

ANNUAL REPORT 2023

LATEST INFORMATION AND UPDATES
ABOUT THE SAULT AREA ARTS COUNCIL

Sault Area
ART CENTER
A Gathering Place

WHO WE ARE, WHERE WE COME FROM, AND WHERE WE'RE GOING

The Sault Area Arts Council (SAAC) is made up of a group of artists and art lovers whose mission is “to inspire and encourage appreciation of the arts for all”. Our current home, the Alberta House, serves as a gathering place where locals and visitors can share ideas, learn from each other, and create, exhibit, buy, and sell art.

SAAC evolved from a colony of young painters (Le Sault Artists Guild 1955) who were looking for a place to regularly meet, create art, and gain inspiration from each other. They officially became the Sault Area Arts Council in 1969 and incorporated as a nonprofit 501(c)(3) entity in 1986. It was then that Mrs. Ida Stuart donated the Alberta House at 217 Ferris Street to SAAC. Our doors soon opened, and we have operated there continuously since.

The Alberta House has provided SAAC with a solid base on which to grow. Right now, almost 40 years later, a new young art community is forming and the enthusiasm and excitement we are experiencing, parallels that of the founding members' exhilaration. SAAC's programming has increased significantly, thanks to an influx of new artists and volunteers, increased sales, an expanded slate of class offerings, private donations, corporate sponsorships, and government grants. The caliber of our exhibits is consistently high, and the number of class offerings and hosted receptions has expanded severalfold. As a result of our recent growth, we find the space at Alberta House no longer adequate for our activities. A new home with more space, visibility, and accessibility is needed.





Consequently, we are making plans to relocate to 538 Ashmun Street, a building in the heart of downtown Sault Ste Marie. The 538 Building, owned by Five-thirty-eight, LLC, has been awarded three different grants (a blight elimination grant, and two downtown revitalization grants) to remodel and restore the space. Ten new market rate apartments will be constructed on the upper floors and SAAC will occupy two storefronts on the ground floor and the associated basements. The project is scheduled for completion in August 2025. Transitioning from the Alberta House requires, among many adjustments, a name change, as the Alberta House will remain the historic “Alberta House” on Ferris Street. Our new building name (Sault Area Art Center – a Gathering Place) and logo, announce clearly who we are and the service we intend to offer the community.

Over the coming months we will define the architectural and engineering requirements for our new home. The leased space will be in “white box” readiness for us. Basic electrical wiring/outlets, plumbing, lighting, and HVAC will be completed but SAAC will need to build out the space to meet our specific gallery, shop, and classroom requirements. We will hold ongoing meetings to outline exactly what construction and furnishings are needed. Refining our strategic plan, preparing for a major capital campaign to fund these expenses, and applying for government grants are our next orders of business.



SHOWCASING LOCAL TALENT

CHILDREN'S TALENT

One of SAAC's primary goals is to engage our youth in creating and appreciating art. During the month of March, 56 students from six local schools participated in our annual K-12 Youth Art Exhibit. The exhibit, attended by 125 participants, was visually delightful. Our local children exhibited considerable talent.

In July, thanks to a grant from the Michigan Arts and Culture Council (MACC), 13 children participated in a week-long art camp at the Bay Mills Cultural Center. They experimented

with seven different art forms including drawing, painting, clay, photography, woodworking, fiber art, and traditional native beading. The project served as a model for developing future art classes at the Art Center.

Based on our success with the art camp, we will be holding twice monthly Saturday art classes for children during the school year. As evidenced by the joy and concentration in the faces of these young artists the camp was enjoyable and inspiring.

PHOTOGRAPHY

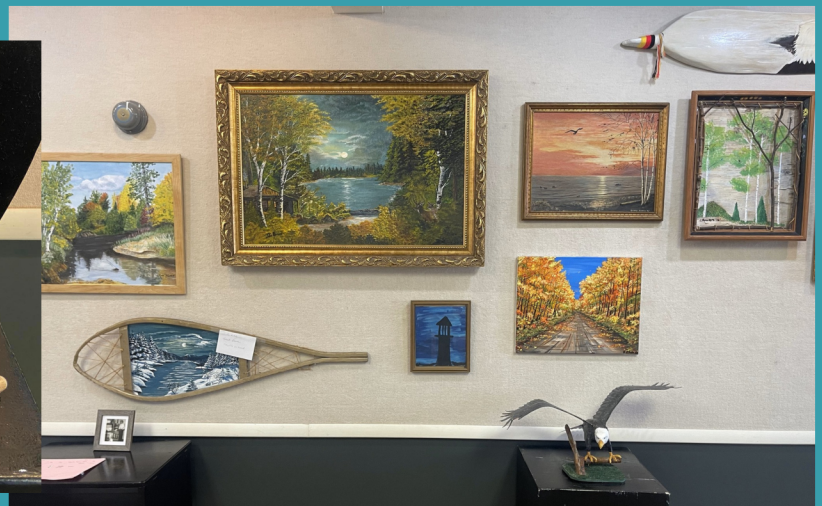
The Art Center hosted a new photography event in July, "Chippewa County in Photographs", subtitled "48-48-48". Each of the 48 photographers (amateurs and professionals) had 48 hours to take pictures in one of 48 regions of Chippewa County. The photos were then exhibited in the Gallery for the month. This project generated great enthusiasm among the participants and other attendees. Due to popular demand, this will become an annual event.



SHOWCASING LOCAL TALENT

INDIGENOUS ART

The November exhibit showcased the arts and crafts of local Indigenous artists and included paintings, baskets, beadwork, sculpture, and a birch bark canoe. A retrospective of four generations of Brimley Bowen family artists featured prominently in this show. The constellation of paintings was a moving tribute to the Bay Mills Indian Community as it was the first time that tribal members were able to view the expansive works of so many Bowen artists assembled in one place. Also included were works by the Sault Tribe of Chippewa Indians' artists, Brenda Brining, Deanna LaLonde, and Ron Paquin, and Odawa/Ojibway artist Zoey Wood Salomon.



CHRISTMAS SHOW AND PARTY

Another event initiated this year was the annual SAAC Christmas party. The exhibit featured small works modestly priced. The primary purpose of this gathering was to honor our volunteers and sponsors with gifts and words of appreciation to thank them for their contributions to SAAC's efforts. A secondary purpose was to simply relax and have fun after a very busy year. And that we did - with delicious hors d'oeuvres and drinks, music by a String Quartet from the Soo Theater Project STARS, several door prizes, 1st, 2nd and 3rd prize awards for participating artists and, perhaps the most fun, an Ugly Sweater contest.



CONNECTING ARTISTS

To further advance our mission of creating a gathering place for artists and art lovers, we held an Artist Meet and Greet in March to learn about new artists in the area and to better understand how we can serve them. We welcomed ten local artists to SAAC that night. In addition, we hosted an Evening of the Arts in April during our Artist Choice Juried Exhibition with the Gallery Awards presentation. This first-of-its-kind event was well attended.

We wanted to get to know the regional institutional sponsors of the arts and hosted two other Meet and Greets. In June, we hosted the regional quarterly meeting of the Upper Peninsula Arts and Culture Alliance. In July, we hosted the board of the Michigan Arts and Culture Council. Both events have helped build ongoing, productive relationships with these agencies that are vital to our mission.



UP Alliance, April 2023, (above)

*MAAC Meet & Greet,
July 2023, (right)*



*September 2023
Gallery Show (above)*



COLLABORATIONS

In addition to welcoming the general community to our center, over this past year, SAAC has reached out to other cultural institutions in the city and initiated informal collaborations with the Chippewa County Historical Society, the River of History Museum, the Lake Superior State University Art Center, the Bayliss Public Library, and the soon-to-be opened Soo Locks Children's Museum. Our new Ashmun Street location is ideal for growing these collaborations as we will be situated right next door to the Soo Theatre, across the street from the River of History Museum, around the corner from the Bayliss Public Library and three blocks from the Chippewa County Historical Society. We anticipate that SAAC will be a vital member of what will become known as the Soo's Cultural Circle.

FOSTERING ARTISTS & TEACHING SKILLS

ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE PROGRAM

A truly exciting innovation this year was the inauguration of our Artist-in-Residence program. Scott Laursen, Board Vice Chair, and his wife Eva are offering their VRBO cabin to three different artists (visual artists, writers, and photographers) for 10-day periods in September and November 2023 and in April 2024. This innovative program, advertised on CaFÉ (www.callforentry.org), drew fifty-six applications for the three slots in the 2023/2024 season! To date, one writer and a photographer have completed the program and reported the experience was highly satisfactory. The participating artists are required to contribute a work of art or give a presentation at the Art Center.

This basket woven with pine needles and sweet grass, around a sandstone rock found on the beach is in the process of being woven. The completed work will be contributed to SAAC's permanent collection by visual artist Dawnice Kerchaert, our November artist-in-Residence.



HOSTING GUEST ARTISTS

Two of our SAAC board members provided overnight lodging for visiting artists from the Marquette area, at the time of their exhibit's opening reception in October.

COLLABORATION WITH LSSU

Lake Superior State University does not currently have any Visual Arts class offerings. The Director of the Art Center, Thomas Meacham, expressed interest in SAAC offering future classes where students will be able to get university credits in the fine arts.

POETRY NIGHTS

Local poet Renee Dreiling started a monthly poetry meeting where writers can read and discuss their and others' poems at the Art Center. Average attendance for this activity has been 4-5.

SAAC LIBRARY

Board member Terri Wolski has catalogued and made available for borrowers over 300 art books related to our collection.

GROWING AND CHANGING

PAID STAFF

After relying on volunteer labor since we acquired Alberta House, we now have two parttime paid staff. Rebecca Jones was hired as our social media specialist in October 2022. In March 2023, Robin Sorquist was contracted to be Operations Manager. Robin, Rebecca, our volunteers, and the SAAC Board have enlivened operations at the gallery and shop and strengthened our overall programming. During January and February, Robin and Rebecca rearranged the shop, digitized the shop inventory, contacted artists to confirm addresses and update their inventory, and painted the shop and gallery.

VOLUNTEERS

Our volunteers have been life savers. More than 30 volunteers have given of their time and energy to work in the shop, help with gardening, maintain the interior and exterior of the building, shovel snow, hang the exhibits, provide food and drink for the receptions, write grants, and be ambassadors in the community. We can always find work for any new volunteers in accordance with their skills and desires. The physical maintenance of the Alberta House has always been a priority. To this end, Board member Tom Harrison and volunteer, Terry Moran, repaired and repainted the front porch, fire escape, and handicapped ramp.



WEBSITE DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING WITH POINT-OF-SALE (POS) SYSTEM

Rebecca Jones developed and maintains the saultartcenter.com website. She also posts regularly on Facebook and is getting an average of 1,500 hits weekly. Our Instagram account is monitored by Erin Bullock who reports a 147% growth since July 2023. All classes, upcoming events, gallery exhibits, and contributing artists are posted, as well as opportunities to become members and/or make donations. All SAAC members are encouraged to share any website announcements to help expand awareness of the organization.

The shop volunteers have been trained on the new PoS system. The PoS has made our accounting substantially more efficient, allowing input of all sales, donations, sponsorships, and memberships. It permits the easy set up of new inventory for the shop and gallery exhibits, tracks and reports invoices for artist payments, and categorizes sales. The PoS system generates weekly, monthly, and annual financial reports.

MANAGING & RAISING FUNDS

After visiting several other art galleries and learning their strategies, we are reformulating our business plan. Board member, Cathie Chenoweth is creating a comprehensive list of potential revenue streams which include, but are not limited to:

- **Fund raising events.** We are considering initiating a \$20,000 prize raffle and weekly BINGO sessions.
- **Annual appeal letter**
- **Membership drive**
- **Kohl's Volunteer Incentive program.** Kohl's offers to pay a nonprofit institution \$25/hour for the time that any of their staff volunteer at that institution. Kathleen Maine, a parttime Kohls employee, volunteers for five hours in the shop each week. Her efforts have made a significant contribution to SAAC.
- **Bank accounts.** The SAAC account and Olive M Craig Gallery accounts were merged giving us a total of \$33,761.12 in the bank at this writing.
- **Sponsorships.** Each monthly exhibit had a \$500 sponsor.
- **Community Donations**
- **Governments Grants**

Gallery Exhibit Sponsorships

April: Artist Choice Juried Exhibition
(Century 21, Advantage Plus)

May: Fiber Arts
(Kristin Fairbanks, DDS)

June: Kaleidoscope and Lens & Chisel
(anonymous sponsor)

July: Chippewa in Photographs
(4Front Credit Union)

August: Paint and Metal
(GHL Certified Public Accountants)

September: The Curiosities of two Dames
(Craig Flickinger, DDS)

October: Bonifas Award Winners
(Rotary Club)

November: Indigenous Arts and Crafts

December: Christmas at Alberta House
(Soo Coop Credit Union & BLICK Art Materials)

Community Donations

Bay Mills Indian Community \$1500
Cloverland Electric Cooperative \$500
Walmart \$200
Sault Convention and Visitors Bureau \$250

GOVERNMENT GRANTS

For the first time in its history, SAAC applied for and received state and federal grants.

We were awarded two grants from the Michigan Arts and Culture Council (MACC): ART CAMP 2023 (\$3500) and Operations Support (\$5927). The latter grant proposal, written by Scott Laursen, scored 97% which made SAAC eligible to receive \$5927 this year and over the next two years we will receive 55% of our rolling average annual unrestricted revenue.

We were also awarded a \$10,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) to hold “The Soo Collects: Art for All”. In September 2024, a multiveneue event will occur with exhibits of art that are currently held in the collections of organizations and private individuals. A series of lectures, discussions, art making classes, and even a scavenger hunt for significant public art throughout Sault Ste Marie will fill the month. The program will be free to all and bus transportation will be provided for residents throughout Chippewa County.

The Veterans Administration granted SAAC \$3970 to cover tuition for any veterans attending any classes offered by SAAC.

Two additional grant proposals are in process. The first is a COVID Relief grant sponsored by MACC and the second is a capacity building grant from ArtsHERE to better equip our organization for bringing art to our underserved community members.

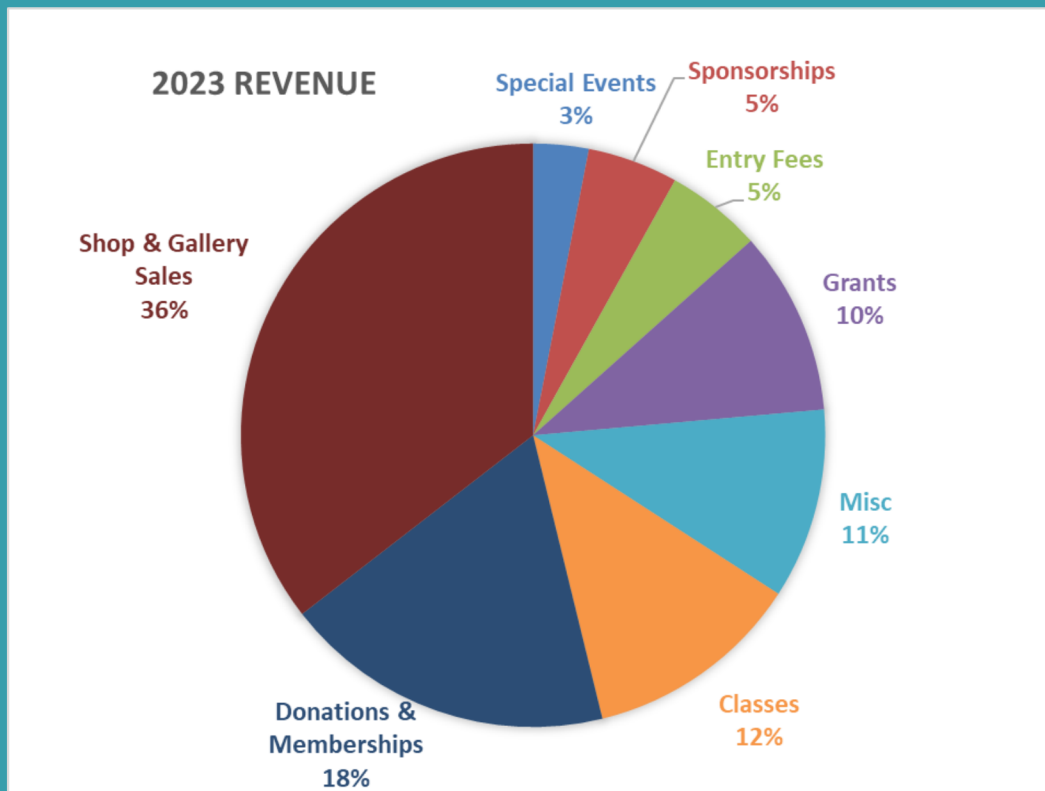


VA

U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

**NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT** for the **ARTS**
arts.gov



2023 REVENUE



SHORT & LONG TERM PLANS

Our immediate priority is to organize a capital campaign to raise funds for building out the gallery, shop, kitchen, classrooms, and venue space at our new home at 538 Ashmun Street. Over the next months, we will identify our specific “brick and mortar” needs, obtain cost estimates, and create blueprints, drawings, and pictures. We will then be able to submit relevant grant proposals and seek out potential donors for matching funds. Our 30-month plan includes clearly defining our expenses and revenue streams, selling Alberta House, and being settled in at 538 Ashmun Street by June 2026.

Visit Us!

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