

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.

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 15th: An opportunity to connect with other arts and culture organizations/individuals across the state
- April 16th: 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
-

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.

Opportunities

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

Date: March 18th, 401 S. Main Street

Time: 11:30 am – 1 pm

Lunch will be served (please register online)

Artists' Ensemble Theatre Auditions

March 21 | 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM

March 22 | 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM

Cheek Theatre, Clark Arts Center, Rockford University

Upcoming Performances

- **Rockford Dance Company** – *The Wizard of Oz* | May 15
- **Rockford DanceMakers Festival** – March 20-21
- **Artists' Ensemble Theatre** – *Conscience* | March 12–29
- **RVC Starlight Theatre** – *The Wizard of Oz, Once on This Island, Something Rotten, 9 to 5* | Summer 2026
- **Rockford Players Guild** – *The Skin of Our Teeth* | April 11
The Effect of Marigolds on the Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds | June 19–28
At Home at the Zoo | July 17–26
- **Rockford University Theatre** – *Rumors* | April 23–26
- **West Side Show Room** – *California* | March 12–15
- **Moon Dog Theatre** – *A Bright New Boise* | March 20–22, 27–29

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?

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:

- A performer expressed interest in developing a local **burlesque and fringe arts community**, focused on unconventional and experimental performance.
- Potential rehearsal or workshop spaces mentioned included Rockford Dance Company, The Office Niteclub, and the Nordlof Black Box Theatre.
- Rockford Dance Company shared that many performing arts groups are facing challenges due to reduced grant opportunities and unstable funding.
- Organizations are encouraged to apply for the **America 250 Celebration Event Grant** (up to \$2,500) for programs recognizing the 250th anniversary of the United States.
<https://www.gorockford.com/america-250/>

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.