



NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – 14 MAY 2020

ArtistYear Immediately Repositions its AmeriCorps Members to offer Virtual Arts Learning.

PHILADELPHIA (May 14, 2020) – ArtistYear, the first AmeriCorps program committed to addressing our nation’s Arts Education Gap through a National Service Arts Corps, pivoted its teaching-artist Fellows within weeks, bringing arts learning out of closed low-income schools and into homes of students across our nation. ArtistYear’s 57 AmeriCorps Fellows typically deliver over 97,000 hours of arts education each school year to 17,000 vulnerable students in 51 Title I schools across three locations.

When the pandemic precipitously cut short the Fellow’s service year in the classroom, ArtistYear pivoted together with its school district-partners: The **New York City Department of Education**; Colorado’s **Roaring Fork School District**; and The **School District of Philadelphia** and their **Education Channel, PSTV**, and The Articulate Foundation, producers of the national PBS show, **Articulate with Jim Cotter**, and **YouTube** to continue teaching students who have limited access to the arts. In addition to providing online learning in tandem with partner-schools, the Fellows have produced 11 Arts Learning Programs on YouTube. Each program is a 10-episode series for K-12 students across artistic disciplines. Fellows are providing students with emotional, creative, and academic inspiration through the arts, whether on a phone, Chromebook, or television.

“Theater of Circumstance,” walks students through the process of creating an original piece of theater virtually. Visual arts Fellows created “Choose Your Own Sketch Venture,” a do-it-yourself-series teaching bookmaking using basic materials. “The CHA CHA Show: Connecting Human Aesthetics to Creative Health Awareness” takes high-school students through the basics of health and wellness through dance. Programs are designed to be utilized with what a family already has at home. No fancy acrylic paints or expensive animation software is required.

“Youth are hungry for creative expression,” said **Margo Drakos, Cofounder and CEO of ArtistYear**. “ArtistYear AmeriCorps Fellows are coming together stronger than ever around a common purpose – to push boundaries and democratize access to arts learning for all youth, no matter their zip code.”

The Fellows are also learning critical capabilities. The Articulate Foundation, producers of the PBS show *Articulate with Jim Cotter* shared, “We feel privileged to contribute our skills to training ArtistYear Fellows. We are not only

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responding to an immediate need precipitated by pandemic-related school closures, we are helping the Fellows tap into and develop their creativity as communicators and educators, beyond their capacity as teaching artists.

“AmeriCorps is America at its best – people putting compassion into action,” said **Chester Spellman, Director of AmeriCorps**. “ArtistYear is finding innovative ways to use national service to solve the unique challenges posed by the coronavirus pandemic. I’m proud that AmeriCorps can be a part of that solution, bringing quality arts education to students at home. As they have for more than two decades, AmeriCorps members will continue to ‘get things done’ for community and country. Through their dedication and sacrifice, I know our nation is in good hands.”

Founded as a virtual organization, ArtistYear was able to adapt in record time to continue enabling Fellows to serve students through an interactive online platform. To bolster ArtistYear’s online-learning curriculum within weeks, ArtistYear partnered with leading art and education platforms. On the production side, YouTube Learning; and The Articulate Foundation, producer of *Articulate with Jim Cotter*, an Emmy Award-winning arts and culture public television program, have guided our Fellows on how to create, record, and produce content while physically separated using basic devices and software. Our shared-delivery partner and friends at PSTV will distribute Fellows’ Programs through PSTV’s distribution platforms, reaching 200,000 students across Philadelphia. Students can also submit their own art from basic devices in response to ArtistYear’s virtual lessons, opening avenues for even greater participation.

“We are truly appreciative of ArtistYear and the partnership with PSTV,” said **Superintendent William R. Hite, Jr., Ed.D.** “It is extremely important that we continue to provide our students with the same well-rounded education that they had in the classroom, which includes arts education. We’re hopeful that this programming will help our students to stay connected and engaged with their learning and each other during such uncertain times.”

“Times of crisis summon our best instinct to serve one another. ArtistYear awakens that instinct through arts education and reminds all Americans of our common humanity.” shared **John Bridgeland, Vice Chairman of The Service Year Alliance** and **former Director of White House Domestic Policy Council**.

About ArtistYear

ArtistYear’s mission is to address our nation’s Arts Education Gap by ensuring that every low-income student has arts education through a National Service Arts Corps. To do so, we develop, support and places exceptional ArtistYear AmeriCorps Fellows – recent higher-education arts graduates across artistic disciplines – as full-time teaching artists at low-income Title I schools. This innovative strategy significantly bolsters arts education for our most nation’s most vulnerable youth, with all its attendant benefits, while improving student academic and socio-emotional development, enhancing school climate and capacity, benefiting the larger community, and developing a new generation of Citizen-Artists. ArtistYear became an independent 501(c)3 in 2016. ArtistYear is proud to be the first national and State AmeriCorps program for artists to dedicate a year of service to our nation. Since 2017, ArtistYear has supported 136

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ArtistYear AmeriCorps Fellows to serve as full-time Teaching Artists in 121 Title I schools, collectively engaging 35,021 low-income students twice weekly, through 231,400 hours of arts instruction. To learn more, visit www.artistyear.org.

About The Corporation for National and Community Service

The Corporation for National and Community Service is a federal agency that engages millions of Americans in service through its AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, and Volunteer Generation Fund programs, leading the nation's volunteering and service efforts. More than 80,000 members serve each year through nonprofit, faith-based, and community organizations at 21,600 locations across the country. Since 1994, more than 1 million men and women have served in AmeriCorps, providing more than 1.4 billion hours of service and earning more than \$3.3 billion in scholarships to pay for college, more than \$1 billion of which has been used to pay back student loan debt. For more information, visit NationalService.gov.

About PSTV

PSTV is dedicated to providing youth equal access to multimedia tools, digital and media literacy training, and industry experience. PSTV is the education channel for The School District of Philadelphia (SDP). PSTV leads the charge with democratizing access to industry-standard multidimensional media arts training platforms that support all forms of learning from individualized, school-based, community-based, and traditional. To learn more about PSTV, visit www.philasd.org/pstv

About The Articulate Foundation

Through our television program, *Articulate with Jim Cotter*, its associated digital media platforms, and other educational vehicles, The Articulate Foundation connects a diverse audience to the human stories behind art, fostering continued real-world engagement with creativity. We envision a world where artists are valued and respected for their ideas, modes of thinking, and productivity, and where the contributions of creative minds are core to thinking in the classroom, in the boardroom, in government, and beyond. To learn more, visit theartfound.org.

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Additional Quotes

“The entire ArtistYear AmeriCorps team, founded as a virtual organization, was able to adapt in record time to continue serving students through an interactive online platform across multiple artistic disciplines. In addition to serving students, the Fellows have gained new skills that will enhance their service year and future artistic careers,”

- *Elizabeth Warshawer, ArtistYear's Cofounder and Board Chair*

"The pandemic shocks to U.S. schooling have blatantly revealed two hard truths—inequitable access to high quality online instruction for underserved students, and that most online instruction is not engaging, ignoring its young people's interests. Enter ArtistYear and its Fellows to explode with imaginative solutions to both failings. If you ever expected that young teaching artists might have the brightest ideas for transitioning to online learning—you don't know how right you were. Thank you ArtistYear for this exemplary, pioneering demonstration of the power of teaching artistry, and for your responsive innovative moxie."

- *Eric Booth, cofounder of Lincoln Center Education's Teaching Artist Development Lab*

"My peers and I embarked on this year of service because we believe that the Arts are an essential part of any healthy life. We never imagined that something like this would happen when we signed up to serve, but now that we are living in this new normal, we want to make sure we are providing an arts education to as many of our students as possible."

- *James Meadows, ArtistYear AmeriCorps Fellow Class of 2020*