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ArtsWave honors arts leaders and advances key initiatives at 2025 Annual Meeting

CINCINNATI (Oct. 23, 2025) — ArtsWave, the engine for the arts in the Cincinnati region, highlighted major leadership transitions, new funding commitments and continued community impact at its Annual Meeting on Wednesday at the Hard Rock Casino Cincinnati.

The program included recognition of outgoing Board Chair Leigh Fox, president and CEO of altafiber, the election of new trustees and officers, and approval of grants that support a more vibrant and connected community. Progress toward ArtsWave 100, the organization's centennial vision, and expansion of digital engagement through the ArtsWave App were also shared.

Sachs Fund Prize recipients

The 2025 Rosa F. and Samuel B. Sachs Fund Prize recognized two leaders advancing artistic achievement and inclusion in the region:

- **Kathy Wade**, CEO and co-founder of [Learning Through Art, Inc.](#), whose four decades of work span jazz performance, producing and community arts education
- **Gee Horton**, a self-taught interdisciplinary artist whose work has been featured in national museums and media, and who operates his own studio gallery in Cincinnati. geehorton.com

Leadership elections

Debbie Hayes, President and CEO of The Christ Hospital Network, was elected Board Chair, succeeding Fox.

Officers serving one-year terms include:

- Vice Chair: **Kala Gibson**, Executive Vice President, Head of Business Banking and Chief Corporate Responsibility Officer, Fifth Third Bank

- Treasurer: **Joe Muraca**, Assurance Partner, EY
- Secretary: **Megan Shaffer**, GVP, Strategy and Consumer Growth, Kroger

Four new trustees were elected to three-year terms: **Sylvester DuPree**, **Trey Grayson**, **Ken Muth** and **Deb Silverman**. Three trustees were re-elected to second terms and three were re-elected to third terms. Five ex-officio trustees, **Katy Sheehan**, **Caroline Hyatt**, **Andrew Quinn**, **Charla Weiss** and **James Zimmerman**, Chair of the 2026 ArtsWave Community Campaign, were also elected representing key community partners, arts organizations and the 2026 ArtsWave Community Campaign.

Grant funding and program updates

Trustees approved **36 project grants**, totaling support of **\$208,000** in community arts projects. These include:

- Ten Circle Grants supporting projects aligned with lived Black and Brown experiences totaling \$80,400.
- Fourteen Pride Grants celebrating and serving the LGBTQ+ community totaling \$80,400
- Twelve YP Grants deepening young professional engagement in the Cincinnati region totaling \$47,200.

Advancing toward 2027

With its 100th anniversary approaching, ArtsWave continues to expand long-term investment in regional arts stability. The **ArtsWave 100** Endowment Committee is working toward recruiting 100 legacy gifts from ArtsWave Visionaries to sustain the arts for the next century.

Digital engagement continues to expand through the **ArtsWave App**, which reached new milestones:

- One in four downloads from people new to ArtsWave
- 450 to 700 active users each day
- A **282 percent** increase in ArtsWave Pass benefit redemptions year over year

Visit artswave.org/report for the full 2025 Community Report, which includes grant listings and community impact information.

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About ArtsWave

ArtsWave fuels the Cincinnati region's arts, supporting 150+ organizations, projects, and artists each year. Since 1927, it has been the primary way the region funds the arts, raising millions annually from tens of thousands of individuals, businesses, and foundations to drive a more vibrant economy and connected community. Through the Blueprint for Collective Action, ArtsWave strategically makes investments that maximize the arts' impact across the region. To learn more and give, visit artswave.org.