

Artpark awarded \$49,500 by NYS Council on the Arts

Artpark & Company has received a grant award totaling \$49,500 from the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA), part of an effort to support the recovery of the nonprofit arts and culture sector. Following New York state's \$105 million investment in the arts for fiscal year 2022, NYSCA has awarded more than \$80 million since June.

"The arts have long been a critical sector in our economy and, as we continue to rebuild a stronger New York, it's essential we do all we can to help this industry thrive once again," Gov. Kathy Hochul said. "These awardees represent the best of what New York's vibrant communities have to offer and, with this funding in hand, they will be able to not only continue their creative and inspiring work, but help spur revitalization

in their own backyard as well." A press release noted, "Artpark & Company plans to utilize the grant in support of personnel and artistic fees and services as it plans for another diverse, impactful and exciting season in 2022." Visit artpark.net for a current schedule of events. NYSCA Executive Director Mara Manus said, "NYSCA applauds Gov. Kathy Hochul and

the New York State Legislature for their responsive investment of \$105 million for the nonprofit arts and culture sector. 2022 will continue to bring change, and Artpark & Company will play a vital role in the renewal of our state's economy and creative ecosystem. On behalf of the entire NYSCA team, we wish to extend our sincere congratulations on your award."

NYSCA Chair Katherine Nichols said, "The council congratulates Artpark & Company on their grant award! New York state arts and culture organizations inspire New Yorkers and cultivate community in every region. Arts and culture are crucial to our state's health, and the council recognizes the dynamic impact of NYSCA grantees on the well-being of all New Yorkers."

Higgins, Ortt, Morinello & Restaino announce expanded broadband, technology access at Niagara Falls Public Library

Over \$210,000 in grants supporting new equipment in 'maker space'

Congressman Brian Higgins, New York State Senate Minority Leader Rob Ortt, Assemblyman Angelo Morinello and City of Niagara Falls Mayor Robert Restaino joined Niagara Falls Public Library Director Sarah Potwin on Friday to announce more than \$210,000 in grants expanding access to broadband and technology for residents in Niagara Falls.

portant internet access is to our daily lives. Niagara Falls Public Library is doing its part to help address this lack of broadband access in our community and, with the help of over \$210,000 in broadband and technology funding, it will now be able to deliver this critical resource to those in our community, especially our children who need it the most."

The announcement took place during an event marking the opening of the Niagara Falls Public Library's "maker space," which includes new devices, Wi-Fi hot spots, printers and other equipment to encourage productivity and creativity.

Morinello said, "It was my pleasure to join the Niagara Falls Public Library, as well as students from the Niagara Falls Central School District, to celebrate the opening of this revolutionary workspace and reaffirm our investment and devotion to education and future generations of learners. I will always prioritize the importance of libraries as a safe learning environment and as a community hub; and during the 2021 legislative session, I fought to ensure we got our fair share of funding. I look forward to watching the children in our district continue to learn and thrive."

"Access to broadband and technology is not a luxury, it is a necessity - for work, for school and for everyday life," Higgins said. "Libraries play an important role in building stronger communities. We applaud the initiative of the Niagara Falls Public Library in evolving to serve the needs of residents today."

Potwin said, "Books are half of our story. We, like many libraries, are evolving our services to meet our citizen's needs. Unique services such as passport acceptance and notary services, scanning, e-book downloads, computer literacy training are some of the many services available to citizens ... all for free. Our efforts to lessen the lack of accessibility to Wi-Fi services are small, but the need is great as has been illustrated during this time of COVID."

The library was awarded a \$133,260 grant from the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) toward the purchase of 200 Chromebooks and 200 Wi-Fi hot spots, which will be available on loan from the Main and LaSalle library branches to library card holders.

"In today's world, connectivity to the internet is an absolute must for individuals to further their careers, access critical community services - and most importantly help educate their children," Ortt said. "The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted just how im-

The Niagara Falls Public Library's "maker space" will join the "maker movement" in promoting access to computers, 3-D printers, a coding robot, snap circuits, a mobile device charging station and other high-tech creative tools, and crafting supplies. It is funded by a \$45,000 grant provided through the American Library Association COVID Tech Relief Grant (\$45,000) and \$4,500 from the Grace Foundation.

Restaino said, "This will be a space for Niagara Falls citizens to learn new computer tech skills, participate in the 'maker movement,' and be creative using both high-tech as well as soft arts to craft. The ultimate goal is to offer connectivity access to Wi-Fi technology that our citizens might not otherwise have."

An additional grant totaling \$27,505 was awarded through the National Library of Medicine for new technology included within privacy pods.

"By the spring of 2022, we will

have our privacy pods in place," Potwin said. "These spaces will be stocked with computers, printers and video conferencing capabilities to allow patrons access to telehealth resources as well as conducting Zoom calls in private. We are very grateful to Mr. Higgins and our government leaders for their focused efforts to address our citizen's Wi-Fi connectivity needs."

Higgins' team said, "According to the most recent U.S. Census data (2015-19), more than 20% of households in Niagara County don't have a broadband subscription."

"The new 'Bipartisan Infrastructure Law' includes \$65 billion to make sure every American has access to high-speed internet."

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