

new dawn



# AURORA CREATES

Arts & History Worth Discovering  
January - February 2022



LIBRARY AND  
CULTURAL  
SERVICES



We are back! Actually, while Aurora Creates was published once during 2020 at the peak of the pandemic, the city of Aurora Library and Cultural Services Department was as active as before the pandemic. The way we provide classes or programs pivoted for some months to virtual, but we were happy to be among the first to be back at providing in-person services, safely. There was no better way to illustrate the return of Aurora Creates and to kick off 2022 than the city's recently repurposed public art "Light of Dawn." As we look forward to this new year still navigating a global pandemic, that first light of dawn gives us hope. And as the art piece brightens the Aurora Municipal Center at dusk in a new way, we hope for all the cultural services by the city to lead the way at continuing bringing all the benefits that the arts and lifelong learning offer to the community, whether that be Art in Public Places, Aurora Fox Arts Center, Aurora History Museum & Historic Sites, Aurora Arts Education and Outreach or the Bicentennial Arts Center, along with our Aurora Public Library.

# from the editors

ON THE COVER: Dedication of "Light of Dawn" by Rafe Ropek at the Aurora Municipal Center. Photo by Kathryn Scott



## AURORA CULTURAL ARTS DISTRICT DESIGNATED AS STATE CREATIVE DISTRICT

The Aurora Cultural Arts District, a 16-block stretch of many culturally and arts-inspired businesses in northwest Aurora, has been certified as Creative Districts by the Colorado Creative Industries. It is now eligible for financial support, technical assistance, marketing support, access to grants, leadership training and more. In January, the city of Aurora Library and Cultural Services Department is hosting a reception to celebrate such milestone for Aurora. Congrats to ACAD and all the stakeholders involved in the process!



Pictured above: AIPP commissioners and city staff (top photo) celebrate at the "Dawn of Light" dedication while Mayor Mike Coffman (bottom photo) speaks at the event.



On your next visit to the campus of the Aurora Municipal Center, you may notice some changes to the iconic sculpture formerly known as “Dawn Fountain.”

In conjunction with the new Aurora Municipal Center in 2003, Aurora sought an artwork that could represent the city’s values, provide a place for people to gather, serve as a focal point for events, and be a powerful image for reports, publications and virtual media. There was a strong desire for it to have a water feature. It was designed to only function during certain months and in a manner consistent with the watering schedule for residents.

Nearly two decades later, soil expansion issues around the Aurora Municipal Center forced a plan to renovate the plaza. The soil conditions cracked the plumbing of this public art piece, meaning water could no longer be provided to “Dawn Fountain.” Restoring its functionality meant returning the beloved piece to its original purpose.

But Aurora Water has spent many recent years communicating a strong message about water conservation and water-wise practices through its on-site model garden and educational resources for residents. Given Aurora’s values regarding water conservation and sustainability, the discussion turned to whether a fountain restoration was a responsible solution. How could the sculpture evolve to continue its role as a positive expression of Aurora’s strengths and values?

Representatives from the Art in Public Places Program, Aurora Water, Public Works, and Parks, Recreation and Open Space invited the original artist, Rafe Ropek, of Berthoud, Colorado, to contemplate this dilemma and return with a proposal. His compelling idea: create a steel and polycarbonate cover for the basin and install an LED array to create a dramatic, playful and ever-changing lightshow. This concept was enthusiastically supported by the team, AIPP Commission, city leadership and City Council, and the artist started working. The four departments contributed funding to cover the costs, and Information Technology integrated it into the system.

Completed in late summer, “Light of Dawn” was dedicated by Mayor Coffman in November with a festive ceremony including comments from the artist. The new artwork, with its dancing lightshow, is an illuminating declaration of Aurora’s resilience, spirit of innovation, and commitment to conservation, sustainability and repurposing.

The Art in Public Program includes a collection of more than 240 pieces, to learn more, visit [AuroraGov.org/PublicArt](https://AuroraGov.org/PublicArt).

# ICONIC ARTWORK FINDS NEW PURPOSE





# Dancing Away: AURORA DANCE ARTS

Aurora Dance Arts had an exciting fall in 2021. The dance program of the city of Aurora re-launched its 9-Month Continuous Dance Program for the 2021-22 school year. This season includes 39 classes per week, for ages 3-20, in myriad styles of ballet, pointe, tap, jazz, contemporary and hip hop for beginning to advanced levels.

Aurora Dance Arts made a triumphant return to stage performances in December, despite the challenges of COVID-19, presenting a twist on its traditional holiday show of "The Nutcracker." "Drosselmeyer's Toy Shoppe & Nutcracker Sweets" was performed in the Troutman Theater at Aurora Central High School. This re-imagined version followed Clara and godmother Drosselmeyer in the enchanted toy shoppe on Christmas Eve, with toys twirling and snowflakes fluttering and sugar plums dancing through dreams. The show included the Nutcracker musical score along with contemporary musical selections. Also integrated were costume/prop updates and a variety of dance styles, including the usual ballet/pointe choreography along with new sections of contemporary and tap. Aurora Dance Arts is proud of its efforts in re-building from the pandemic and looks to the future with gusto!



ON FIRE!

## Bicentennial Arts Center

Bicentennial Arts Center is always a busy place, and the fall of 2021 proved to be no exception. The Aurora Potters' Guild held its first indoor sale in two years on the weekend of Nov. 5. Since many members are also students at Bicentennial Arts Center, they were completing work at a rapid pace, and Pottery Director Jason Bade had to keep pace with the high-fire kiln. This becomes particularly difficult in the fall when weather becomes inclement. Jason ran the high-fire kiln every two weeks last fall, averaging 800 to 1,000 pieces per firing, depending upon the size of the pieces. The city, students and the Guild thank you for your dedication and expertise, Jason! The pottery sale featured 26 artists with two new artists. The sale was held at the Community College of Aurora in conjunction with the opening of the Aurora Artists Guild 26th Annual Gateway to the Rockies Art Show.



# REMEMBERING Joan Peterson



Joan Peterson began her career with the city of Aurora in Parks and Recreation as a recreation leader and later supervised recreation centers. In 1985, she earned her master's degree in communications from the University of Denver. She continued to serve the city as Cultural Arts Supervisor, developing and expanding art, dance, music and pottery classes, and the Concerts in the Park. She worked with the Aurora Potters' Guild and Gateway to the Rockies art shows. Over the years, Joan attended countless recitals, classes, family nights, parent observations and concerts. Joan lived an incredibly full life. She was blessed with many colleagues who became lifelong friends. She was never lacking for someone to enjoy lunch with. She loved spending time outdoors, skiing and became an avid hiker in retirement. She truly enjoyed music. She played flute, guitar, piano and sang in many choirs. It was my great pleasure to be counted among her many close friends and colleagues over the years. We formed a close working relationship while working on grants and projects together. We proudly helped launch the original programs at West Middle School that blossomed into the COMPASS Program today. And yes, we attended opening nights at the Aurora Fox, some working lunches and some happy hours together as well. Joan lost her courageous fight against cancer this past October. I thought it fitting to remember her here, as a decades-long contributor to the Cultural Services Division and the cultural life of the city, and as a friend. (By Lisa Mumpton, Cultural Services Supervisor, right to Joan Peterson in the above photo)



New museum exhibit...

## ADDRESSES HOMELESSNESS

Housing insecurity is a key issue facing our city. To build a wider understanding of people who are often overlooked, misunderstood or unheard, staff at the museum engaged in an oral history project on the streets of Aurora. The stories collected are now presented in the exhibit "Without a Home in Aurora." The people profiled in this exhibition shared intimate details of their lives with the Aurora History Museum. They described how housing insecurity affects them personally and reflected on the broader issue of homelessness.

The conversations and connections made in these testimonials are central to the exhibit. Patrons will be able to get to know over 20 Aurorans experiencing housing insecurity. The goal of the exhibit is to shed light on a complex and complicated social demographic. Accompanying these testimonials are portraits and photography, reflecting the nature of life on Aurora's streets. Much of the photography is being provided by local street photographer Amy Forestieri.

"I really hope this exhibit brings a humane insight into the lives of some of our most vulnerable Aurorans. I hope through their interviews, our guests can see all people as valued and important and bring more awareness to a very complicated issue in our city," Museum

Director T. Scott Williams commented. "Further, our desire is to connect people with the resources available, as there are a lot of city programs and organizations trying to assist our housing insecure."

The exhibition opened Dec. 14, 2021 and will continue through May 29. Admission to the Aurora History Museum is always free. To learn more about the exhibition and the museum, visit [AuroraMuseum.org](https://AuroraMuseum.org).





step into

# a world of

magic with

# your library

Join Aurora Public Library in celebrating the magic of books and favorite fantasy franchises. On Saturday, Feb. 5, fandoms will collide online and in-person at all Aurora Public Library branches with A World of Magic.

Each library will host marvelous activities for all ages, including a magical creature scavenger hunt. The fun ventures into the virtual this year, too, with a lineup of bewitching videos featuring your favorite librarians and community partners as well as virtual games and trivia!



The most magical part of the event, though, is you! World of Magic is celebrating all fantasy fandoms, from the Wizarding World to Westeros; from the Shire to Olympus; from the Land of Oz to Neverland – we want to see your favorites! From Jan. 18 to Feb. 2, submit a photo of your favorite fantasy-inspired costume or fan art for our Fandom Contest for a chance to win a prize. The contest is open to all ages and can feature any fantasy fandom (book, movie, TV show, etc.). Submit your entry to [APLReadingRocks@AuroraGov.org](mailto:APLReadingRocks@AuroraGov.org) or via the library's social media.

Have your wands ready, find some pixie dust and watch out for dragons – Aurora is turning into A World of Magic! For more information on A World of Magic and Fandom Contest, visit [AuroraLibrary.org](http://AuroraLibrary.org).

winter  
reading  
challenge  
starts Jan. 15

Don't let the winter blues bring you down--There's sNOW better time to catch up on your reading list -- and win a prize for doing it--than on cold Colorado days!

Aurora Public Library's annual Winter Reading Challenge returns Jan. 15 through Feb. 26. Visit your favorite library branch or [AuroraLibrary.org](http://AuroraLibrary.org) to get a log and start reading. Complete three activities on the log to win a prize. The Winter Reading Challenge is open to all ages – so tell a friend, or sign up the whole family, to participate together. For adults, this challenge is the first of five during 2022.

Visit [AuroraLibrary.org](http://AuroraLibrary.org) for more fun programs and events from your library this winter. Happy reading!



# Meet your *Aurora* Cultural Affairs Commission



The participation of Aurora residents in city boards and commissions is crucial, and their point of view provides valuable insight into city operations and the City Council's decision-making process. Five vibrant boards and commissions support the Library and Cultural Services Department: the Cultural Affairs Commission, the Aurora Public Library Board, the Aurora Fox Arts Center Board, the Art in Public Places Commission and the Historic Preservation Commission. Collectively, they provide important contributions to the department's vision, which is to nurture an environment of lifelong learning and cultural enrichment by stimulating learning and literacy, inspiring creativity, and integrating arts, culture and history into the lives of Aurorans. In the next few issues, this publication will highlight each of these in greater depth. The Cultural Affairs Commission has a two-fold mission: to provide for ongoing planning for the development of cultural arts activities within the city of Aurora and to implement an arts plan established by the city charter. This commission also assists the many community cultural groups by providing needed overall resources in the form of grants, promoting community involvement and enhancing cultural activities. Current members are: Sethe Tucker, chair; Auset Maryam Ali, vice-chair; and members Donnie Betts; Matt McCormick; Mary Mollicone; and Tone Ellis de Jesus. (Photos above in this same order.) They meet virtually on the second Wednesday of the month. If you are interested in serving on this dynamic commission made up of talented Aurora volunteers, contact the City Clerk Office at [CityClerk@auroragov.org](mailto:CityClerk@auroragov.org) or visit [AuroraGov.org/Boards](https://AuroraGov.org/Boards).

## ARTS AND CULTURE IN AURORA



### CITY OF AURORA LIBRARY & CULTURAL SERVICES

**Aurora Dance Arts**  
Multiple locations  
303.326.8308 | [AuroraGov.org/Dance](https://AuroraGov.org/Dance)

**Aurora Fox Arts Center**  
9900 E. Colfax Ave.  
303.739.1970 | [AuroraFox.org](https://AuroraFox.org)

**Aurora History Museum**  
15051 E. Alameda Parkway  
303.739.6660  
[AuroraMuseum.org](https://AuroraMuseum.org)

**Art in Public Places**  
Multiple locations  
303.739.6747 | [AuroraGov.org/PublicArt](https://AuroraGov.org/PublicArt)

**Aurora Public Library**  
• Central, 14949 E. Alameda Parkway  
• Hoffman Heights, 1298 Peoria St.  
• Iliff Square, 2253 S. Peoria St.  
• Martin Luther King Jr., 9898 E. Colfax Ave.  
• Mission Viejo, 15324 E. Hampden Circle  
• Tallyn's Reach, 23911 E. Arapahoe Road  
[AuroraLibrary.org](https://AuroraLibrary.org)

**Aurora Rhythms – Concerts on the Lawn**  
303.739.6520 | [AuroraGov.org/Concerts](https://AuroraGov.org/Concerts)

**Bicentennial Art Center – Pottery**  
13655 E. Alameda Ave.  
303.344.1776 | [AuroraGov.org/Pottery](https://AuroraGov.org/Pottery)

**Cultural Arts and Outreach**  
Theatre, music and visual arts classes at multiple locations  
303.739.6520  
[AuroraGov.org/Arts](https://AuroraGov.org/Arts)

**Historic Sites and Preservation Office**  
15051 E. Alameda Parkway  
[AuroraGov.org/HistoricSites](https://AuroraGov.org/HistoricSites)

### OTHER ARTS AND CULTURE ORGANIZATIONS AND VENUES

**5280 Artist CoOp**  
303.432.9162 | [5280ArtistCoOp.com](https://5280ArtistCoOp.com)

**Aurora Artists' Guild**  
[AuroraArtistsGuild.com](https://AuroraArtistsGuild.com)

**Aurora Cultural Arts District (ACAD)**  
303.913.7508 | [AuroraCulture.org](https://AuroraCulture.org)

**Aurora Singers**  
303.343.3377 | [AuroraSingers.org](https://AuroraSingers.org)

**Aurora Symphony Orchestra**  
303.873.6622 | [AuroraSymphony.org](https://AuroraSymphony.org)

**Community College of Aurora  
Arts and Communication Department**  
303.340.7335 | [CCAurora.edu](https://CCAurora.edu)

**Downtown Aurora Visual Arts (DAVA)**  
1405 Florence St.  
303.367.5886 | [DavArts.org](https://DavArts.org)

**Grand Design Inc.**  
303.955.2724 | [GrandByDesign.org](https://GrandByDesign.org)

**Inside the Orchestra**  
303.355.7855  
[info@insidetheorchestra.org](mailto:info@insidetheorchestra.org)

**Kim Robards Dance Inc.**  
303.825.4847  
[KimRobardsDance.org](https://KimRobardsDance.org)

**The People's Building (City Venue)**  
9995 E. Colfax Ave.  
720.819.6680  
[ThePeoplesBuilding.com](https://ThePeoplesBuilding.com)

**Red Delicious Press**  
9901 E. 16th Ave. | 303.366.2922  
[RedDeliciousPress.com](https://RedDeliciousPress.com)

**Roshni, Voice of the Voiceless**  
Multiple locations | 720.427.0404  
[RoshniLight.org](https://RoshniLight.org)

**Vintage Theatre Productions Inc.**  
1468 Dayton St. | 303.856.7830  
[VintageTheatre.com](https://VintageTheatre.com)

**Visions Performing Arts**  
720.620.2316  
[VisionsPerformingArtsCompany.org](https://VisionsPerformingArtsCompany.org)



Director April Axé Charmaine – Photo by Melanie Moreno

# A NEW HERO *prepares to set sail* THIS WINTER *at the Aurora Fox*

The Aurora Fox Arts Center will ring in the New Year with a new play! (Well... a new-to-Colorado play, anyway.) The Colorado premiere of "Dontrell, Who Kissed the Sea" by Nathan Alan Davis will play the Aurora Fox's main stage from Jan. 28 to Feb. 20. "Dontrell..." is a modern day hero's quest that tells the story of 18-year-old Dontrell Jones III. He believes it is his duty and destiny to venture into the Atlantic Ocean in search of an ancestor lost during the Middle Passage. But his family is not at all ready to abandon their beloved son to the waters of a mysterious and haunting past. Blending poetry, humor, wordplay and ritual, "Dontrell, Who Kissed the Sea" explores the lengths and depths to which we must be willing to go, in order to right history's wrongs. April Axé Charmaine, the globetrotting theatermaker and creative mastermind behind last season's hit, "Queens Girl in the World," returns to the director's seat at the Aurora Fox to lead a team of familiar faces and brand-new-to-the-Fox artists. Tickets are on sale now. Visit [AuroraFox.org](https://AuroraFox.org) or call 303.739.1970 to reserve your seats for this sure-to-be Aurora Fox favorite!

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