for a closer look. Areas become more walkable, the economy improves, and the community feels more connected.

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 nearly 50 murals across Greater Peoria.



In 2025 we added 20 new pieces to our public art landscape! These works of art not only enhance navigation throughout the city but also stand as landmarks of creativity, unity, and local pride.

“Our collective strength propels us faster and further and when we reflect joy and vibrancy, we attract more people who are willing to work to make Peoria the best it can be. Gilmore Foundation and Choose Greater Peoria believe in public art and will continue to encourage projects that enhance the vibrancy of our downtown,” Laura Cullinan, Gilmore Foundation President



PUBLIC ART

“PLAY GREATER” by Bob Doucette

“Since I have arrived in Peoria, I have found it to be an open playground to express myself through my art. I’m thrilled to be part of a community that inspires and is committed to bringing play to all its people with such great offerings to get involved in from theater, film, sports, parks, to music and festivals.”

- Bob Doucette



Pictured: Mayor Rita Ali, Bob Doucette
Photo credits: City of Peoria

Sponsors



With Support from

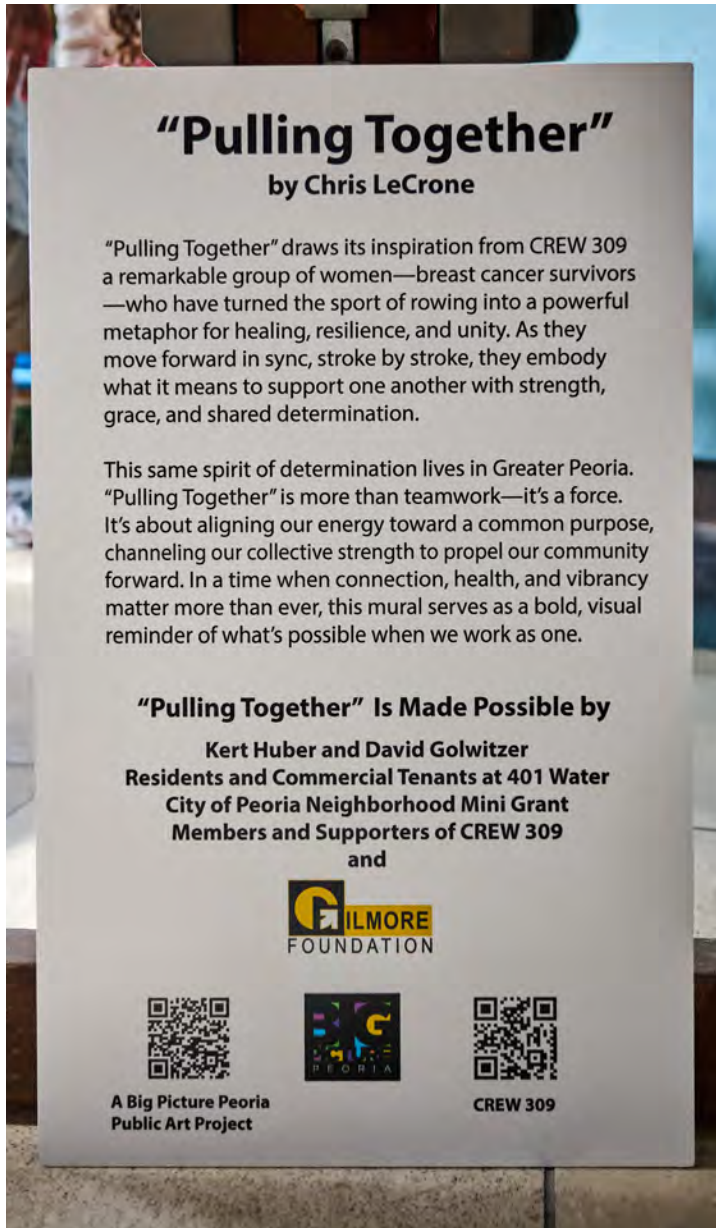
Oberlander Electric, KSA Lighting,
Cat Altorfer Rental, and Springfield Electric



Left to right: Eileen Leunig, Big Picture Peoria; Laura Cullinan, President Gilmore Foundation; Rita Ali, Peoria City Mayor; Tim Riggerbach, Peoria City Councilmember; Mark Roberts, President Community Foundation of Central Illinois; Bob Doucette, artist; Mark Misselhorn, Big Picture Peoria; Brian Ray, Regional President PNC; Alex Carmona, Peoria City Councilmember; Doug Leunig, Big Picture Peoria

PUBLIC ART

“PULLING TOGETHER” by Chris LeCrone



Pictured: Chris LeCrone, CREW 309, Big Picture Peoria Board, Alex Carmona
Photo credits: Mouve Film, Jeffery Noble

“‘Pulling Together’ is about more than teamwork. It’s about channeling our collective strength to move our community forward. This mural will serve as a bold, visual reminder of what’s possible when we work together,”
Maggie Misselhorn, Big Picture Peoria board member.

PUBLIC ART

Washington & Depot Street Galleries



The Washington and Depot Street Gallery Artists, John and Gina Wetzel, Big Picture Peoria board members, and our youngest volunteer standing in for artist Lori Reed.

Photo credits: Mouve Film, Jeffery Noble

John and Gina Wetzel, in partnership with Big Picture Peoria, made a bold new investment in Peoria’s Warehouse District by expanding the collection of large-scale public art on their building at 926 SW Washington Street.

In 2025, the Wetzels swapped out the original eight murals installed in 2020 for new works by local artists—and added eight more large-scale murals to the back of the building. The new section, called The Depot Street Gallery, faces a fully revitalized streetscape where the City of Peoria installed new pavement, landscaping, lighting, and parking, creating an ideal viewing area for the expanded collection. New lighting illuminates each piece at night, enhancing both the vibrancy and safety of the area.

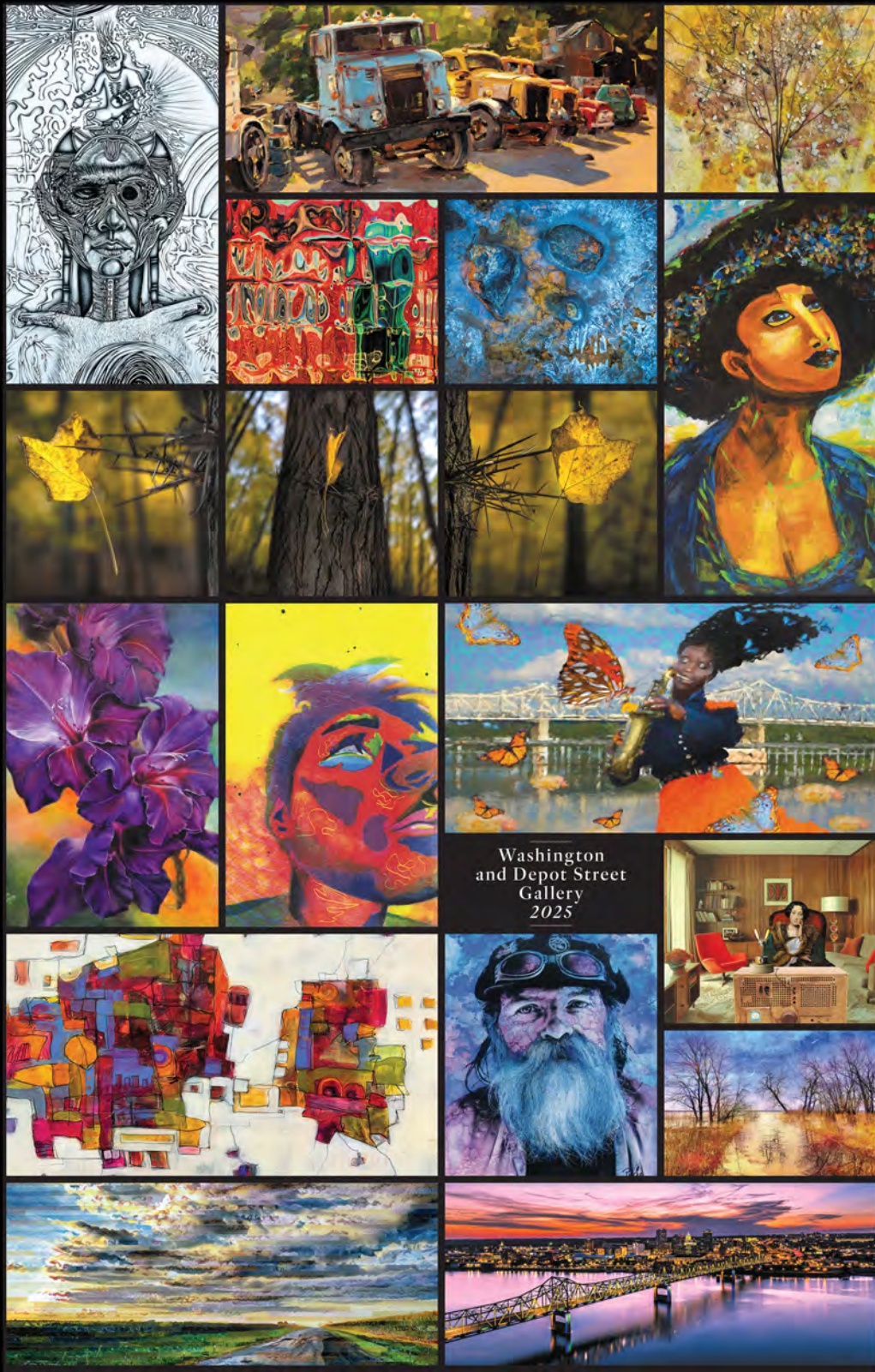
The updated Washington Street Gallery and the brand-new Depot Street Gallery were unveiled to artists and the public during a short ceremony in October.

“Sixteen new large-scale murals—each 10 feet tall and varying in width—on a single building is truly remarkable,” said Doug Leunig, co-founder and president of Big Picture Peoria.

“John and Gina Wetzel are investing in Peoria’s vibrancy because they understand the power of creative placemaking and the pride it generates in our community.”

“Public art doesn’t require admission—it’s free for everyone to enjoy. John and I want to share our pride in Peoria and create a place where residents and visitors can experience the talent and creativity that exist in our community. We hope other business owners will feel inspired to show their pride in Peoria, too,” Gina Wetzel, property owner.

PUBLIC ART



Washington
and Depot Street
Gallery
2025

PUBLIC ART

Washington Street Gallery (2025)

The Washington Street Gallery features eight large-scale reproductions of the following works:

1. Gladiolus 1 — Mary Hildebrand
2. Joy Guide Monkey Drums — Heather Ford
3. Collected 1.23 — Keith Cotton
4. Collected 10.23 — Keith Cotton
5. Romance — Eileen & Doug Leunig
6. Connected to Peoria — Chris LeCrone
7. River Riffs — Natalie Jackson
8. Bountiful — Lori Reed

Depot Street Gallery

The new Depot Street Gallery showcases the following eight large-scale pieces:

1. Jazzy Jays — Adrienne Risby
2. Yellow Trees — Lisa Nelson Raabe
3. Dancing Trees — Julie Dodge
4. Sunshine Type — Isabella Grey
5. The Usual Suspects — Tracy Frugoli
6. Gehry Reflections — Bennett Johnson
7. Destined — Billie Howd
8. Rider — Mary Lou “Pixie” Jacquin

PUBLIC ART

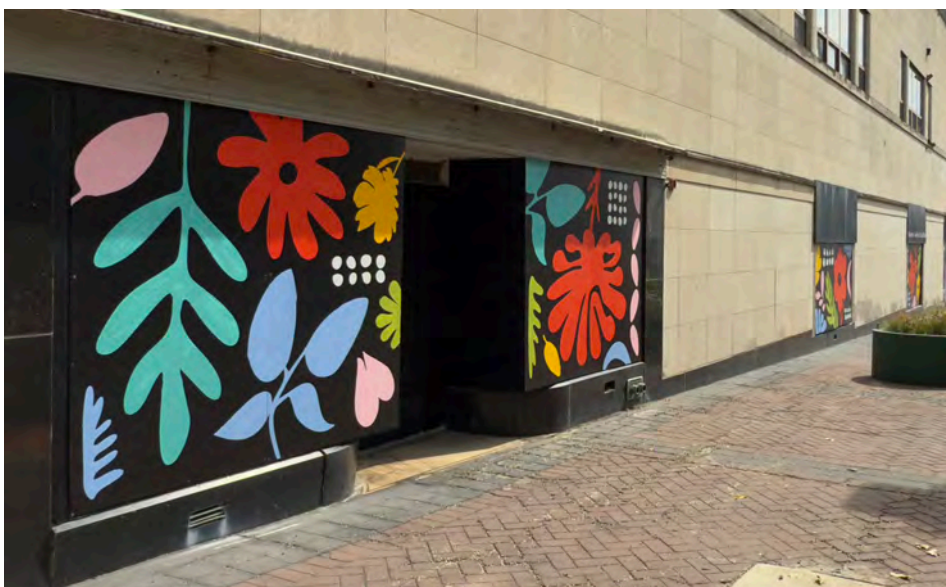
Fulton Plaza Beautification Project

We brought new life to a downtown corner through the Fulton Plaza Beautification Project, using window clings and community-painted mural panels.



“If you could imagine yourself as a butterfly... traversing the country on your migratory journey... crossing vast spaces, gliding above an ever-expanding sea of agriculture, urban sprawl and over-medicated, lifeless lawns, ... flying, searching for a place of refuge, a place to find food and shelter, a place to spawn the next generation of your kind. If you can imagine that journey... then maybe you could imagine the butterfly’s joy of finding an occasional backyard garden, or a flower bed, or a window box or even a single potted plant on a front porch — an Oasis,” Mike McGarvey.

“Oasis” by Mike McGarvey



“Flower Power,” designed by John Seckler and painted by the community at the Big Picture Peoria Street Festival.

ART FESTIVALS

Film Festival

The 2025 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 three-day event took place at the Peoria Riverfront Museum.



“I’ve never been to Peoria and didn’t know what to expect. I was so happy to see the large arts community it has. I definitely want to visit again!”

“It was exciting to see a thriving/growing arts community in Peoria and I hope to see more films set in central and southern Illinois from Illinois filmmakers taking advantage of the expanded film tax incentives! (Not just projects swooping in from the coasts!)”

“I loved feeling like a real part of the Central Illinois filmmaking community. I’m so excited to see how this scene grows and thrives in the coming years!”

FILM FESTIVAL

Thursday Night Feature Length Film

To kick off the Big Picture Peoria Film Festival, we had our very first feature length film screening, directed by Peoria native, David Ferino. David's film, "Wardcliffe" played on the Giant Screen at the Peoria Riverfront Museum and was followed by a Q&A, moderated by Dr. Darrel Gumm. The night was sponsored by Drs. Jane and Darrel Gumm.



Friday & Saturday Screenings

The film festival showcased 26 short films in a variety of genres including documentaries, animation, and live action. Local musicians performed before each screening and the emcee, Blake Wirth, kept the audience engaged. Q&A sessions with the filmmakers after each screening were a big hit.



FILM FESTIVAL



Filmmaker Awards

Festival judges awarded 3 main cash prizes for the Biggie Gold, Silver, and Bronze awards. Plus festival attendees weighed in for the people's choice awards. Award winners received the commemorative 2025 poster designed by Jeremy Berkley.



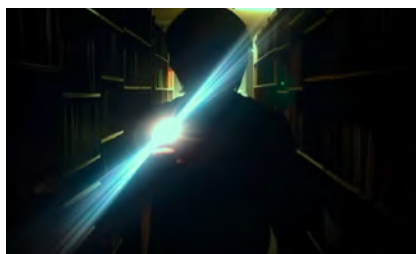
Biggie Gold
Broken Flight



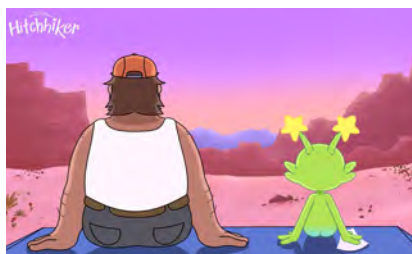
Biggie Silver
A Man of Character



Biggie Bronze
Goober Madness



People's Choice Friday
Nocturnal



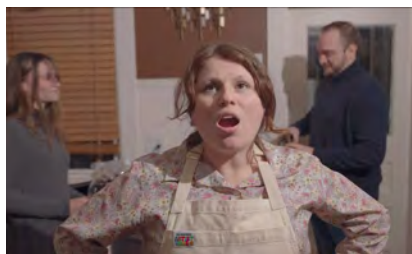
People's Choice Saturday
Hitchhiker



People's Choice Saturday Night
Goober Madness



Special Feature
Wardcliffe



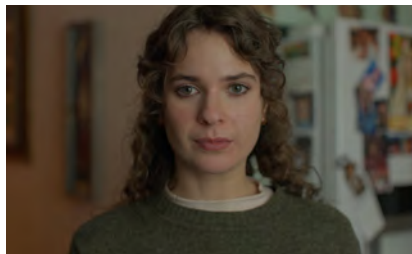
Best in Backyard
Scarlet



Rising Star
Draco vs. Decoy



Best Script
Freakin Weekend



Jury Honorable Mention
Madrina



Best Midwest Story
The House on Garling

ARTS FESTIVAL

Big Picture Peoria Street Festival & GO DAY 2025

On September 7, Big Picture Peoria Street Festival and Choose Greater Peoria's GO DAY took over Water Street for a collaborative day of fun! Thanks to our wonderful community of artists, the Big Picture Peoria Street Festival consisted of 16 make & take booths! The family friendly stations gave Peorians the opportunity to try and take home art projects like metal sculpture, clay molding, stamp carving, collage, and many more.



Chuck's Chalk Challenge

Along the sidewalks was the "Chuck's Chalk Challenge" chalk art competition thanks to the sponsorship of C.T. Gabbert. From chameleons to Mario to optical illusions, the talent was endless! The competition attracted over 20 artists/teams to leave their mark on the city sidewalks and winners were chosen by popular vote. Each winner received a cash prize!



ARTS FESTIVAL

Big Art Needs a Hand

We joined the “Bisontennial” buzz and invited the public to get their gloved palm painted and leave their mark on Big Art the bison. Big Art made its debut on Oct 4th at the Peoria County Bicentennial Celebration before moving to its permanent home outside Born Paint in Peoria’s Warehouse District.



Flower Up Fulton

Flower up Fulton is a three-part community mural designed by artist John Seckler and painted by festival attendees. The three murals are now on display in Fulton Plaza further enhancing and brightening the greenway.



ARTS FESTIVAL

Doodle Wall

Fritch Heating and Cooling sponsored a Doodle Wall that drew a lively crowd throughout the day.



Acoustic Showdown

Peoria Music Live organized and Jerry Kolb sponsored the Original Acoustic Showdown—an open-mic contest with 13 performers, including one 12-year-old! Winners were chosen by popular vote and received cash prizes. The afternoon was rounded out with the wonderful voices of local musicians.



Bradley University Students

Bradley University Interactive Media students from User Experience, Game Design, Game Art, and Animation showcased their works and shared the joys of being a Bradley student.



WORKING TOGETHER

Adirondack Chairs built by Manual High School Students

In collaboration with Choose Greater Peoria and with support from the Peoria Riverfront Association, the Big Picture Peoria team debuted brightly painted Adirondack chairs made by Manual High School students along the riverfront—simple but high-impact additions that people really love.

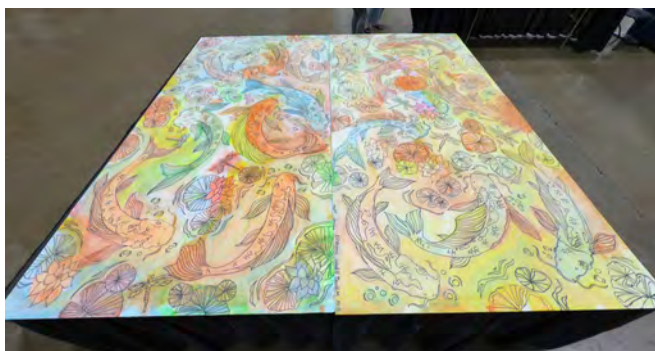


WORKING TOGETHER

Clean Water Celebration

Big Picture Peoria, in partnership with instructors Meredith Popp and Joe Orteza and their Peoria High School of Art, students gave the over 1,500 students attending 31st annual Clean Water Celebration the chance to paint two murals as a community art project. The Sun Foundation Clean Water Celebration is a truly unique event, a model developed in Peoria for the world. Since its inception in 1994 as a collaboration between the Rivers Project and Sun Foundation, it has reached an estimated 60,000 or more youth and adults.

The celebration presents water from many perspectives with experiences for all learning styles reaching students of all ages. It has grown each year to become a magical educational experience combining both the arts and sciences.



WORKING TOGETHER

Project 1612

Big Picture Peoria supported the work of Project 1612 during their tenth anniversary invitational exhibition titled Ripples (August 2025). Project 1612 is an artist-run residency and outdoor exhibition space based in Morton, IL and was founded by curators Jessica Bingham, Alexander Martin, and Zach Ott in 2015. The exhibition included seven artists from Project 1612’s history: Eric Anthony Berdis (2018 alum), Kiley Brandt (2019 alum), Tyanna J. Buie (2023 alum), Ada Farcus (2017 alum), Peyton Fitzgerald (2022 alum), Mona Gazala (2018 alum), and Joey Knox (2016 & 2018 alum). The visiting artists came from across the country to share their artwork and ideas in various ways including a panel discussion at the Peoria Public Library Main Branch, family-friendly art-making workshops, a film screening, a live online conversation via Instagram, artist talks, and exhibition—all free and open to the public. Big Picture Peoria provided stipends to the artists to assist with their travel and/or material costs for the exhibition and related programming. You can learn more about this exhibition on the [NPR WCBU’s Out & About interview](#).

Statement from the exhibition’s press release: “In regard to the chaotic political climate and global suffering that the world is navigating, this exhibition will connect us to where we have been, and where we are going. These artists explore and magnify themes of climate change, Blackness, Queerness, education, femininity, apartheid, immigration, and exploitation in their work. They remind us that we are all connected, that history is here, and that our choices today will impact us for years to come.”



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 for the BUNNY HOP

Each spring, the Peoria Riverfront Association in conjunction with the Peoria Jaycees holds the Bunny Hop walk. Families enjoy using the event maps to find participating organizations and learn more about the Warehouse District. We were happy to participate again in 2025 and share art kits with the kiddos.



ARTS OPPORTUNITIES

Art Supplies Donations



Each year we celebrate the winter holidays by donating art supplies to local schools. This year we made good use of the Dick Blick annual warehouse sale in the fall to load up on colored markers, paints, paper and so much more for students.

ARTS OPPORTUNITIES

Peoria Senior High School Mural Boards



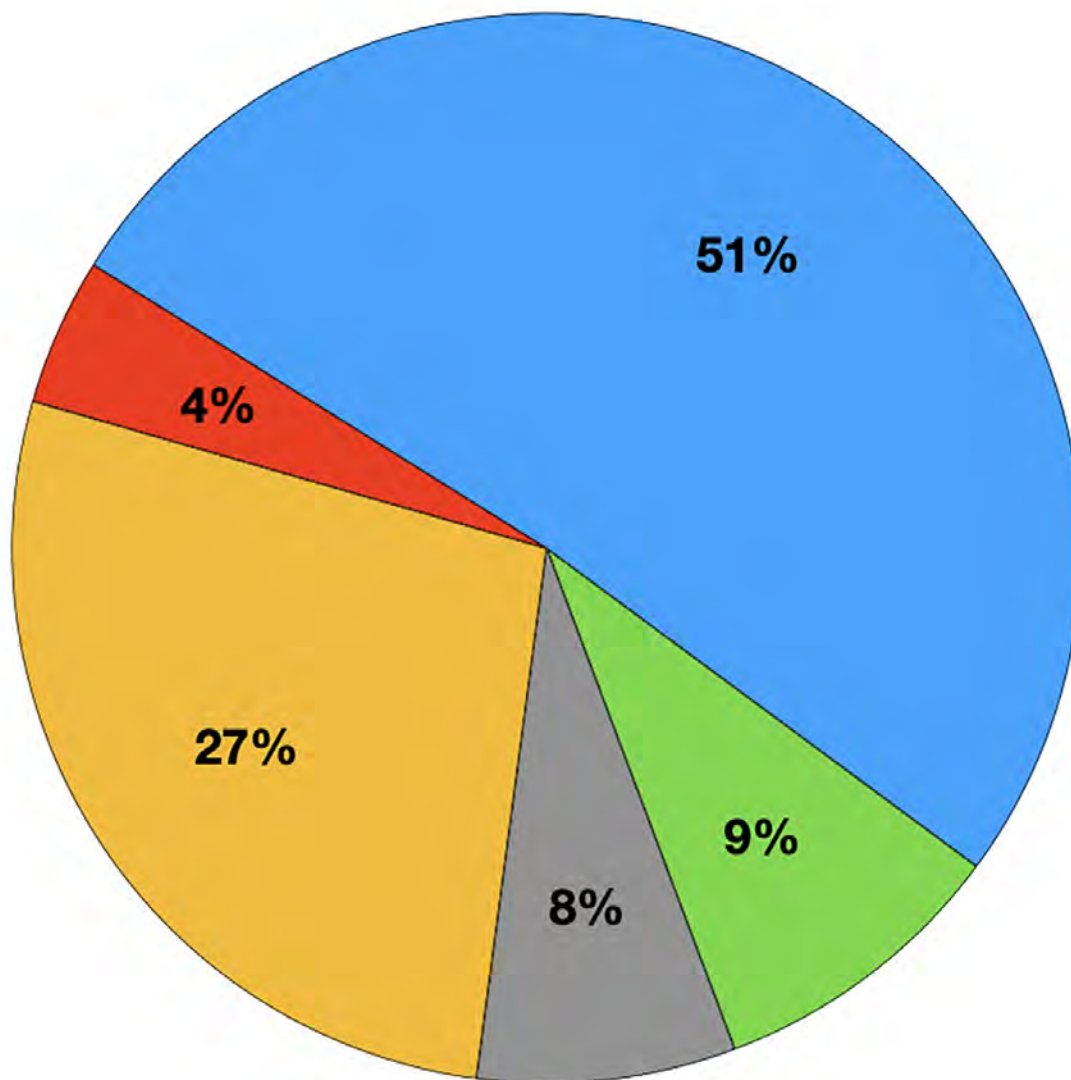
Big Picture Peoria has enjoyed a great relationship with the Peoria High School of Art and in 2025, we were happy to donate several mural boards to the school. Instructors Meredith Popp and Joe Orteza and their students have been working on this project all year. The murals celebrate the new multicultural school for the district. Look for more good art from these young creatives!



INCOME SOURCES

- Grants
- Corporate Contributions
- Sponsors
- Private Donors
- Gifts in Kind

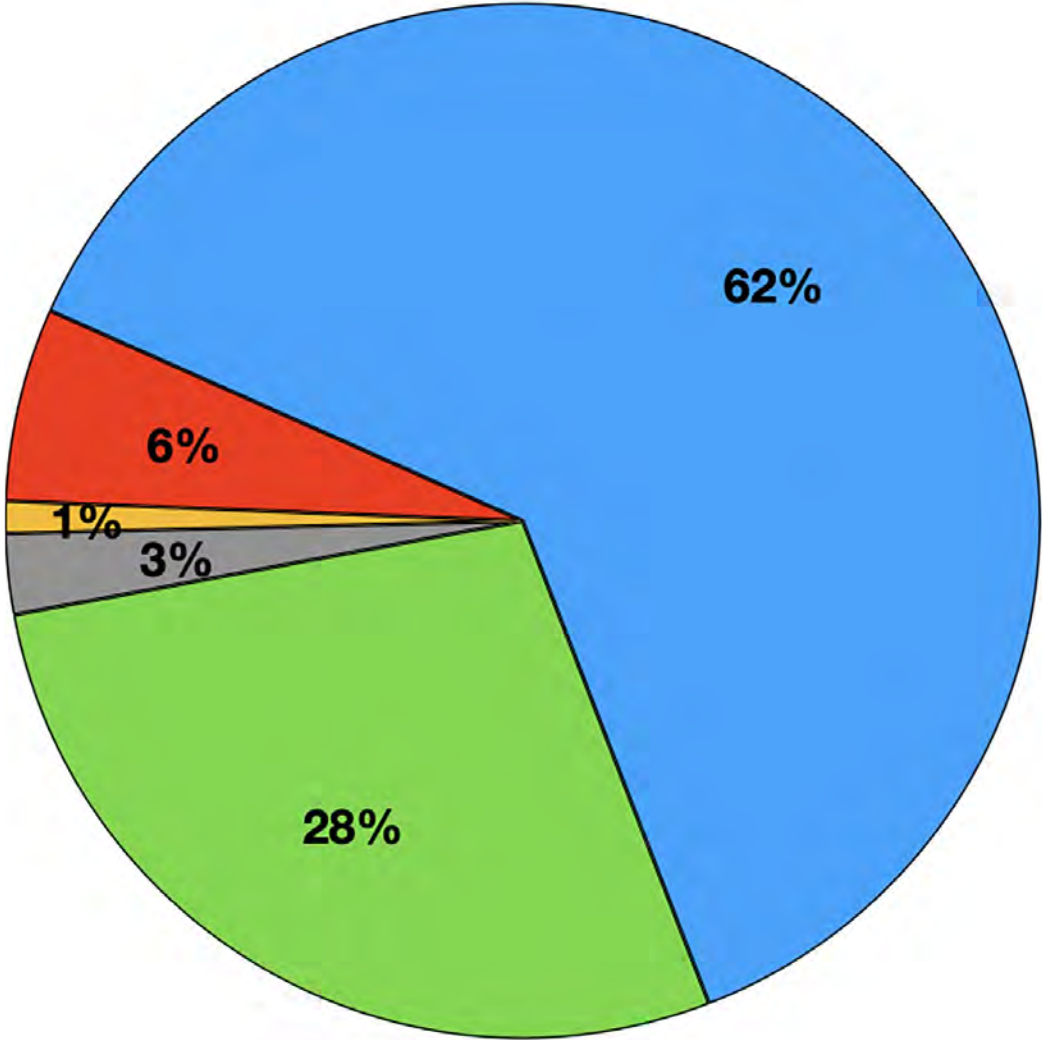
2025 was an amazing year! We welcomed new sponsors and private donors, and received a grant from the Community Foundation of Central Illinois that helped support the Big Picture Peoria Film Festival. We greatly appreciate all of the support we have received by sponsors and donors throughout the year!



ALLOCATION OF FUNDS

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

As an all-volunteer, grassroots nonprofit, the funds we received in 2025 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!



Be a Film Festival Producer and participate in the **2026 Big Picture Peoria Film Festival!**
November 20-21, 2026

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

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