Annual Report

Fiscal Year 2015
Inspiring Artistic Expression
Music

Building Community
Mentorship

Annual Financial Report

Funders

Promoting Self-Respect
Wellness

Developing Independence
Solo Exhibitions
If anything, The Arts of Life is diverse. Our artists, staff, volunteers, financial contributors, and community supporters come from many backgrounds and have a multitude of aspirations and goals. Equally diverse are The Arts of Life programs and activities – we are more than an organization striving to provide artists with disabilities a safe place to work. We are also about art, music, health, mentoring and community.

In this year’s annual report, we want to share a few of the many programs at The Arts of Life that reflect this diversity:

• The highly successful Mentorship Program that pairs a Studio artist with a community artist.

• Our two rockin’ bands that have recorded albums in 2015 and what they learned in the process.

• The brave adventure of one of our artists who planned and executed his first solo exhibition.

• Our expanded wellness program that encourages our artist to take care of their health as they learn and grow their visual talents.

Our diversity is our strength.

Many thanks for your continued support expressed through your commitment, dedication, and guidance.

Warmly,

Denise Fisher

Denise Fisher
Executive Director
The Arts of Life seeks to create a diverse creative community. In addition to the rich visual practices at both the Chicago and North Shore studios, artists' interest in music led them to form two bands. The groups write songs together, perform live at bars and music venues, and create studio recordings. The artists gain as much self-confidence, independence, and growth from music as they do from their daily visual arts practice.

The pop-punk Arts of Life Band grew up alongside the Chicago Studio and released their first album in 2008. Studio founder Veronica Cuculich was one of the original members of the group. The North Shore studio's Van Go Go is a newer group with a sound infused with reggae, roots rock, and funk. Van Go Go drummer and singer Nikole Heusman says, “Our music makes me feel like I can do something that frees me from my disability. Our music is for your heart and for your soul.” Both bands chose to focus on recording studio albums in 2015.

A full album promised to take Van Go Go's sound to the next level. However, the fees to rent recording space and produce an album can quickly add up. Not to be deterred by their limited budget, the group launched an IndieGoGo campaign in March of 2015 to crowd source the cost of studio rental and album production. Fans came out in droves to fully fund the project, so the band got down to work this fall at Experimental Sound Studios, a local non-profit, artist-run recording space.

Playing in a recording studio was a totally new experience for many band members. Nikole noted the differences between the studio’s recording environment compared to practice and performance spaces. “It was small, and it didn’t have a stage, just a place for the microphone and the headset. Everybody couldn’t fit in at once, so we had to take turns. It was much quieter than at the studio. It was kind of weird to hear myself singing, and it sounded different, and loud.”

Over at the Chicago studio, The Arts of Life Band was also working towards a new album Singer Christina Zion, who has been with the group from the beginning, was especially excited to record some of the new songs written since their first album. Band member Ricky Canning provided access to a recording space and equipment, allowing The Arts of Life band to record sessions during their regular Friday morning practices. Week after week, they laid down tracks, reviewed prior recordings, and mixed everything in-house. Most importantly for band member Mike Marino, the space was accessible and comfortable. “It was good to be at Ricky’s studio... We had enough space and couches to relax on.”
Both bands noted that the process of recording in a studio was different than performing live. Listening to bits and pieces of a song over and over again changed the musicians' perspectives on their music. Both Van Go Go and The Arts of Life Band singers marveled at their ability to clearly hear vocals during recording sessions. Mike talked about recording his song ‘Brookfield Rap.’ “It was really cool, how I could hear my own voice in the headphones. It was a lot clearer than at shows, and I could hear what I was saying, all the lyrics.” Van Go Go vocalist Pam Robe had similar feedback. “I was so happy that everyone could hear me.” Her bandmate and ukulele player Vanessa de Leon expanded on that thought. “Often times, I feel like I am in the background or my instrument is being overshadowed by other instruments. When recording in a studio, everyone had the chance to be heard and it seemed that everyone did better while recording.”

Recording presented as many opportunities for creative problem solving as painting or drawing. Arts of Life Band member Taylor Hales emphasized the significance of being present to each recording as a unique experience. “There wasn’t one approach to apply to every [musician]. What worked for some artists didn’t work for others. We had to develop a unique process for each artist.”

When asked what he took away from recording, North Shore Arts Coordinator John Sharp said, “I’ve been with this band for quite a while now, but it can still surprise me, and that is so refreshing. Even after rehearsing for so long, there’s just something that happens when you go into the studio; things happen unexpectedly... It helps us keep growing.”

Van Go Go’s self-titled album was released on November 20th at a standing-room-only performance at Comfort Station in the Logan Square neighborhood of Chicago. They plan to continue performing and promoting their album in 2016. The Arts of Life Band recorded throughout the summer of 2015, and mixed the final track of their new recording in October. The band plans to master and press their vinyl album during early spring 2016. In the meantime, they just want to rock out! You can find the details for their upcoming gigs on Facebook. Christina offers this invitation: “We like to get people dancing fast and having fun. We want to see some new faces in the crowd.”

“Our music makes me feel like I can do something that frees me from my disability. Our music is for your heart and for your soul.”
The Arts of Life is committed to integrating artists with disabilities into Chicago's vibrant arts community through a professional experiences and opportunities. To fully engage as valuable members and contributors in the larger Chicago arts community, our artists must build strong visual practices to generate and express their ideas. To this end, The Arts of Life developed a Mentorship Program to partner our studio artists with professional Chicago-based artists. The goal of the Mentorship Program is to enhance individual artist’s skills and interests through collaborative and equitable work and dialogue as a team.

The Chicago Studio Arts Coordinator is responsible for matching artists and volunteers based on their interests, dedication to their work, and their artistic styles. With a minimum commitment of six months, The Arts of Life studio artists and volunteers work together about every other week, At first, the teams get to know each other through dialogue and pursuit of their individual work. After the pairs are comfortable and familiar with each other’s process, they build bodies of work that speak to their collaborative experience. The program began with a handful of partnerships including Allison Wade and Frances Roberts.

Allison Wade and Frances Roberts are a good example of the benefits of the Mentorship Program. Allison and Frances found their partnership rewarding, though not without challenges. Volunteer Allison is a practicing artist who received her Masters’ from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Studio Artist Frances is largely self-taught. Frances admits it took some time to get comfortable working with each other, but now she feels differently. “We get along pretty good. Allison teaches me about art and how to draw. I’m teaching her how to draw chairs and she teaches me how to draw people.” The two can be seen together planning, sketching, or painting. Through their collaboration, they each gained greater awareness of their strengths and weaknesses.

After working together for a few months, Allison and Francis began to conceptualize a joint exhibition. Featuring a new series of drawings, “Everyone Enjoys a Party” opened at Tusk in spring 2015. At the opening, family and friends came out to support and encourage the artist.
Their joint experience of creating work and planning the exhibit helped to push their professional careers forward, with both artists recognizing how their perspectives had changed. As Allison noted, “My drawings have become much more colorful and complicated since I started working with Frances. I noticed this happening about 6 months ago. I also started layering colors in pencil because of a technique Frances showed me. I don’t think I would have come to that on my own”.

Working artists are sometimes isolated and can struggle to find daily motivation and solutions to problems in their work. By linking artists in teams, The Arts of Life Mentorship Program uses collaboration to foster artistic growth. Frances points out that “it’s important to work with others because they teach you about your own work and bring out your strong points. Allison and I give each other advice and encouragement to get through the challenges we face both in our personal lives as well as in our art work.” Allison most appreciated the openness required for a successful collaboration. “There’s a freedom in collaborating and sharing the decisions and direction of the work with Frances. And I am always surprised at where the work goes.” As a result of the progress Frances made within her practice this past year and the risks she took in developing this strong mentorship connection, she was honored with the 2015 Artist of the Year Award at the Chicago studio.

Frances and Allison have forged a strong connection. They continue to collaborate regularly and offer each other an outlet to process daily feelings. Outside the studio, the two enjoy going to exhibitions together and being able to learn from and enjoy other people’s artwork. Due to the positive outcomes we have seen from this program, we continue to keep our doors open for new mentorships to develop.
### Fiscal Year ended June 30, 2015

#### EXPENSES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FY Ended June 30, 2015</th>
<th>FY Ended June 30, 2014</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program Services</td>
<td>$438,074</td>
<td>$471,100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Administration &amp; Fundraising</td>
<td>$242,291</td>
<td>$101,781</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>$680,365</strong></td>
<td><strong>$572,881</strong></td>
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The State of Illinois has not increased its’ hourly rate for reimbursement of services in several years. As a result, the Arts of Life is increasingly dependent on funding from grants and contributions. In Fiscal Year 2015 additional expenses were incurred in fundraising to increase grants and contributions.

**BEYOND THE LEDGER:** An incredible amount of resources and supplies go into making The Arts of Life a success.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canvases</td>
<td>902</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paint Brushes</td>
<td>175</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oil Pastels</td>
<td>438</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gallons of acrylic paint</td>
<td>101</td>
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### SUPPORT AND REVENUE

<table>
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<th></th>
<th>FY Ended June 30, 2015</th>
<th>FY Ended June 30, 2014</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State of Illinois</td>
<td>$439,902</td>
<td>$433,691</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Grants &amp; Contributions</td>
<td>$180,965</td>
<td>$99,343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Events &amp; Other</td>
<td>$67,207</td>
<td>$55,740</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>$688,074</strong></td>
<td><strong>$588,774</strong></td>
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Total support and revenues increased by 17%. Because the State of Illinois has not increased its hourly rate for reimbursement of services, the agency is increasingly dependent on funding from grants and contributions.

### SUMMARY FINANCIAL POSITION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FY Ended June 30, 2015</th>
<th>FY Ended June 30, 2014</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Change in Net Assets</td>
<td>$7,709</td>
<td>$15,893</td>
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<tr>
<td>Net Assets, Beginning of Year</td>
<td>$104,428</td>
<td>$88,535</td>
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<tr>
<td>Net Assets, End of Year</td>
<td>$112,137</td>
<td>$104,428</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thank you to all of our wonderful supporters

$5000+
Amanda Joy Sidell
Annette Towler
David Warn
Illinois Arts Council
New Trier Township
The Lavin Bernick Huber Charitable Fund
The Coleman Foundation

$1,500–4,999
Big Stick LLC
Granger
Jere A. Law
Meghan Holmes
Northfield Township
Raj Fernando
Scott Fischer
Steve Nazarau
The Heather Foundation
Toddy Beyer

$500–1,499
City of Highwood
Division Street Crossfit
Law Office of Charles R Fox
LVII
Niles Township
Alice Rybak
Anne Kelly
Bronwyn Kelly
Carrie Kennedy
Chris McLaughlin
Cindy Lazard-Hunt
Cindy Shanker
David Booth
David Fronweltter
Elizabeth Tucker

$1–499
Aaron Halstuk
Abigail Satinsky
Access Living
Adeline Winkowski
Agnes Sherry
Albert Gaudyn
Alex Dowson
Alex Menocal
Alexander Scott
Alexander Watkins
Alexandra Babig
Alpha Phi Omega/Alpha Zeta Delta
Alison Towen
Allison Bailey
Allison Barr
Allison Stout
Allison Wade
Alyssa Moore
Amalia Townsend
Amanda Bailey
Amanda Burgdorf
Amberly King
Amy Berk
Amy Franco
Amy Yamashiro
Anita Hennigs
Anita Olives
Ana Raba-Michelson
Andrew Bisco
Andrew D'Arcy
Andrew Daley
Andrew Hild
Andrew Holmquist
Angie Lennard
Angela Ramas
Angie Renfro
Ann Brundett
Ann Jonaitis
Ann Kelly
Anne Palouzin
Annette Sloan
Annie Kielman
Anthony Anderson
Anthony Galliotto
Anthony Perez Jr.
Apur Puri
Ariele Ebacher
Ashley Chismark
Ashley Colon
Ashley Fear
Audrey Spraggins
Avon Township
Barb Kehein
Barbara Abelson
Barbara Becker
Barbara Chamberlain
Barbara Goldman
Barbara Hanan
Barbara Monier
Bazil Branard
Ben Marcus
Ben Sanders
Benjamin Taylor
Benjamin Torres
Bethanne Stone
Betsy Baer
Bill Finley
Bluelight
Brad Nones
Brad Knain
Brandy Erwin
Brent Holman
Bret Hoekema
Brian Hall
Brittney Williams
Bridgek Walsh
Bridgegett Ytle
Brittany Towers
Britt Miller
Bruce Handler
Bruce Lomont
Bryan Ward
Catin Law
Cara McCaran
Carla Zeller
Carisa Hogberg
Carl Ruczeka
Carol Goodman
Carol Robinson
Carrie Barach
Carrie Healy
Carson Hoerz
Catherine Norcott
Cathy Wolowiec
Celestina Sachs
Ceila Jones
Charles Curane Jr.
Charles Ripp
Charna Albert
Chelsea Yang
Chis Hoffman
Chris Sturm
Christina Cerasale
Christina Elston
Christina Korbakas
Christina Parentea
Christina Pillsbury
Christina Valdes
Christina Waterman
Christine Wykes
Clare Kelly
Clare Stubor
Clarence Carter
Clayton Britnell
Clayton Hasson Kubinski
Colin Young
Colleen Kehin
Connie Hamilton
Constance Hernandez
Corinne Helted
Corrie Thompson
Courtney Penzato
Cristen Chapman
Cynthia Bassuk
Dan Friedman
Daniel Bennett
Daniel Christian
Daniel Christman-Crook
Daniel Hurwitz
Danielle Campbell
David Kubica
David Riz
David Shuey
David Sullivan
David Yoon
Dean Thanos
Debby Dwyer
Debbie Hall
Debbie Kim
Debbie Kubica
Debbie Zillo
Debora Frost
Decker Phyllis
Delane Heidt
Denise Constantine
Denise Fisher
Dennis Jacobs
Derek Hess
Diana Guzman
Diana Popan
Diane Honeyman
Diane Thayer
Dianne McMerritt
Dickoal Kehein
Dolores Connors
Dom's Concrete
Dongyan Li
Donna Cooper
Donna Fronweltter
Doug Cox
Dr.George Wilson
Draw the Button, inc
Earl Wendel
Ed Boarini
Ed & Ellen Manus
Edward Frintd
Edward Rawski
Eleine Bomy
Elan Kennedy
Elena Vaszquez
Elissabt Gryzya
Elisah Preston
Elizabeth Bobskill
Elizabeth Dell
Elizabeth Knowlton
Elizabeth Melchers
Elizabeth Tillar
Elizabeth Zavala
Ellen Wallace
Elysa Lock
Emily Hartman
Emily Tuesday
Emily Whitmer
Eric Broughton
Eric Newmiller
Eric Pierce
Erica Bermudez
Erin Ramirez
Ernesto Borges
Eva Soutsos
Fidelity Charitable
Flo Cafe and Bar
Frank Solano
Garret Zunta
Gail Borgerd
Gail Sellog
Gale Heschky
Gale Stoffregen
Gerald Kostuk
George Vymi
Ginka Agimb
Gordon Knowlton
Gordon Kummel
Greg Walker
Gregory Brinkman
Gregory Davis
Gretchen Rahm
Haley Adkin
Hanan Van Dril
Hanna Bemer
Hannah Barton
Heather Melvin
Helen Uwda
Hilary Conlisk
Hilaire Marshall
Holly Bell
Hope Washinushi
Illinois Tool Works Foundation
Ilyse Mechanic
Inbal Amit
India McCoid
Info Talk LLC
Ingrid Perlongo
Irene Koulhan
Isa Giallorenzo
Isamu Conners
Ivy Ericson
Jackie Furtado
Jackie Pobold
Jacyn Jones
Jacqueline Blanchard-Fentim
Jada Black
Jake Gold
James Bemer
James Fitzmaurice
James Hameeke
James Richards
James Melendorf
James Williams
Jamie Knuth
Jannie Zabel
Jami Sebold
Jan Conley
Jandy Stute
Jailc Doyle
Jane Gallery
Jane Ward

Janice Tedder
Jared Metzer
Jason Allain
Jason Pickleman
Jason Kalajainen
Jason Nell
Jennifer Mervine
Jeff Boarini
Jeff Granda
Jehri Wendel
Jen Marno
Jenna Baisden
Jennifer Jenkins
Jennifer King
Jenny Nativi
Jenny Kendler
Jenny Pafflin
Jeraul Ruggles
Jerry's Wicker Park
Jessica Bribesca
Jessica Buhrman
Jessie Yanson
Jill Dunbar
Jill Nyhof
Jim & Mary Ladus
Jo Dee Walsh
Joan Martin
JoAnne Firth
Joe Garcia
Joe Jordan
John Case
John Cunningham
John Gammal
John Riker
John Korh
John McWhirter
John Morris
John Ostrowski
John Porterfeld
John Tynsiki
Jolyon Glosom-Simon
Jon Plotkin
Jonathan Doyle
Jonathan Rusch
Jonathon Alppatch
Joseph Davis
Joseph Harzich
Josh Wyles
Joshua Arents
Joshua Broecker
Joshua Fisch
Joshua Rosenbluh
Joshua Urban
Joshua Zeidler
Juan Espinosa
Judi Pellegrino
Judy Esye
Julie Pawlowicz
Julie Bauer
Julie Bronder
Julie Chez
Julie Gallott
Julie Gardner

Robert Fisher
Robert Kritt
Tiffany Shimada
Victoria Kim
We Are Lions
During fiscal year 2015, The Arts of Live has been excited to expand our wellness programming by participating Health Matters, a program that provides organizations such as ours with tools and resources to build diverse and effective wellness programs. Although The Arts of Life is focused on supporting people with disabilities to become professional artists, we feel that wellness programming is equally important. For that reason, we decided as a community to devote a portion of our work week to wellness.

HealthMatters uses a variety of activities to promote wellness. One important component is the physical exercise program that encourages participants to find physical activities and exercises they enjoy. Artist David Kreuger has taken responsibility to lead a short stretching/aerobics workout 3 days per week as well as co-facilitating yoga twice a week. He is great at encouraging many members of our studio to take a break from their artwork and get some exercise.

Health Matters also includes classroom activities focused on learning about healthy foods and the impact exercise and good nutrition have on our bodies. As a result, many artists have started bringing more fruits and vegetables in their daily lunches. David Kreuger frequently announces when he has a “big ol’ freakin’ salad” for lunch.

Our garden project has tied in well with HealthMatters. Artist Kelly Stone, an active member of the Chicago Studio Horticulture Committee, has been an invaluable advocate in keeping the project alive.
"We decided as a community to devote a portion of our work week to wellness."

Every Monday, Kelly walks around the studio with a huge grin on his face, waiting for the Horticulture Committee to leave for the Bon A Petit Community Garden. In the Arts of Life plot, artists grow tomatoes, carrots, green beans, potatoes, lettuce, herbs, and much more.

After reaping their harvest, members of the Horticulture Committee often head over to the kitchen at Rogue Philanthropy, an Arts of Life partner, to cook up some delicious and healthy treats to bring back to the studio. They've prepared hummus, potato salad, baby carrots, eggplant, and more. After a quick poll of the studio, the overall favorite has been wax beans pickled with hot peppers. The community is in agreement -- that particular treat contributes immensely to their overall wellness.
Every artist has to start somewhere. Most typically, artists make their entrance into the public art world through juried or group exhibitions. But there comes a time when some artists want to dream bigger, step outside of the box, and make something happen just for themselves. The summer of 2014 proved to be precisely that time for North Shore Artist Quinn Zenner when he decided to have his first solo exhibition.

Zenner began the process by rummaging through dozens of his paintings and drawings as he considered the very best of his work to exhibit. “We pulled the work out before hand and talked about it. Which ones would stand out in a gallery? It’s really all about your preference as an artist.”

But where would such a finely curated body of work be shown? As an active Evanston resident, Quinn was quick to consider the Unicorn Café. “I usually hang out there. And I like the different artist that they show.” With the help of Dylan Sperry, the North Shore studio’s summer arts marketing intern, Quinn reached out to the cafe to propose a solo exhibition at the eclectic venue. Sperry recalls the experience: “We were looking through a list of potential venues in Evanston. When we came across the Unicorn Cafe, Quinn was instantly inspired because he said it was a ‘hippy-ish’ place.”

Exercising his professional muscles, Quinn oversaw each step of the exhibiting process. From curating his work to creating a resume and promotional materials, Quinn was eager to make sure every last detail was covered for his big solo debut. “I handed fliers around to people who might be interested in the show, like my friends and family members. I talked to a lot of people I know.”

On November 8th, 2014 Quinn Zenner hosted his first solo exhibition, rightfully titled “Outside of the Box,”
“Sometimes you have to get out of your comfort zone because you never know what amazing things could happen.”

at the Unicorn Café in Evanston, IL. “I was happy to see that people were there. I couldn't believe how many showed up. It's kind of interesting your first time doing something like that. You don't know who is going to be there or if people are going to care. It was my first experience showing my art in public. I felt pretty at ease about it. I was used to the environment there. There were a lot of people. I didn't know half of them.”

"I'm a local artist and [the exhibition] was a unique experience. It drew out my character as a person. It's like discovering something that I never knew I could do - to accomplish so many things in my life."

Quinn's advice to other artists? “If it is your first time you might be hesitant for a while but I would say sometimes you have to get out of your comfort zone because you never know what amazing things could happen.”
Get involved

SPONSOR AN ARTIST
The best way to support an artist is by purchasing their artwork. None of the art sale revenue is used for general programming!

ATTEND AN EVENT
Our events would not be what they are without attendees and sponsors. Join our mailing list and keep up-to-date on our fundraising events! artsoflife.org/subscribe

DONATE
We’re always in need of supplies, from art materials to office equipment. Call either studio to arrange a pick-up or drop-off!

JOIN THE BOARD
Make a difference by joining one of our two boards! Board members guide The Arts of Life with their experience and passion for our mission. To learn more about both boards, visit artsoflife.org/jointheboard

VOLUNTEER
We love our volunteers (and we always need more of them to love!) Our community thrives and depends on the unique skills and capabilities of everyone involved with the studios. We value each volunteer’s contributions at The Arts of Life and match your skills and interests with our needs.
Apply today! artsoflife.org/volunteer

This program is partially funded by