

# boone county arts council news



November 2021

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## Paint on State

Paint on State 2021 brought out hundreds of artists to paint State Street, despite the rainy weather. The weather forecast called for a weekend of rain, but we were happy to hear that the City of Belvidere was not deterred in going forward with offering whatever Heritage Days festivities could still happen. Plans were adjusted so that Paint on State could take place without the drawn lines, and participants instead would be able to choose their own spot on State Street for their art.

The morning started with a downpour, but as the weather cleared the first round of artists arrived. Rain returned a couple of times, but laughter and memories filled the day. The art was beautiful despite washing away sooner than we hoped. In an effort to be ready for the event no matter what health guidelines were in place, we made the shift to using whole bottles of paint this year rather than small cups. This turned out to be an added bonus to the day- people could paint State Street and then bring home their extra paint supplies for more projects.

Thank you to our generous sponsors and the City of Belvidere for making it possible to bring back Paint on State this year. Belvidere's Ace Hardware once again provided paint brushes for the event, and Dari Ripple, Boone County Shopper, and Locust Street Press all helped bring this event to the community as well as many individuals who volunteered their time. Thank you!



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boone county arts council  
P. O. Box 311  
Belvidere, IL 61008  
815-544-6242  
[www.boonecountyarts.com](http://www.boonecountyarts.com)

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Beth Luhman and Gary Simon

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## **Letter from the President**

As we begin to emerge from our pandemic cocoons, it seems a good time to reflect on the healing power of the arts and how creativity engaged us during those long months of isolation.

Globally, we were given opportunities to appreciate the arts online, as musicians in Italy took to their balconies to offer ear-pleasing melodies, and art museums provided online tours and meet-the-artist programs. On a local, grassroots level, children and adults alike demonstrated how art can unite us in an engaging web of creativity. It was a joy to discover stones painted by children planted along the pathways in the parks, while Paint on State at Home resulted in brightly colored sidewalks and driveways throughout town. Furthermore, the student-led installation, Connection Fence Project, was conceived, created, and implemented by art students at Belvidere's two middle schools. Although COVID stopped us in our tracks, we found ways to interconnect through art, bringing us joy, giving our minds a respite from the stress of the pandemic, and allowing us to interconnect.

Through it all, the BCAC continued to meet – at first, via Zoom and now, in-person – to plan the programs and events we were able to offer and will offer in the future. We also welcomed three new members to our board: Jeremy Schulz, Lexi Gruber, and Chris Gardner. Together, we will continue to celebrate the arts in Boone County. Thank you for your support of our organization.

Cheers!  
Heidi Thacker

## Concerts in the Park, Summer 2021

It was great to hear live music again! The Boone County Arts Council presented the first Concert in the Park since July of 2019 on June 6, 2021. The 2020 season was cancelled because of the COVID pandemic. This year was supposed to be the 30th anniversary of the start of the concert series that began in 1991 but that will be a celebration for 2021. Our concert series was started before there was a Baltic Mill Performing Arts Stage and the wonderful tiered seating that we enjoy now. Those additions were not built until 1995 with the restoration of the Baltic Mill. The Boone County Arts Council raised \$120,000 to help pay for the outdoor stage and seating area. Before the stage and seating was created, we would drag a portable stage out of the Baltic Mill and assemble it before each of the concerts. Belvidere High School loaned the stage to us from 1991 to 1994. Thankfully we had enough strong helpers to construct it for six Sunday night concerts.

We now have an eight concert series and travel to several locations in Boone County. Five concerts are held on the Baltic Mill Stage, one concert at the Boone County Fairgrounds before the Belvidere Heritage Days fireworks, one concert at the Poplar Grove Vintage Wings and Wheels Museum, and one concert at Candlewick Lake. We thank all of our host locations for their help with the concerts.

Many thanks go to our financial sponsors this summer - Blackhawk Bank, Byron Bank, Candlewick Lake Association, Heritage Way Advisors, Savant Wealth Management, Solutions Bank, and Swedish American Hospital. We also want to thank the Belvidere Park District. The Community Building has served as our rain site and we utilized the facility two times this summer. Also, the programs of the BCAC are sponsored in part by the Illinois Arts Council Agency. We hope to see everyone at the concerts in 2022!



## BCAC Mural Committee Happenings

### The Eldredge Mural

The pandemic has continued to affect programming throughout 2021 – but we were still able to squeeze in a new mural for downtown Belvidere! Thanks to Public Art benefactors Jack and Peggy Wolf and their magnificent gift to the citizens of Belvidere, the south wall of O'Brien & Dobbins Snyder Drugs store, now features a stunning mural of the Eldredge automobile.

The Eldredge was produced from 1903 to 1906 by the National Sewing Machine Company in Belvidere. A restored 1904 model of the Eldredge Runabout is on display, across the street at the Boone County Museum of History. The original Eldridge mural was designed in 1997 by Mark Oatis for the first Walldogs festival and was located on the north wall of the Stylehouse Furniture building. Oatis contributed to the new mural with his creative redesign. The mural was created between June 26th and July 4th by a team of 14 renowned artists, who were dubbed 'The Eldridge Auto Club.'

Mural highlights: The 'driver' of the Eldredge is a painting of C.J. "Doc" Wolf – taken from an old photo. The license plate on the mural also says 'DOC' as a tribute to Jack's father. The 'farmer' and his 'son' in the mural are the son-in-law and grandson of designer, Mark Oatis – and the trompe l'oeil painting of the girl on the skateboard pulled by her dog on the far right side are Mark's granddaughter and 'granddog'.

The mural project came in on-time and under budget. Talks are underway to remove and relocate the old telephone pole that is the only visual obstruction. Attendance to the Museum of History increased – illustrating the impact and economic influences of Public Art.

The BCAC Mural committee and Board of Directors extend our sincere gratitude the community of Belvidere for your support, kind remarks, shouts and honking horns of appreciation – and your hospitality for our visitors.



### American House mural

The BCAC mural committee was encouraged by the brief opening of the Canadian-U.S. border in late summer to allow our Canadian artists to return to Belvidere and repaint the American House wall in mid-September. Regrettably, the border closed again with the spread of the variant and once more the mural will be delayed for another year and will be painted during Heritage Days weekend in June 2022.

The BCAC thanks our sponsors who will make the restoration of the American House Mural possible: The Community Foundation of Northern Illinois, the City of Belvidere, and the Community Building Complex of Boone County. Without their consistent support, we would have much less impact on the image we present for visitors to Belvidere and Boone County. Thanks, too, for their patience and trust.

### Unity mural – Apollo Theater

Late August also saw the BCAC Mural Committee finalize the design for the Unity mural on the side of the Apollo Theater. Chicago artist and Pilsen native Robert Valadez will paint the design on a 5' x 8' canvas in his art studio. The final image will be photographed and produced digitally – as the BCAC did with the Millennium Mural at Lincoln and State. This method allows the image to remain for years to come by simply applying new digital images to the existing panels.

The art will remain the possession of the Boone County Arts Council. We also own the original art for the Millennium Mural. The Mural Committee is considering the proper way to display these original works of art and will keep the public aware through the newsletter. The weather is going to turn colder soon –



and getting that mural installed this year will be a challenge – but is our goal. If not this year, then early next spring the mural will be installed on panels over the existing, aged mural.

The BCAC sincerely thanks all of the sponsors who have made this new version of the ‘Unity mural’ possible. They include the City of Belvidere, the Boone County Community Foundation, the Kjellstrom Family Foundation, the Community Building Commission, the Rockford Area Arts Council, and individual local donors. This program was funded in part by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council Agency.

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## **Art Voyage**

Have you ever wanted an easy way to locate and learn about the public art in Boone County? Board member Michael Hart built an app that you can download to your phone to learn about our local public art. ArtVoyage has a map feature that allows you to see all of the public art locations. You are also able to see the art sorted by what is nearest to your location. When you visit a mural or sculpture, you can ‘unlock’ the art, and you’ll see animated confetti and it will mark the location as visited.

**You can download the app by going to [www.artvoyage.app](http://www.artvoyage.app)**

## **New Mural Brochure**

The Boone County Arts Council is in the process of developing a new brochure that includes the many murals that have been created in the last ten years. We are pleased to announce that Walmart has recently given the BCAC a \$500.00 grant for its publication. We also thank the Illinois Arts Council Agency for providing funding for our organization that enables us to produce this much needed informational brochure.