2026 SNAPSHOT

C.R.E.A.T.E. Community Studios



CAPITAL REGION EXPRESSIVE ART, TRANSFORMATION & EMPOWERMENT

Using art to promote freedom of expression, personal growth, and community connection

Wow! What a busy year it's been! We've been in **MORE** community spaces, creating MORE public art and impacting MORE community members than ever before.

As we begin to close out 2026, we are looking at the many ways CREATE begins to **"Light the Way"** not just encouraging people to make art, but to embrace how community art is part of full systems change and social transformation.

We invite you to join **"Light the Way"** with us on December 4, 2026 for our annual fundraiser and silent auction at the **Stockade Inn** in Schenectady. It will be an amazing way to close out our 9th year and look forward to celebrating a **FULL DECADE** of creating art with and in community with all of you.

If you cannot join us on December 4th, please consider a gift as we enter our 10th year full of promise, excitement, and LOTS OF ART!!!
Thank you!
Heather, Julie, Laura W, Laura C, Kristi and Charlotte



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Together, we're creating something greater than ourselves!

Your support makes it possible to create a community where art and connection thrive! Your gift doesn't just help us show up; it changes lives. Thank you for being the heart of our work!

DONATE NOW
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COMMUNITY PROGRAMS * THERAPEUTIC PROGRAMS * COMMUNITY ART * IN STUDIO PROGRAMS * TRANSFORMING COMMUNITY * WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

CREATIVE THIRD SPACES



Saratoga is Shining!
Our Saratoga Studio is where wonder glimmers! Artists from AIM Services, the Center for Disability Services, and community members of all ages and abilities soak up the good vibes of making art during our Open Studio sessions. Also, we hosted our annual **Pictures in Health** Art Show, spotlighting the incredible artwork created by residents of RISE Housing and Support Services.



Troy is Growing!
2026 was an incredible year for our Troy studio! We hosted five art shows, highlighting work from local creators: **No Ma'ammy** (Aysha Charise), **Shared Threads** (Arlene's Artists Group), **The Little Years** (Grace Lang), **This is Me, She, We** (Ashley Rutledge), and **Art of Hope** (a combined exhibit with Arts4Vets and Studio e: Epilepsy Art Therapy). Open studio participation significantly increased and we continued our community partnerships with Wildwood, Capital Critters and Oakwood Community Center.

SHARED SPACES, BRIGHTER PLACES

As a community-rooted organization, CREATE views public art as a bridge between our studio programs and the broader public. We are proud to have participated in several noteworthy public art projects this year.

- **Rotterdam Junction Tunnel Project:** A mural painted inside the Empire State Trail bike-pedestrian tunnel in Rotterdam Junction by the **Warrick-Harrison siblings** showcases the natural landscape around the bike trail. The imagery of the mural has transformed an otherwise graffiti-covered tunnel into a destination worthy location! Thanks to **Cycle Schenectady** for partnering with us on all the **#colorthecanal** projects! Schenectady Metroplex, Erie Canalways Heritage Corridor and Schenectady County provided funding.





- **ALCO Tunnel Mosaic:** A community mosaic made from thousands of tiles crafted by local community members connecting North Jay Street to Erie Boulevard in Schenectady. Special thanks to the Electric City Arts District, Schenectady County and Schenectady Metroplex for their support of this ongoing project. Kristi, Betsy, Malik, Charlotte, Bri and dozens of volunteers have put in countless hours installing this unique mosaic.





- The **Mini-Mural Project** added 26 unique pieces of art to traffic signal boxes. To date we've transformed more than 50 boxes!

Map of Mini Murals

- **"Tree of Life"** is a unique mosaic project completed with St Peter's Health Partners at the Hildegard Medicus Cancer Center in Troy. Kristi worked with dozens of patients and staff to create ceramic tiles which created this final mosaic framed art design to be installed at the center.

Schenectady is Bustling!

Our Schenectady Studio had another busy year of creative expression and community connection! In addition to serving as a coworking space for the CREATE team, the studio hosted an expanding schedule of programs. Our regular programs like **Art Journaling**, **Songwriters Circle**, and **Queers Craft Here** (formerly Stitch & Bitch) has expanded to new programs like **Screen Printing**, **Block Printing**, **Zentangle**, **Rhythm & Rhetoric**, **Gelli Printing**, and the **Upstate Artists Social**.





Ceramics Studio is Flourishing!

CREATE's Ceramic Wellness Studio completed a phenomenal inaugural year! Our schedule features a mix of accessible clay programs; **Wheel Sessions**, **Kids Wheel Throwing**, **Open Clay Studios** and "**Wheel Tasters.**" We were especially honored to host the Saratoga ASL Chat group for a hands-on workshop. We celebrated our first anniversary in September with an incredible outdoor Raku firing, pulling glowing bisqueware from the kiln and immersing it in natural materials like leaves and paper to yield striking, one-of-a-kind surface textures and colors.

ART HAPPENS EVERYWHERE

The CREATE team and our dedicated volunteers love sharing our mission through hands-on art-making in our communities! Throughout 2026, you may have spotted our pop-up activities at the Clifton Park, Guilderland, Schenectady and Mechanicville Libraries; the Niskayuna and Saratoga Farmers Markets; the Schenectady Greenmarket; Schenectady Kids Art Festival, Earth Day Celebration, and Trash Parade, Beekman Street Art Fair and Saratoga Springs Art in the Park . . . and much more!



CREATIVITY UNLOCKS LEARNING

CREATE engages with children through our **Creative Mindfulness** program. Our trained teaching artists and instructors provide 8-week mindfulness and expressive arts programs for Pre-K through 12th grade students throughout the school year and school vacation weeks within the **Albany, Schenectady** and **Troy School Districts**. We share our approach with students, teachers, and families by providing mindful art experiences and professional development for teachers, participating in school-community events, working with students and teachers to create public art displays within schools, and leading workshops for families in mindfulness and art. We believe that participation in our program will equip children with tools to help them be more resilient, improve their self-regulation and communication skills, and increase their overall happiness.





PARTNERS IN WELLNESS



CREATE provides expressive arts programming in close collaboration with local human service partners, **RISE, AIM, Wildwood, Oakwood Community Center**, to expand access and normalize mental health care. By reducing structural and social barriers, we offer accessible creative programs for adults living with serious mental illness or varying disabilities, caregivers seeking tools for emotional wellness, and individuals experiencing anxiety, depression, and chronic stress. Each session is grounded in evidence-informed practices that promote stress reduction, self-awareness, and healthy communication.

BRIGHTER FUTURES



We were thrilled to welcome 16 incredible interns representing seven institutions across NY state: Hofstra, NYU, Russell Sage, Siena, Skidmore, Syracuse, and Union! This talented group of students dove right into action, facilitating in-studio programs and conducting research to showcase the power of CREATE's work. Each intern received one-on-one mentorship from our team to help fuel their professional growth every step of the way!

We also partnered with Siena University's Center for Academic Community Engagement, **NExT Fellowship** (Nonprofit Excellence and Transformation). This collaboration helps students gain real-world skills while helping us build program-analysis data tools. Our goal is to use these tools to learn more about participants' experiences, strengths, and needs to keep serving our community members.

We had three fantastic student Project Assistants for our Summer Meals Expressive Arts programming. Avianna Nadolny is a SUNY Adirondack student studying Education. Tahjae Shaw and Galaxie Ortiz joined CREATE through Schenectady Connects. Tahjae, a student at Niskayuna High School, has a bright, cheerful mindset and was a welcoming presence for the kids. Galaxie, a sophomore at Rotterdam High School, has a silly, playful energy that brings out the fun in the kids.

SPOTLIGHT ON OUR COMMUNITY



"Creating with my community, means connecting with my community. CREATE has offered me the ability to build a safe third space for queer folks. Providing us with a chance to experience and share joy through art and other means of creative expression without a financial barrier. My goal is to keep Basement Club free and accessible to all."

SHINING TOGETHER

CREATE's mission is a catalyst for systems change and a brighter future. We have seen that art breaks down barriers, elevates marginalized voices, and builds a culture of belonging, inclusion, and equity within our communities.



Last fall, Heather began working with the Schenectady Foundation's new initiative "**ONE Schenectady**" focused on "**O**rganizing thriving communities, **N**urture collective strengths, and **E**mpower inspiring change" to help empower residents to create projects in their communities. Through this initiative, CREATE has been co-creating new positive spaces with Schenectady resident Tiffany Caldwell in the Mont Pleasant neighborhood. More exciting transformations will be coming in the spring of 2027!

CREATE continued **Erasing Spaces and Faces: The Legacy of Urban Removal in Saratoga Springs**, a collaborative social practice project that seeks to restore visibility to the impacts of displacement on the local Black community through art, research, and storytelling. Highlights included **Pull Up!** in February, which featured local artist performances and an art auction supporting Black creators, and an October screening of featured filmmaker Careina Yard's documentary, followed by a discussion on this vital history.

DONATE TODAY TO HELP US CREATE COMMUNITY THROUGH ART!

$50 per month: Provides free art programming for up to 10 community members
$20 per month: Provides art kits to five community members who can not afford their own art supplies
$10 per month: Provides paint for one free community program
$5 per month: Provides Open Studio time for one community member
No contribution is too small—every bit helps!

Did you know there's an easy way to support us? We were recently surprised with a generous donation through CARS (Charitable Adult Rides & Services) a 501(c)(3) nonprofit whose mission is helping other nonprofits!