

**Purpose of Round Table Meetings**

A space for performing artists to connect, share ideas, raise concerns, collaborate, and learn about opportunities within the Rockford Region creative community.

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**Arts Council Updates****Rockford Area Arts Awards**

- Press Release and upcoming events
- Video, photos, and Awardees on website

**Capitol Day:** April 15+16 is Capitol Day in Springfield – please join us!

- April 15<sup>th</sup>: An opportunity to connect with other arts and culture organizations/individuals across the state
- April 16<sup>th</sup>: Arts Council-organized legislator meetings
  - Encourage our legislators to continue supporting (increasing funding to) the Illinois Arts Council
  - Share testimonials from our partner agencies about impact/reach

**Business of Art Resources**

- New video resources available
- Feedback requested:
  - Future *Business of Art* topics
  - Suggested panelists
  - Arts Instruction Opportunities Resource List (see attached)
  - Financial resources through Midland Partnership

**Summer Programs**

- Share your agency's summer programs with us!
- Share our programs with your members/users

**Membership Drive – May 2026**

- The Arts Council is a membership organization
  - Membership benefits
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**Action Grants****January 2026 Recipients**

- **Rockford Players Guild** – Summer theater season featuring local artists at Rockford University's Cheek Theatre
- **Matt Schwerin** – Archival scanning of historic negatives documenting Rockford's south side
- **Evon J. Sams** – Jazz concert featuring original works inspired by Rockford history and Black lived experience
- **Rockford DanceMakers Festival** – Two concert dance performances featuring regional choreographers
- **Kelsey Nichols** – Six-piece visual art series exploring personal and collective storytelling

**The next term, Term 2, opens May 1** - Grants are awarded on a rolling basis; once all available funds are dispersed, applications close.

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## Opportunities

### **RAAC Partners meeting: Accessibility Workshop and Armory Update – Public Meeting**

Date: March 18<sup>th</sup>, 401 S. Main Street

Time: 11:30 am – 1 pm

Lunch will be served (please register online)

### **America 250 Celebration Event Grant**

Organizations are encouraged to apply for this grant (up to \$2,500) for programs recognizing the 250th anniversary of the United States.

<https://www.gorockford.com/america-250/>

### **poetry815**

Submissions for Fall 2026 Anthology open May 15th, 2026 and close July 31st, 2026, for fall publication

### **City of Rockford Poet Laureate, Adam al Sirgany**

- Poetry workshop at Highland Community College in Freeport on April 14th, open to the public.

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## Upcoming Events

**Rockford Writers Group** - meetups every 2-3 weeks on Monday evenings at 6 PM. (Next is on 3/23 at Sticky Rice)

**Maze Books** - Books for Brighter Futures – donate new and gently used books, now through April

**Spring ArtScene** - “Hear/Here: An Exhibit of Art & Poetry in Community” at RPL Nordlof April 24-25

**poetry815** - A release party for the spring anthology - TBD in April for National Poetry Month

**Poet Laureate** - the featured guest at Rockford Writers' Guild's monthly meeting via Zoom on April 19<sup>th</sup>

**Midtown Inscape Collective** – Open Mic Night – 3/13 at 6PM

**Rockford Public Library** – *The Librarians* movie screening, April 16 – 5:30-7:00pm

Womanspace – April 10 – 5:30-7:00pm

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## Community Discussion

### **Your Turn: Q&A and Community Updates**

- What is happening in your work or organization?
- What opportunities or challenges are you seeing in the performing arts community?

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## Next Meeting

The Arts Council offers **daytime Round Tables in the fall** and **evening Round Tables in the spring**, so creatives have an opportunity to attend at least one meeting each year. One organization asked for the meeting to be conducted over Zoom.

## Notes:

Womanspace is considering offering a writers group once again. Nicole asked whether or not the group believed this would be valuable or not, and if so what type of group this might be. JP shared that the Rockford Writers Group typically has three types of writing group purposes: social, workshop, and quiet writing. Jenna shared that when she attended the previous writers group at Womanspace, she appreciated its consistent meetings.

Nicole also shared that she wants the community to know that Womanspace has meeting space available, and offers a sliding scale for rental costs to groups based on size.

A number of open mic and performance events were mentioned and celebrated. City of Rockford Poet Laureate, Adam al Sirgany, shared that the Rockford Public Library is working to expand its Teen Space poetry program on the third Wednesday of the month at 5:00 pm.

Fauna is the Inkwel Books author-in-residence. She has open hours and assists authors, poets, with questions and resources to continue their paths as literary artists. Her flyer is attached to this message.

Lorene Kennard from the Rockford Public Library shared upcoming programs and events including a Comic Con to coincide with 815 Day, a local author expo for independent authors to take place in October.

## **2026 Rockford Area Arts Awards Winners**

### **Arts Educator of the Year – Ingrid Hyde**

Ingrid Hyde has taught art in the Harlem School District for 23 years, including 13 years at Machesney Elementary Fine Arts School, where she also coordinated art curriculum and developed programming for gifted students.

### **Young Arts Ambassador – Ziana Olson**

Ziana Olson is a student artist who exhibits locally, performs in theater productions, and works with 317 Art Collaborative through support from the Illinois Arts Council.

### **Excellence in Service to the Arts (Individual) – Jessica Dobson**

Jessica Dobson is Executive Director of the Rock and Roll Institute, where she leads youth music education programs and expanded community outreach in the Rockford region.

### **Excellence in Service to the Arts (Group) – The Music Academy**

The Music Academy provides music education and performance opportunities in Rockford and launched a tuition-free music program at Constance Lane Elementary School in 2025.

### **Visual Artist of the Year – Verónica Soria-Martínez**

Verónica Soria-Martínez is an interdisciplinary artist and educator whose work explores interactive installations, mixed media, and community-based storytelling.

### **Performing Artist of the Year – Grupo de Baile Mosaico Cultural**

Grupo de Baile Mosaico Cultural is a Rockford-based dance group that teaches and performs traditional Mexican folk dance at schools, festivals, and community events.

### **Production of the Year – *Ellis Island: The Dream of America***

The Rockford Symphony Orchestra presented *Ellis Island: The Dream of America*, a multimedia orchestral production featuring projected images and readings performed by local actors.

**Literary Excellence – Rachel León**

Rachel León is a writer and editor whose work has appeared in publications including *Chicago Review of Books*, *Arcturus*, and *The Rockford Anthology*.

**Innovation in the Arts – In Bloom, Rockford Art Museum**

*In Bloom* at the Rockford Art Museum was a multidisciplinary event combining visual art, floral design, fashion, and immersive media through collaboration with local creatives.

**Placemaking + Spacemaking – Inscape Midtown Collective**

Inscape Midtown Collective is an artist-run space in Rockford's Midtown District that supports local artists through exhibitions, retail space, performances, and community events.

**Distinguished Artist of the Year – Judith Meyer**

Judith Meyer is a visual artist and educator with a 45-year career whose work has been exhibited regionally, nationally, and internationally, and who previously taught art and humanities courses at Rock Valley College.

**Symbol of Rockford – Bob Greenblatt**

Bob Greenblatt is a Rockford native who has shaped some of the most iconic television shows and theater productions in the world. His achievements showcase the immense talent that comes from our community and inspire young and seasoned artists in Rockford to dream big, reminding us all of the remarkable creative potential right here at home.