

Meet the Kentuckians for the Arts 2023 Youth Arts Council

Abigayle Kate Gatton Stokes is a junior at Lafayette High School in Lexington. Her artistic interests are dance, vocal music, and theatre. Abigayle is a passionate advocate for the importance of the arts in society. "As performers we have a stage to advocate for change and be artists for good and humans that respect one another for our shared interests and our unique differences. Our modern world needs us as artists to set a tone for tolerance and respect. That is why it is so important to incorporate the arts in education as early as possible."



Sara Gdovkais is a senior at West Jessamine High School in Nicholasville. Her main art form is visual arts. She says that art gives her a space to think and create freely. She would love to see more vibrantly decorated spaces, especially schools. "I feel that young people should be able to look at their school environment and not see a

bleak, cement building. Student led art installations such as murals, sculptures, and showcases could help to liven up brutish construction."



Madelyn Haysley is in the seventh grade at Owensboro Middle School in Owensboro. She is interested in creative writing and both instrumental and vocal music. She sees the arts as a way for people to share their experiences with one another. "The arts have given me a pathway to who I truly am and helped define me as a person. If there were youth artists willing to demonstrate what they do in the arts and talk to groups at schools, it could comfort youths and let them see how people their age have embraced the arts."





Austyn White is in the seventh grade at Owensboro Middle School. Austyn’s artistic passions are architecture and instrumental music. He sings in his school choir and plays in their band. Band is his favorite part of the school day, and he also plays at church. Austyn encourages other students to take advantage of any opportunity to be involved in the arts.

Rhiley Cruz is a junior at Community Christian Academy in Paducah. She enjoys dance, instrumental and vocal music, and theatre. She plays the clarinet. Rhiley believes that the arts “can bring people happiness and since there are different arts, everyone has choices. I always try to have a positive attitude towards others and get them to do fun things. Playing my instrument or singing to them will probably get them to notice the arts and hopefully get them to join.”



Julia Kinsman is a senior at Barren County High School in Glasgow. Her art forms are creative writing, dance, theatre, and vocal and instrumental music. Julia’s passion for music is interwoven into the fabric of her life. “I am involved with the arts because it is my source of peace and self-discovery. When I find myself in a moment of stress or panic, I immediately

go to the piano, something I have done since I was five. I feel my worries melt away as my fingers glide across the piano. A day without music for me, is a day wasted. No matter where I go in my life, and no matter the age, music will always be there. It provides a space where I can truly be myself without judgment. It’s the details about music that makes it so intricate and captivating. The arts are a collection of little moments. A collection I could not live without.”





Tyler Jones is a senior at Model Laboratory High School in Richmond. His main art form is visual art, and he also enjoys creative writing, film and photography, and media arts. Like many artists, Tyler finds that the arts help him to de-stress. He believes the arts “could be used to show everyone that, yes, we are different and unique but it's these differences and expressions that should draw us together and make that key difference in the world that we need right

now.” He believes that the way to involve more young people in the arts is to provide more funding for arts education, to give more youth “the opportunity and experience in the arts and possibly help them to find their real selves.”



Jessica Clark is a junior at Anderson County High School in Lawrenceburg. She enjoys both vocal and instrumental music and theatre. She has been engaged in the arts since she was four and believes that “today in our society we tend to be divided on certain issues such as politics, religion, and culture. The arts can change that by bringing people together to express themselves! We can use the arts to work together and bond over our love of vocal music, instrumental music, theater, drama, visual art, and so much more. The arts is a way for people to forget about our differences and make a change in the

world together!” Jessica would like to establish more local theaters. She would like to see more funding for arts education to “ensure that every school has an arts program that includes every form of art! That way students have more accessible access and more ways to be involved with others who share their same interests!”



Kaitlyn McCoy is a freshman at Western Hills High School in Frankfort. Her art forms are instrumental music, visual arts, and theatre. She says, “I am involved with the arts because it's what keeps me going.” Participating in the arts has always improved her state of mind. She reminds us that “You don't have to make a life out of



art to participate or appreciate it.” She would like to help spread the message of the importance of the arts through “more recent social media platforms. Starting off with an Instagram page and simple art software would be a great start. Showing people you don’t have to get traditional art supplies or be Van Gogh to start would take some of the weight off of their shoulders.”



Maggie Bowman is a junior at Lincoln County High School in Stanford. She enjoys visual art, instrumental music, and both theatre performance and set design for theatre. Maggie says, “I love working with others. I love being a member of the theatre community, and visual arts community. I love being able to have engaging conversations about the future of the arts. It truly excites me to be involved in the arts. To put it simply, I love the arts!” And she is involved in providing opportunities for other young people to experience what she has. “The last two

summers, I have helped one of my former directors with the Lincoln County Arts Academy, a program she co-created and currently facilitates. The premise of the program is to give elementary and middle school age students a week in July where they can freely express themselves. At the end of the week a finale is presented in which the kids showcase their work. During the week we focus on vocal music, drama, visual art, and culinary arts. If I could somehow make this a statewide instituted program, I would. Students are taught hands-on techniques to give them a solid foundation in different artistic endeavors. Students get to experience first-hand the amount of work and thought that goes into a production because they get to create every aspect of the finale.”



Kathryne Janeway Howard is a freshman at Lafayette High School in Lexington. She enjoys architecture, creative writing, dance, instrumental and vocal music, theatre performance, theatre tech and design, visual arts. She explains that she is involved in the arts “because art is something beautiful that brings color and depth into our world, and I believe that every person should be able to experience some type of



beauty every day in their life.” She would like there to be more opportunities for youth to share their talents, “such as a showcase for the entire community or local competitions. There should be more opportunities for students who are not yet participating with the arts to be involved with it during school, free time, and in the community. For example, poetry readings, creative writing classes, and art workshops could be offered to youth to enhance their understanding of the art forms and expose the community to the young peoples’ point of view through the various types of art. In conclusion, the arts should be far more accessible to all young people, through the help of the open community and state and local programs.”



Jack Atchley is in the eighth grade at Elkhorn Middle School in Frankfort. He has a wide range of artistic interests including creative writing, dance, film and photography, vocal music, theatre performance, theatre tech and design, and media arts. Jack said he has been involved in the arts since before he knew what they were called. He believes the arts are important in promoting equity

and social justice. “The arts help create the world we want to live in. If I could dream big, I would make a grant that could be used for transporting kids, so that more people who wanted to be involved in the arts had the chance to. Most of the time when I hear kids say they want to do things like be in chorus or a play but can't, it is because they do not have a way to get to practices or to get home from practices. If there was a way to offer things like Uber rides or to pay for a later school bus run after practice, more kids could be involved. At school, an example could be to start a ride share program, where parent volunteers were offered gas money if they would drive an extra kid home.”



Cooper Bartlett is a junior at West Jessamine High School in Nicholasville, His art forms are vocal and instrumental music, creative writing, and theatre. Cooper is passionate about expanding the reach of arts programming to every county and every school in the Commonwealth. “Maximizing education opportunities for youth is something I only want to see more of. My home county (Jessamine) has a strong community theatre,

music, and visual arts program called Arts+, despite it being a relatively small town. To see educational arts being exposed to all of Kentucky's beautiful counties would bring a smile to my face, because I know not everyone is growing up with the same arts opportunities I did. The ability and freedom to create through art is a wildly under-appreciated asset that should be even more readily available to students. I believe arts expression can be used to make the world a more empathetic place. Through observing other perspectives and hearing stories told that we aren't used to, we learn more about other walks of life. Being able to not only coexist but also understand others on a deeper level is invaluable."



Lorelai Prewitt is in the seventh grade at Lynn Camp Middle/High School in Corbin. She is involved with theatre, make-up, choir, painting, and sculpting. She says, "I am involved with the arts because I like being creative and I like doing hands-on activities. Art is a great way to express yourself and I really find joy in creating it." She wishes there were opportunities for people of all ages to come together and create any kind of art they want.



Chelslynn Helton is a freshman at Lynn Camp Middle/High School in Corbin. She is in the school choir and has performed in two musicals. In her free time, she enjoys drawing, reading poetry, going to concerts, and watching plays. She says, "I am involved with the arts because it is a different way to express yourself. In choir I have found a family and somewhere I feel welcomed. The arts to me is a very welcoming community." Chelslynn wishes that "schools had more of a selection for the arts such as choir, band, drawing, photography, theater, film, and more. I think that the arts are slowly fading away in schools and it's very sad." She also would like to see more arts opportunities in the community. "I think having a festival or something dedicated to different forms of the arts would also bring in a lot of attraction from young kids and young adults too. I think some people don't realize the talent they have until they try it and having a festival or a small community thing would bring more interest."



Emmaleigh Gray is in the eighth grade at Lynn Camp Middle/High School in Corbin. She enjoys singing, painting, drawing, sculpting, pottery, and theatre. Coming from a musical family, she has been involved in the arts since she was little, but she realizes that many young people do not have this opportunity. She explains, “A lot of schools don’t have access to arts such as choir, band, theatre, or general music classes at all, so youth do not get to explore arts outside drawing and painting. I would like to make it available to schools to have more music involved. My school does not have theatre or band, but I think it would be nice if we did.”

