What a spring! One we will remember for the ages as it has impacted our world and put our resilience to the test. While we don’t know how the future looks, as we are producing this publication in early May, we can assure you that the arts and culture in Aurora will continue to inspire and impact lives for the better.

During the uncertain times we have lived, all the programs from the city’s Cultural Services Division, same as our library services, never stopped creating. From dance and visual arts classes to virtual tours and conversations with local artists, in this issue of Aurora Creates we’ll give a sample of the several great programs and classes that have continued to carry on, mostly virtually.

We are very proud of the entire Cultural Services team who took their creativity to the next level to bring their talents to Aurora homes and beyond.

Much has happened in the Art in Public Places Program since the last edition of Aurora Creates. Two new public art pieces have been installed, “Canopy Lights Garden & Play” by Koryn Rolstad, located at the Red-Tailed Hawk Park Inclusive Playground; and “Never Forgetting Our Heroes” by Austin Weishel, located at the new Fire Station #5. Also, “Once Around” by Tim Upham has been approved for the traffic circle south of the Iliff Light Rail Station and should be installed in December. Maintenance projects are ongoing. The newly updated Collection Guide is available online at AuroraGov.org/PublicArt. The city’s technology department is helping us create an interactive online mapping tool for exploring the collection and planning self-guided tours. During the stay-at-home order we shared coloring pages of works from Aurora’s public art collection, images to use as social media backdrops, and information about an exciting upcoming exhibition.

“Canopy Lights Garden & Play” by Koryn Rolstad, completed in 2020. Media: Aluminum metal and acrylic. Location: Red-Tailed Hawk Park, Inclusive Playground, 23701 E. Hinsdale Way. The goals of the public art at this site were to visually unify the entire playground and to provide a variety of sensory experiences for all playground users. Components include shade tree canopies, interactive sound bollards, and colorful acrylic circles.

“Never Forgetting Our Heroes” by Austin Weishel, completed in 2020. Media: Bronze and steel. Located at the New Fire Station #5, 1141 Laredo St. This artwork honors the 343 firefighters who lost their lives at the Twin Towers in New York on the Sep. 11, 2001 attack. It also serves as a reminder of the dangerous and challenging work performed by our first responders.
This summer represents the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment, otherwise known as Women’s Suffrage. Recently, we have seen women running for president, walking in space, sitting on the Supreme Court, leading major companies, and as innovators in fields including science, technology, the arts, the environment, medicine and the military. Achieving the right to vote 100 years ago made these achievements possible, transforming how women’s roles in society were defined.

Ten metro area women artists were invited to reflect on this topic and create a work of art expressing their individual perspectives. These artists represent different ages and cultural and economic backgrounds. Recent immigrants and those whose families arrived many generations ago are included. They bring whimsy, restraint, passion, conviction, and many other qualities to their work.

Included are Adri Norris, Alyssa Mora, Angelica Jimenez, Ariella Asher, Eileen Ruscina-Richardson, Emilie Luckett, Maruca Salazar, Monica Marquez Gatica, Sharon Duwalik, and Terrilynn Moore.

Their works examine the complexities and nuances of this topic. Celebrating what the 19th Amendment was for some, acknowledging where it fell short, and revealing how the amendment has evolved over time to become more inclusive.

This exhibit is presented at the Martin Luther King Jr. Library and the Tallyn’s Reach Library. Each location will display half of the exhibit, or five works at a time. At the midpoint of the timeframe, the artworks will be moved from one location to the other. The plan for the exhibition is to run June 2 to Aug. 9 and Aug. 13 to Oct. 30.

Pending their re-opening, visit our libraries and the Aurora History Museum for more information about the 19th Amendment events organized by the city of Aurora Library and Cultural Services Department, or visit AuroraGov.org/VotesForWomen.

"First of Many" by Monica Marquez Gatica.
VISUAL ART AND MUSIC INSTRUCTORS

Our instructors have been working on multiple ways to engage with students during the COVID-19 safety restrictions. Some have put material online for people to try out or learn a new skill. Other instructors are working on new material for when our in-person classes start again.

To check out what is happening online click here: AuroraGov.org/ArtClasses
Or at Facebook.com/CityOfAuroraArtsEducation

Art with Terra Necessary
I have been keeping my hands busy this whole time. Part of that has been letting digital teaching tools fully into my life. While I grew up with technology, there’s always something new, and this time has been a ripe one to explore the ways we communicate and connect when we can’t be close. Twitch live streaming art and making video tutorials, while not entirely a foreign concept, has been...an adventure.

Guitar Lessons with David Freshman
During this time of COVID-19 I’ve been hard at work on several reference tools and lessons. One of the subjects that I am very excited about is working on classes teaching students to write their own songs. This is a really good way to stamp your own personality on your creative work and is for both children and adults. I am putting lessons online that cover multiple types of material and are divided into different subjects for music/guitar/bass.

Mixed Media and Polymer Clay with Liz Hall
I find that having a regular schedule for art making is beneficial to my physical and mental health. Uninterrupted time in my studio during the quarantine allowed me to complete half-finished projects. I then developed a new polymer clay color lesson with embossing powders. I paid for an intensive animal sculpture class to improve my modeling skills. Expressing our creativity during hard times can give us the opportunity to return to daily life with a new mindset. Join me after quarantine ends in Polymer Clay or Mixed Media classes to see how I can help you revitalize your art practices.

Keyboard with Amy Thorne
I have put online some piano theory games and puzzles, along with note stories in the hope that these will be enjoyable, facilitate continued growth, and keep students interested. It is vitally important for students to practice on their own in order to improve and grow. I am also in the process of putting together a booklet to hand out with lesson books as a reference guide that contains material to empower students to figure out many things on their own as they work.

HOW ART SAW US
Can dance and the arts thrive in the time of a worldwide pandemic?
Aurora Dance Arts tasked themselves with this compelling question with a resounding, "Yes, we can!" The highest priority of the staff has been to create continued and special connection to dancers of this amazing program during the COVID-19 health crisis.

Since the "Stay at Home" order went into effect, Aurora Dance Arts has been providing free, online dance classes via their page at Facebook.com/CityofAuroraArtsEducation. The program offers a varied schedule of 18 classes per week in myriad dance styles for multiple age groups and levels. These classes are taught by many of the program’s fabulous instructors via the live video platform, and instructors have also provided a collection of supplementary technique tutorials. Instructors find creative ways to convert their homes into miniature dance studios...moving furniture, rolling up carpets, dancing around pets, and learning new technology, all to provide dance education and emotional release during the crisis. Consensus from these artists is that creating from home is not without its adjustments and definitely requires a sense of humor.

The response has been incredible and widespread, with indication of students from across the country dancing virtually with their beloved instructors. And instructors remain passionately dedicated to the training and well-being of their students. "While dance has always been a release and an opportunity to create, it is also a constant means of mental stability," Instructor Minda McGurk said. "I knew it was critical for us to have a presence for our students, for families (current and new), and for ourselves." Instructor Michelle Ballard added, "I have enjoyed still being able to share the love and passion for dance with my students along with anyone else who may be watching. I feel like we have been able to reach a variety of people we normally may have not reached."

Art will always find a way because art is a reflection of the state of the world, and Aurora Dance Arts believes that, truly, dance is what continues to give people hope. Learn more about this program at AuroraGov.org/Dance.
One man’s trash is another’s treasure. Jason Bade, Pottery Arts Program specialist at Bicentennial Art Center, firmly believes in this motto, and during the COVID-19 time, he saw the opportunity to repurpose a discarded, old kiln into a mini high fire kiln—capable of achieving temperatures of 2,350°F in only 6 to 8 hours—that he designed, constructed and has been testing.

Bade spent several days drawing out his design and carefully planning before executing his grand idea, knowing the mini kiln posed several difficult feats to conquer. The biggest of them was budget. He wanted to build the mini kiln only using all old parts laying around the Bicentennial Arts Center studio.

Bade has always desired a small gas kiln for the arts center, a kiln which could be fired within minimal time and use little gas consumption. “A mini high fire kiln would highly benefit Bicentennial Arts Center, a kiln of such would be great for firing work from Date Night classes which designates a quick turnaround,” he said. “Firing sample test glazes, but most importantly when glazes possibly become contaminated, I can fire a test sample of the glaze and have results the next day. A kiln like this would provide the center with almost immediate answers. Normally testing glazes and finishing Date Night pieces can wait weeks to be fired.”

Building a kiln is both a rare, exciting challenge and an opportunity that only few potters can take. Bade’s 19 years of ceramic knowledge contributed to the successful completion of such a complex project.

Bade is planning for more test firing of the mini kiln until he is happy with the firing results. He firmly believes the glazing process and firings are most important to the studio. Bicentennial Arts Center currently hosts 39 unique high fire glazes, all made in house. The colors of these glazes are only achieved through a correctly fired kiln. “Firing this new kiln is like learning to drive a Maserati on ice as it is very unpredictable.” Bade said. “I am used to firing a kiln that drives like an 18-wheeler, very unresponsive to adjustments in gas and air flow mixtures.” It will take several more firings to be able to learn the dynamics of this new kiln and achieve the desired results to which he is accustomed. Bade feels once the firings are dialed in and the results are achieved through proper firing process, BAC will have another great new tool benefiting its staff and students alike.

The social distance gave Bicentennial Arts Center instructor Andy Grossman and wife Mara Maxwell, a sculptor, a unique opportunity to collaborate on one same piece of art, each working on their area of expertise and passion while exploring new paths. Andy started the vase at the art center for his pottery class before the COVID-19 closings and finished at home with Mara. He threw the form and she did the decorative carving to add the finishing touches. The result, a 28.5-inch pot in the classic Greek style, with a twist, that required 35 pounds of clay for its creation.

“I enjoy throwing a large pot from time to time not only for the challenge of it but there is something satisfying in creating a large vessel that has a form that one can reference to historical pots,” said Grossman. The handles for a pot of this size are a challenge. “Sometimes, the handle placement and creation is a very difficult process,” Grossman said. “Proportion is a make or break rule when it comes to handles as is there attachment. The handles need to seem as though they belong to the pot.”

And for Maxwell, such a large canvas was both a challenge and opportunity. At the end, she decided to carve the pot versus painting “to give more visual interest and depth, and because it sounded more fun!” The carving took about 30 hours.

Once this master piece is completed, said Grossman, “the real challenge begins.... Where am I going to put this thing?”
As evident in recent times, the present quickly becomes the past. And as stewards of history, the museum and historic sites staff is busy documenting and recording this defining historical event when COVID-19 came to our community.

To capture the living history of Aurora residents during this time, the museum is collecting and archiving documents like official city and county communications to the public, creating a process for collecting oral interviews of residents throughout the community, and capturing the imagery of a changing cityscape easily documented behind a lens.

Documenting such a defining moment in our local, national and world history will be a worthwhile endeavor for Aurorans of the future. To find out more about this effort and how you might contribute, visit AuroraMuseum.org or Facebook.com/AuroraHistoryCO.

The museum and historic sites staff is continuing forward progress on exhibits and programming for the public once they are open again. The museum has also ramped up its online engagement through offering resources to engage the public digitally and to continue to serve our mandate as a public resource, and bring our community together during these trying times.

Online resources include: museum and archive databases, education lesson plans, online exhibits, brief documentary videos, historic sites virtual tours, and live streaming activities for kids and adults. For more information to access these community resources please visit: AuroraMuseum.org and Facebook.com/AuroraHistoryCO.
The Aurora Fox Arts Center found its new entertainment normal in creative virtual content during this spring’s coronavirus pandemic. A “Meet-the-Artists” campaign saw Aurora Fox Executive Producer Helen R. Murray do brief interviews with a few audience favorites, like Mary Louise Lee (“Caroline or Change” and “Secrets of the Universe and other songs”), while a “Virtual Stage” campaign allowed Aurora Fox performers to sing a little ditty or do a short monologue for people following the Aurora Fox on social media.

But the crowning virtual content achievement had to have been two livestreamed events featuring three incredible performers, all live from their living rooms.

Eli Pafumi and Mollie Jane, two up-and-coming folk rockers who are both making waves in Los Angeles’ vibrant music scene, shared an evening of their original music with the Aurora Fox’s virtual audience. And Laura Jo Trexler, a Denver-based theatre maker, performed her original one-woman show “Play On! A Musical Romp with Shakespeare’s Women!” Trexler’s “Play On!” was named the pick of the Fringe” for the Hollywood Fringe Festival in 2018.

The two virtual performances earned nearly 4,000 views from across the country, exposing the small theatre on East Colfax to people from outside Colorado who might not ever have a chance to see a show there otherwise. The Aurora Fox intends to continue its virtual cabaret series through the summer and perhaps even into the fall as part of its 36th season.

And speaking of Season 36...

Season ticket packages for the Aurora Fox’s 36th season will soon be available, and this year the theatre is offering a brand new package designed just for these uncertain times. In addition to the Aurora Fox’s traditional 3, 4, 5 and 6 show packages, the patron services team will be rolling out a multi-season ticket FlexPass package. FlexPass tickets would have no expiration date and could be used for any show in any future season. Stay tuned for more details on the Aurora Fox’s 36th season at AuroraFox.org.