



# Explore the artist within

## September 2023

### MISSION

To foster, through artistic expression, the creative potential that exists in everyone to enrich the lives of our neighborhoods, our community, and the world at large.

### VISION

An intentional community where the power and joy of arts education and experiences are accessible to all.

### PURPOSE

To provide quality professional programming and supervision in both Arts Education and Community Schools for students of all ages to set them up for a successful lifelong journey in the arts.

### A message from the executive director

My first year of service with the Richland Academy of the Arts (RAA) has been both challenging and stimulating. It's been a year of learning about the Academy's rich history of serving Mansfield and the surrounding communities.

Having lived in nearby Lexington for over a decade, I was aware of RAA's significant educational and performance opportunities, but I didn't closely follow course offerings or performances. My commute to Malone University in Canton, where I served as a music professor, keyboard studies coordinator, and director of the preparatory program, kept me busy.

I've enjoyed learning about RAA's history and am deeply committed to its mission. Given my background in music, the Academy's music, visual arts, dance, and theatre programs were a natural fit. In addition to learning more about our martial arts program offerings, I've focused on better understanding the community school sponsorship side of the house.

I suspect I'm not the only Richland County resident somewhat unfamiliar with community schools – also known as charter schools -- as most have historically been located in Ohio's eight urban areas since first established in 1997. Today, Richland County is home to six community schools, and Richland Academy of the Arts is the proud sponsor of seven located in Akron, Columbus, Cincinnati, Lorain, and Tiffin. As a community school sponsor, the Academy's responsibilities include oversight and monitoring, as well as providing technical assistance. I'm proud of our "Effective" rating by the Ohio Department of Education and appreciate program director Mrs. Sheri Hughes' leadership and commitment to education standards in this area of RAA's mission.

On the arts side of the house, I've focused on a thorough review of our mix and schedule of offerings. Most of our faculty hold full-time positions in addition to teaching at the Academy, which has limited our ability to offer classes during the day. I'm pleased to have hired several new faculty who are available to teach day classes, which will undoubtedly appeal to some of those we serve, given their diversity – from toddlers to seniors.



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## BOARD MEMBERS

Brian Hamilton,  
President  
Jessica Hiser,  
Vice President  
Joann Hipsher,  
Secretary  
Jim Henry,  
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Don Hoover,  
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Dr. Julie Chaya  
Leah Gesouras  
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Tim Hilterman  
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Ashley Pifer  
Michael Thomas

## LEADERSHIP

Dr. Michael Benson,  
Executive Director

Sheri Hughes,  
Assistant Director

Pam Madore,  
Business Manager

Sarah Horrigan-  
Ramos,  
Dance Department  
Chair

## HOURS OF OPERATION

Monday  
9 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Tuesday  
9:30 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Wednesday  
12 noon to 8 p.m.

Thursday  
10 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Friday  
9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Saturday  
9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

*Subject to change*

## Executive director – continued

There are opportunities for RAA to educate and inspire homeschool students seeking to earn fine arts credits toward graduation. Surveys recently completed by 69 homeschool families support the belief that this represents an opportunity to increase our impact.

A thoughtful and strategic review of current course offerings and scheduling has revealed another opportunity to enrich the lives of those we serve by encouraging a structured curriculum into the Academy's music, visual arts, and theater programs, modeling after our highly structured and well-respected dance programs.

Richland Academy is fortunate to be housed in a historic building in a great downtown location with plenty of space. But, like most older buildings, there are opportunities for improvement. A capital campaign to fund building renovations is an essential priority as our efforts to make visiting and learning in this unique environment inspiring for all arts disciplines.

I give much credit to Mrs. Marianne Cooper for founding and leading such a dynamic organization, and I am committed to building on her inspiring work as we chart our course for the future.

I'm fortunate to work with a dedicated staff team – including our business manager, Mrs. Pam Madore, whose long tenure with, and historical knowledge of, the Academy have been so helpful. RAA team members share my passion for the arts and commitment to the Academy's dynamic future. This newsletter represents one of many ways we will keep the community informed on opportunities to engage in and support the arts.

I'm also blessed to work with an outstanding board of trustees comprised of community members who bring diverse experience from a variety of business sectors -- from insurance, accounting, banking, and energy, to media, education, legal and, of course, the arts.

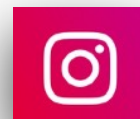
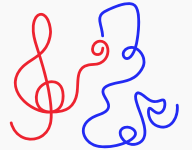
I continue to serve on the Ohio Alliance for Arts Education board and as a member of its Advocacy Committee. I will always hold a strong belief in the value of arts education.

Thanks to all who have supported me throughout my first year leading the Academy. I'm honored to be associated with such a dynamic organization that contributes so much to Mansfield and surrounding communities.

*Dr. Michael Benson*

## We're just a scroll away!

Follow us on Instagram @richlandacademyofthearts  
Like us on Facebook @richlandacademy



## Every gift helps, too!

RAA is grateful to all who support its mission to foster the creative potential in those we serve. Donation and scholarship highlights include:

- ~ \$6,289 in support of the Dance Another Day dance floor replacement project;
- ~ \$2,230 in student scholarships from the Neil A. Doerman Scholarship Fund;
- ~ \$1,000 contributing to awards totaling \$2,265 for RAA student music scholarships from the Barkdull Scholarship Fund; and,
- ~ \$241 through the Kroger Community Rewards program which allows RAA supporters to donate to local organizations based on shopping they do every day.

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## Every grant helps!

Richland Academy of the Arts (RAA) is fortunate to receive support from so many generous state and local agencies and foundations, sponsors and donors, all of whom help bring out the best in our community. Over the past five years, grant funding from three key organizations has totaled more than \$363,000.

The Ohio Arts Council – a state agency dedicated to ensuring equity and resilience in Ohio’s arts and cultural sector – funds quality arts experiences to strengthen Ohio communities culturally, educationally and economically. Through its various grant funding programs, the Council provides support to artists and to make arts activities available to a broad segment of Ohioans. OAC sustainability grants awarded to RAA over the past five years total more than \$133,000, helping to cover operational and programming expenses.



Richland County Foundation raises funds for many local not-for-profit organizations through its Richland Gives initiative. The foundation’s fundraising tool was developed to coincide with Giving Tuesday, which supports not-for-profits with fundraising efforts and education. Richland County Foundation and its Richland Gives initiative have provided nearly \$150,000 over the past five years in support of various RAA initiatives including:



- ~ Phase 1 of the Dance Another Day dance floor replacement project, supported by Robert and Esther Black Family Foundation Fund;
- ~ Reinvesting in the Future Grant, Phases 1 & 2, which replaced fluorescent lighting with LED lighting throughout the main building, supported by Robert and Esther Black Family Foundation Fund;
- ~ Winter and Summer internships for local full-time college students, allowing RAA to employ 14 interns in dance, marketing, music, visual arts and administrative support over the past five years, by the Fran and Warren Rupp Advised Fund;
- ~ Professional development in development and fundraising for staff, by the Osborne Meese Grant Prizes, IUPUI, Lilly Family School of Philanthropy;
- ~ Participation in Richland Gives and Giving Tuesday for the past five years, earning grant prizes thanks to the support of community partners including the RAA board of directors, friends, students, faculty and staff. RAA received Leader Board grant prizes totaling \$15,000 and a custom video by DMI valued at \$1,000; and,
- ~ Scholarship fundraising activities during Richland Gives, the Barkdull Scholarship Fundraiser and the Marianne Cooper Music Scholarship Fundraiser to help make art programs accessible for all, supported by the Thomas Family Fund and the Robert J. and Stella F. Sutter Fund.

Area Agency on Aging – a division of the Ohio Department of Aging – also provides grants that support free programming for Ohio seniors, 60 years and older. AAA grant funds totaling nearly \$81,000 over the past five years have supported RAA’s:

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## Gifts – continued

These and other gifts allowed RAA to award more than \$29,500 to 170 grateful recipients during the 2022-2023 fiscal year.

[Click here](#) to learn more about scholarships and tuition assistance.

Interested in helping to fund the Jeffrey L. Molyet Dance Scholarship Award and other RAA scholarships and programs?

[Click here](#) to learn more about opportunities to support RAA and its students.

### Support RAA through the Kroger Community Rewards program!

It's simple: just link your Kroger Shopper's Card to RAA. Swipe it as usual at check out and RAA will receive an annual donation based on your percentage of spending as it relates to total spending associated with all participating Kroger Community Rewards organizations. [Click here](#) to learn more and to sign up for the program.

## Grants help – continued

- ~ Enrichment Field Trips to the Cleveland Art Museum;
- ~ Community in- and out-reach art and music therapy programming with Wedgewood Estates;
- ~ Caregiver Event celebrating community members who care for a loved one;
- ~ Enriching experiences and events including opera, museums, symphony and musicals; and,
- ~ Free class programming at RAA in dance, music and visual arts.



## Our impact: A quick look at 2022-2023

Richland Academy of the Arts (RAA) proudly serves students of all ages in Richland, Ashland, Crawford, Knox, Morrow and Erie counties. We're committed to providing opportunities for our students to explore who they are, and who they can become, through dance (including yoga and pilates), music, theatre, visual arts and martial arts. We exist to enrich the lives of our students and community members – through events and performances, community programs and workshops – within a safe, professional environment as they discover their inner artist. In the 2022-2023 fiscal year alone, RAA's contributions are reflected in a number of ways:

- ~ Foot traffic in weekly classes of 40,042 – an increase of 8% over the previous year;
- ~ Total class registrations in dance, music, art, theatre and martial arts of 3,085 – up 16%;
- ~ Student enrollment of 1,856 – up 17%;
- ~ Total attendees of 13,207 at various RAA events – up 50%; and,
- ~ A total of 11,329 classes offered – up 37%; and,
- ~ Tuition assistance and scholarships totaling \$29,512.

## We want to hear from you!

At Richland Academy of the Arts (RAA), we never forget who we serve and are always eager for input and feedback. We're committed to providing the best experiences possible for a widely diverse population of students – from "littles" to seniors and every age in-between.

If you haven't already shared your thoughts through our recently launched brief family survey, please [click here](#) to do so.

Here's what we've learned from respondents so far:

- ~ More than 2/3 use the RAA website often or sometimes;
- ~ Nearly 80% rate the RAA website from average to best;
- ~ 100% rate RAA branding from average to best – about 37% give it a top rating;
- ~ Nearly 95% find RAA branding to be cohesive with offerings;
- ~ Nearly 90% have registered for classes online;
- ~ 79% describe the registration process as easy or somewhat easy;

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## Something for everyone!

It's not too late to register for Fall classes and there's something for everyone! Richland Academy of the Arts' Fall schedule features more than 50 classes – as well as private lessons -- in dance, music, theatre, visual arts and martial arts for students of all ages.

Proudly sponsored by RAA, Area Agency on Aging, and Ohio Arts Council are offerings for students 60+ years of age including alternate medium arts, studio arts, ceramics, dance, guitar & ukulele, keyboarding/piano, drumming, stretch and technology & computers.

Consider trying a new experience, branching out to explore new opportunities to enjoy the arts! Help us spread the word about the great experiences available through RAA to friends and family. It's never too late to explore the artist within!

### Hear from you – continued

- ~ Nearly 3 in 4 would like the ability to pay online at the time of registration; and,
- ~ Nearly 95% prefer to receive communication/information from RAA via email.

We also seek to better understand the needs of families that homeschool through a recently launched survey. If you haven't yet participated, please [click here](#) to do so.

Here's what we've learned from respondents so far:

- ~ Nearly 2/3 are interested in adding arts enrichment programming to their curriculum;
- ~ Nearly 85% are interested in dance (which includes yoga and pilates);
- ~ More than 80% are interested in music;
- ~ 77% are interested in theatre;
- ~ Nearly 3 in 4 are interested in visual arts;
- ~ About 46% are interested in martial arts;
- ~ Respondents are interested in programming throughout the day -- the majority between 10 a.m. and 12 noon
- ~ Respondents are interested in programming Monday through Saturday, with Wednesday and Saturday the lowest preferences;
- ~ 54% of respondents are willing to pay for tuition and materials and the remaining 46% maybe be willing to pay; and,
- ~ More than 80% of respondents are not knowledgeable of Ohio's Afterschool Child Enrichment (ACE) Program which allows qualifying families with students ages 6-18 enrolled in RAA arts programs to receive up to \$1,000 reimbursement (per student).



Thanks, as always, for sharing your views!

### Mark your calendar!

**Richland Gives, Giving Tuesday** – a county-wide fundraising campaign on the Mightycause platform: **November 28**

**The Nutcracker Ballet** – [Click here](#) to purchase tickets: **December 9, 10**

### Explore the artist within

Be a part of our year-round educational arts programming in dance, music, theatre, visual arts and martial arts offered for all ages!

Register today – [Richlandacademy.com](http://Richlandacademy.com); 419-522-8224

## From a grateful mother

" ... you all do more than just teach dance, somehow, these children learn to be respectful and kind to each other ...

Perhaps it's the effect of arts on the heart on its own, but I don't think that's it. You all and your staff perpetuate kindness and compassion and encourage it.

Thank you for being a safe place for my children to learn, as well as a good example to so many children, who in turn will plant themselves in our communities and spread that same kindness and compassion.

## Get to know us even better!

[Click here](#) to access RAA's Youtube channel to learn about faculty, upcoming celebrations and events, and other highlights.

[Click here](#) to watch a short, fun video documenting our recent transformational Dance Another Day dance floor replacement project.

[Click here](#) to explore the many programs offered this fall and to find a new passion in the arts!



## Thank You to Our 2022-2023 SPONSORS

The Doerman Scholarship  
Trust at Richland Academy



The Robert and Esther Black Family  
Foundation Fund through RCF and PNC



The Fran and Warren Rupp  
Advised Fund of the RCF



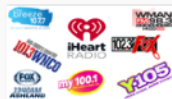
The Thomas Family Fund  
of the RCF; Joann Hipsher



Harvey & Carol McGowan



Dr. Michael & Denise Benson  
Doug & Melissa Olson



Noble Piano Services  
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