

ARTPARK: A lot to do at lively Lewiston venue

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ready to welcome patrons back with new and exciting events and versions of events we do every season.”

That includes fresh approaches to camp, family weekends and special events.

“Art Camp planning typically begins in December,” Winslow said. “I reach out to teaching artists and discuss what workshops they want to engage young artists with. We talk about the professional artist work that they are currently doing and how that might translate to something that would be exciting for a 9- to 14-year-old to create in their own individual way. Once ideas are finalized, I write the descriptions of the workshops so that our wonderful marketing team can promote the program to families.”

“Campers have had the opportunity to work directly with professional, Buffalo-based artists Chuck Tingley, Richard Tomasello, Ani Hoover, Fotini Galanes, Matthew Sagurney, Leanne Catanzaro, Hilary McAndrew and Tanya Chutko.”

Winslow said, “Free Family Saturdays’ takes shape from workshops that I typically design. I choose the themes of each week and use inspiration from artists, workshops I attend, and projects that I see throughout the fall and winter. I also work with our talented team of visual arts and family programs staff to develop certain workshops during the summer season. Ultimately, we try to decide what might be inspiring for families to engage with together.”

“In the past, I have reached out to local industry for donations of materials that they might be disposing of. I look for interesting things like ceramic from Buffalo China (when they were in business), paper and odd-shaped packaging materials. There is a lot of driving involved to load up my personal vehicle with supplies and art materials to bring with me to Artpark. Once I drove to Rochester to source some particular, wonderfully shaped and colorful foam material.



“Both of these programs utilize spaces that are winter storage. Wildlife tends to find refuge in these spaces and can create a bit of a mess. Every season, we spend at least a week or two cleaning out these spaces and rebuilding any furniture or support that is needed to make the programming possible. We recover the ceramic tables with canvas, grease the ball bearings on the pottery wheels, move 2,000 pounds of clay, and unpack multiple carloads of art materials.”

“We drink a lot of water, bask in the glow of 90-degree weather and, this year, worked around wildfire smoke.”

When it comes to a stretch like mid-July, where multiple activities were converging, Winslow noted, “The people make this all happen. I could not do my job without a talented team of visual arts and family programs staff, the artists, the Artpark administrative staff, stage crew and NYS Parks. We collaborate and help each other.”

Quite an Impact

At its annual board of directors meeting last October, Artpark & Company reported the following 2022 season statistics:

✓ Number of events: 271

✓ Event attendance: 148,067

✓ Employment/economic impact: 512 artists and cultural sector professionals presented and worked at Artpark, in addition to a total of 271 employees

✓ Community economic impact: \$10,113,016

For more information, visit www.artpark.net.

“Typically, the visual arts and family programs staff divides into groups to run one program while we prep for another. We discuss who will do what, and we work to each other’s strengths. Some of the team is talented in painting, some in pottery, some in building, and some in navigating logistic tasks like hanging fabric from trees.”

“Our executive team helps strategize, direct and support. NYS Parks helps where ever they can – thank you! Artpark marketing staff promotes and communicates and supports. Development finds the funding and reaches out to organizations for support. Concession and customer experience feeds and hydrates the people, shops for product, and makes sure that the patrons move safely through the event. Production cleans the dressing rooms, fulfills the requirements of performance riders, and brings together equipment. Stage crew builds the more complicated structures and makes sure we can hear the performance. The box office fields hundreds of emails and phone calls. Hospitality welcomes and hosts the artists that travel here. Artists work on conceptual designs long before we are in season, and we work together to figure out how and when it can physically happen.”

“Some artists build and created off-site in their own studio space and bring work to Artpark. It is a series of Zoom calls, emails, meetings, phone conversations and images shared. We try to have most of the materials, ideas and plans in place before this type of stretch begins. Some days are more hectic than others. Plans fail, materials fall through, stuff breaks. However, we all work collabora-

tively without ego to support each other and problem-solve. We lean into discomfort and ideate new ways to do a thing if we need to. It is long hours and sweat and laughter and sometimes stress. We lean on our families. Many of our partners and family members show up throughout the week(s) to help move something, feed us dinner, care for our own kids at home, and keep loving us when we say we are coming home late, again. My dad still shows up with his truck, at 87 years old, to help me move a 4-foot, round bale of hay, benches and signs.

“Ultimately, we just come together and try our best to realize each other’s visions. It’s a team effort. We couldn’t do it without each other.”

What makes it worth it for Winslow is “I want families to connect with each other and the space,” she said. “I want them to create together. I want them to know and experience the same sense of joy and excitement that I found as a child playing with artists and my father when I was young.”

“Artpark is where I learned how to think, how to collaborate without ego, how to play, how to make art every day. I have been coming here since I was a baby (she now brings her own children). I think that is a very special thing to create together as a family. I want to provide a space and materials for families to be together and actively make something; to be inspired and find hope.”

Making Connections, Building Inclusion

Though Artpark patrons might not see the work accomplished behind the scenes, the workers responsible for the programming make it a point to see patrons. That is to say, the team actively

seeks out occasions for inclusion, vocalization and personal/community growth, and bakes these opportunities into the season schedule.

Artpark Bridges, for example, debuted in 2019 with a goal to direct “site-specific performance and art-making for people living with neurodiversity or progressive disease.”

Director Cynthia Pegado said that, “In my experience, Artpark is a place of community. Opportunity. Discovery. Revelation. Home.”

She said, “I have the honor of facilitating and co-creating meaningful experiences with others in my capacity as Artpark Bridges director and expressive arts leader. I designed the Sensing Resonance series as an embodied, mindful approach to building personal and communal connection with our workshop environment, which includes the nature around us at Artpark and the social context of being with each other. My first artistic language was dance, so I created Sensing Resonance as a movement-based approach to writing poetry that can disclose felt resonances.”

She said, “The mission I have established for Artpark Bridges is helping others grow their own unique sense of ‘my Artpark,’ and cultivate their own languages of expression. A personal sense of belonging at Artpark gave me a ‘home’ to return to, and my hope is to pass this forward through programming that opens diverse entry points and accessible interactions. I devised Sensing Resonance as one portal into a place where dreams, thought, expression and creativity become zero-barrier ambulations.”

Winslow said the North Star for those who work at Artpark is that the site “has been and will be a place where people can feel inspired and delight in the imaginative moments that make us human.”

“When I was a child, my father took me to Artpark every day,” she said. “It was a place of magic; a park situated on the breathtaking Niagara River Gorge where artists came to create with everyday people. Days were filled with face-painting and poetry in the woods, pottery wheels and people on stilts, wandering through crooked houses and setting a thousand balloons off into the sky. Artpark mixed sculpture with fireworks as neon danced across the midnight lawn. I loved it here.”

She added, “I’ve been working at Artpark for over 20 years, directing and resurrecting its visual arts and family programming. What I have found is that every artist, patron, board member and sponsor has an Artpark story. We have all made memories here. They are experiences that we cherish and they keep us coming back to create more lasting moments.”

“I want to be a part of something that holds that same sense of wonder and electricity. I want to forge new relationships that can bring us to the next generation of wonder-seekers. To see families engaging in creative making and experiences means that Artpark and its sense of creative ideas and playful exploration will live on for generations to come.”

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