



@ YEA

arts.street

# 2025 Program Highlights

2025 saw Arts Street@Youth Employment Academy overflowing with connection, community, and creativity with **186 unique youth** participating in our creative industry academies, internship, and mentorship programs. Our youth identify as 92% BIPOC and 98% low-income with many residents from our affiliate organization, Denver Housing Authority (DHA).

- Our **creative industry academies** served **182 youth** with a **95% completion rate** and **93% demonstrating an increase in industry skills**. One highlight was our partnership with Denver Public School Colorado High School Charter Osage, Denver Parks & Recreation at La Alma Recreation Center and the Equity in Arts grant program. Through this partnership young artists explored their personal and community identity through photography, culminating in an exhibition celebration and installation of a permanent public art piece in La Alma Recreation Center- all while they earned credit towards graduation. Our summer academies worked with over 60 youth who learned about issues in affordable housing, community gardens and mental wellness. They focused on large-scale public art projects including painted pavers and signage design for DHA's Columbine Community Gardens and two painted indoor murals at DHA's Thomas Bean Towers with a large community celebration. In addition, they created digital designs and traditional artwork in collage, painting, and photography for our clients. **91% said Arts Street helped them learn new skills and 96% said because of Arts Street they work hard when something is important.**
- Our **internship program** worked with **25 young adults** who earned stipends while working on projects for our real-world clients. Client projects included digital designs used by DHA's Communications Department for social media, a wall mural made from carpet tiles and a t-shirt design that will be sold at Steamboat Resort. **100% of our interns completed their internships and 96% showed an increase in industry skills.** One intern said, **"This program helps prepare for my future by identifying who I am and what I want to do."**
- Our **mentorship & mental wellness programming** thrived with all youth participating in mental wellness workshops, and many working 1:1 with our Youth Advisor, Destini Montez. Many got to be part of special experiences such as seeing *The Wiz* at DCPA and our art and wellness retreats to Colorado Springs & Steamboat Springs. All received support in guidance towards their goals of education, employment, and mental wellness. **100% of our high school students stayed in school or graduated and 87% said that because of Arts Street they are better at taking responsibility for their actions.**
- Arts Street is also privileged to work with so many amazing **Denver artists** who teach their skills and mentor our young artists individually and in community. Our projects highlight this work led by these outstanding creatives; Adama Bamba, Jess Early, Juan Fuentes, Lilian Lara, Chelsea Romaniello, Devin Urioste and Jasmine Wynter. **99% of participants said that "Arts Street staff care about me."** One Arts Street participant said, **"I have learned that it is okay to be yourself and express your own ideas. I now know I can do hard things and help the community."**

# Fashion Design and Photography

Arts Street worked with 24 students, ages 14-21, attending Colorado High School Charter (CHSC), for eleven weeks this spring exploring fashion. The Arts Street course, taught by Jessica Early, Juan Fuentes, and Adama Bamba, inspired students to learn about contemporary fashion designers & photographers as well as how to create their own unique apparel. All fashion was upcycled from repurposed clothing and the young designers learned various sewing and embellishing techniques as well as portrait photography. The students had guest lectures from three contemporary artists and fashion designers, Lilian Lara, Devin Urioste and Marcus Correa. The students all loved working with the artists and learning more about their process. Their clothing creations were an exploration of personal identity that were informed by discussions about how the clothes they wear and how they present themselves in their community reflect who they are. They wrapped up their course with an exhilarating fashion show held at their school. The upcycled fashion wowed the audience! Some of the aspiring designers have been selling their upcycled fashion pieces at First Fridays' events and even getting commissions. This is just one of the many courses Arts Street has offered in partnership with CHSC over the years where students earn elective credits to graduate from high school.

Spring 2025



# DHA's Thomas Bean Towers Murals



Summer 2025



Our hard-working Arts Street interns completed several amazing client projects this summer! One of the most impactful were two murals for Denver Housing Authority's Thomas Bean Towers. Twenty-two youth artists, ages 14-19, met with DHA staff and residents of Thomas Bean Towers to learn about their vision for the project. Residents wanted to celebrate their community and chose a theme of jazz and Five Points. They said they also wanted bright colors with specific Denver references. After that, our artists created digital designs which were presented to our client who then chose their top 2 designs. Justine T., age 18 and Lyell F., age 17, designs were chosen to be produced.

Led by Arts Street staff, Jessica Early, youth worked over 5 weeks painting these murals and we then had a big celebration with DHA residents and staff to celebrate. Our young creatives were paid for their work while learning basic job readiness and creative skills. An unveiling and celebration were held at Thomas Bean towers with several of those community members represented on the murals in attendance. This joyful event brought our young people and elders together bringing pride in work and beautiful energy to the building. Artists who contributed to this project included Aaiden A., Cris C., Sirus D., Abigael D., Erica D., Jacob F., Laneice H., Chaoting L., Nevaeh L., Citlali L., Alejandro M., Lyla M., Yeimi M., Maria O., Layla R., Arthur S., Alexx T., Dominick T., Juan V., and Rawaa Z.

# DHA Felt Banners

Summer 2025



# DHA Columbine Homes Community Gardens

## Summer 2025



For this project, 18 Arts Street artists ages 15-19, met with our client, Denver Housing Authority's Columbine Homes development, and learned about the building of their community gardens and partnership with Denver's People's Budget which distributed funding for creating these gardens. The interns learned about this housing development and that it is in a food desert and residents don't have easy access to healthy food or grocery stores. Establishing these gardens was important for the residents to be able to source their own fruits and vegetables. They also learned that it has created a stronger sense of community and ownership over healthy living.

Our client asked interns to create vibrant pavers and a sign design for the gardens. They received guidance on colors and imagery that our client wanted to see on the pavers including bright colors, pollinators, flowers and vegetables.

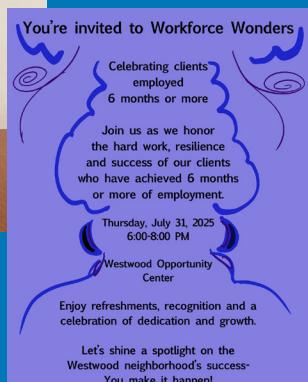
**NO SKULLS PLEASE!** Led by artist Devin Urioste, our excited interns worked over three weeks, sketching out designs for approval by the client and painting their designs on large pavers. Our artists also created digital designs for signage that will be fabricated out of metal. In addition to earning a stipend for their work, our young creatives learned basic job and creative skills including learning Procreate software and meeting specifications and deadlines.

Each artist had at least one paver installed in the gardens and Kimora W.'s design was chosen for the signage. An opening celebration was held at the gardens with DHA staff and City Councilwoman Jamie Torres recognizing the work of Denver's People's Budget, DHA staff and Arts Street artists.

# DHA Jobs Plus Event Products & Westwood Community Mural

## Summer 2025

A group of 17 Arts Street interns, ages 14-19, worked on projects with our client, Denver Housing Authority's Education & Employment Department, for their Jobs Plus program at DHA's Westwood housing development. Youth were recruited from the 80219 neighborhoods to be part of our creative team for a three-week program. Youth first met with our client to learn about the Jobs Plus program and what staff needed for an event they were putting on, as well as guidance for an inside mural that the client wanted painted in DHA's Westwood Opportunity Center.

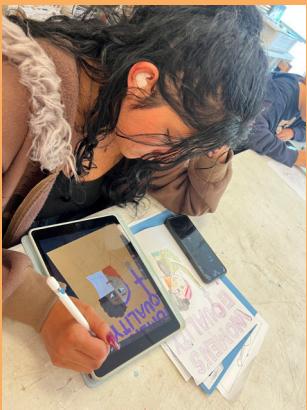


For the Westwood community mural, the client asked for designs that would represent community, and feel welcoming to all, cheerful and uplifting. Each artist created a design and presented it to DHA staff with the design chosen being by Westwood resident, Sydney F, age 18. Led by artist/instructor Devin Urioste, the entire team then assisted in painting the large-scale mural to beautify the space. Artists from the Westwood team included: Alani R., Delphin R., DJ D., Esther M., Hawa G., Jasiah D., Jasohn D., Jessica S., Josiah C., Kevin N., Macky G., Oveh W., Paul M., Sarryah S., Zinya F., and Zuriah B.

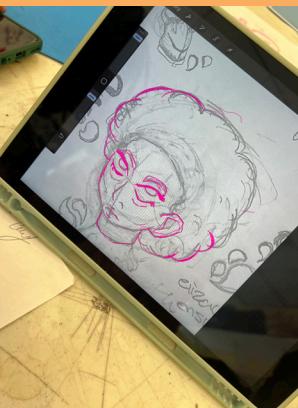
Product the client needed for the event included centerpieces, invitations and flyers for Jobs Plus's celebration of their participants that had acquired jobs and stayed employed for at least six months. Some key words the client wanted represented in the projects were inviting and congratulations! Under the guidance of artist/instructor Lilian Lara, our young artists learned how to construct a variety of paper flowers and then create 3-D sculptural elements for unique and beautiful centerpieces. The youth were also asked to create a flyer and invitation for the event that felt fun and celebratory. Guided by artist/instructor Jasmine Wynter, they learned how to use Procreate on iPads to make their digital designs.



# 2025 DHA Communication Designs



Denver Housing Authority's Communication Department sends out email blasts and social media posts recognizing special holidays and designated months such as Women's Equality Day and Hispanic Heritage Month. They were utilizing simple clip art for these communications and asked Arts Street interns to develop multiple designs that they will then share with all DHA's staff. Interns were assigned different days/months and researched about the holiday and then created a digital design that the intern felt represented them. These designs were submitted to our client and a top design was chosen. Below are some of the winning designs and the artists who created them.



# Equity in Arts with Arts Street

Fall 2025

Arts Street is honored to have artist, Juan Fuentes, as a guest artist/instructor for our creative programs. A Denver photographer, Juan's work has been featured nationally from books to exhibitions with an emphasis on documenting community. Juan has worked with multiple classes through our partnership with Colorado High School Charter (CHSC). Through his leadership, our young artists have learned skills in digital photography, Photoshop and collage work. This fall over 50 students worked on large scale public art pieces as well as personal self-portraits, all while gaining insight into themselves and their community.



In addition to completing these amazing public art pieces, our young artists created individual projects representing their unique identity. Using photos of personal items and landscape photos, each emerging artist was taught how to use double exposures in Photoshop to create their beautiful collage of self.

In 2025, Arts Street was awarded an Equity in Arts grant in partnership with CHSC and Denver Parks & Recreation to complete a public art piece that highlighted the La Alma community and its identity through the eyes of young artists. This fall, Arts Street's CHSC students were led by instructors Juan Fuentes, Adama Bamba and Jessica Early to create four large-scale photographic wall murals for the La Alma Recreation Center. To complete these reflective pieces, students learned photographic skills from our professional artists and explored what it means to be a community. They took photo walks in the La Alma neighborhood and focused on visual storytelling, capturing the historic aspects of the area and what they felt celebrated the neighborhood. They then utilized the medium of wheat paste collage and paint to complete the large pieces. The finished art now hangs in the game room at the La Alma Recreation Center as a reflection of pride and joy for the entire community.



This project was funded in part by the Equity in Arts Learning for Colorado Youth grant, administered by Think 360 Arts for Learning. This grant opportunity is made possible by the visionary generosity of these collaborative funders: Bonfils-Stanton Foundation, Colorado Creative Industries, Denver Arts & Venues, and the Gates Family Foundation.

# Steamboat Resort T-shirt Designs

Fall 2025

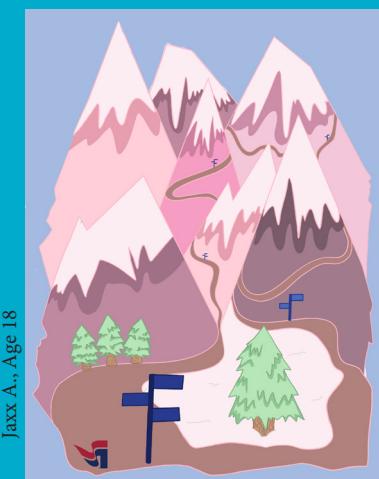


STEAMBOAT



Lyell F, Age 18

SHARES WINTER



Jaxx A, Age 18



Aubri G, Age 17



Arts Street continued our partnership with Alterra Mountain Company/ Steamboat Ski & Resort Corp with an exciting new project for our fall internship team. For this project, Andrea Benavente, Visual Merchandising Manager for Steamboat, met with our interns where they learned about her career journey, the resort and our newest project for this client - t-shirt designs! Steamboat has a retail shop on top of the mountain, where customers can visit and make their own t-shirt, choosing from different fun designs. Our young artists were directed to create designs that would represent Steamboat Resort and provide customers with a physical memory of their time at the resort. Interns brainstormed our designs on paper and then turned them into digital designs. Interns learned how to submit drafts to client, receive feedback, and make adjustments to their design. The final designs were presented by each intern live to the client. A final design was chosen by Steamboat Ski & Resort, and this design will be seen in the Torian Sports retail shop where customers may choose it for their souvenir t-shirt. All our interns submitted amazing work and the design chosen was by artist Lyell F, age 18. A special thanks to Share Winter Foundation who sponsored this project. The Share Winter Foundation strives to reduce barriers to on-mountain access and expand opportunities to youth in the region. Make your own t-shirt when you visit Steamboat Ski & Resort winter 2026!



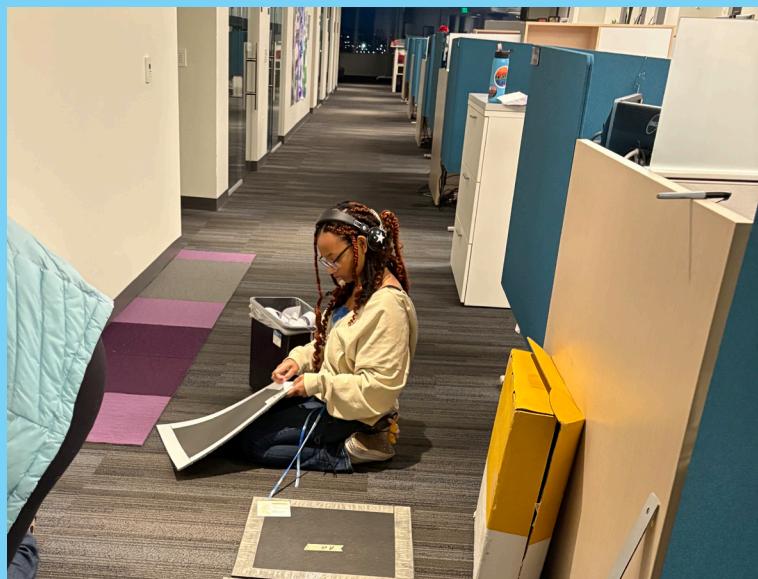
Ayannah C, Age 16

# DHA's Finance Dept. Carpet Mural

Fall 2025



One of Arts Street's largest (8'x 24') projects for the fall internship was to create a mural out of carpet tiles for DHA's Finance Department. They approached Arts Street with this idea to help with sound dampening and aesthetics in their office space. This client brought the interns examples of other carpet murals they liked and asked interns to create something similar. To do this, interns first created designs on a gridded template. Each square of the template represented a carpet tile that would go up on the wall. After they completed their designs, they sent them to our client for final approval. The client had such a hard time choosing between all the amazing designs that they took elements from each drawing for the final design. The interns laid out the carpet tiles using the template design. They then cut some of the tiles to create the buildings and mountains and finally installed the design on the wall!



# 2025 Mentorship and Well-Being



Our mentorship program is an ongoing program where youth connect with positive adult role models through 1:1 meetings and creative activities. Some of the highlights this year have included going to see the movie *Wicked*, alternative Valentine's party, celebrating birthdays and graduations, and a supportive job club.

All the young adults that go through any of YEA's programming can participate in a variety of mental wellness workshops covering many topics. These mental wellness workshops allow students to build tools and coping strategies to increase mental wellness and build connections with mental health professionals. Led by YEA Youth Advisor Destini Montez, therapists Tamika Thomas and Diana Francis, these workshops allowed Arts Street participants to build tools to support their mental health.

Counseling, and workshop topics this year have included self-care, growing your strengths, identifying emotions and moods, and how society and identity can impact mental wellness. We have received positive feedback on the workshops with 85% of the participants saying they learned a new skill to cope with mental health challenges and responses such as, "These activities are essential for us and we should do more!"

# Identity Workshops 2025



Throughout the year, Arts Street places an emphasis with our participants on exploring identity and the integral part it plays in art. Post-programming surveys show that because of these workshops, 82% of our young adults showed an increase in understanding of their identity. Highlights from this year include working with Denver artists Lilian Lara and Devin Urioste who led our young artists in creating meaningful and beautiful artwork reflecting their identities.



Another project with identity as a focus included working with 18 young adults, ages 14-19 to create digital photographic portraits. Devin Urioste again led the group in a workshop of identity exploration where youth brainstormed symbols they could represent important aspects of their identity and wrote an artist statement about the meaning. They each had their portrait taken and incorporated those symbols onto the photo digitally using Procreate software.



Lilian Lara is a Denver artist who creates beautiful fashion and headdresses from upcycled materials reflecting her Latinx heritage. In summer 2025 she worked with 22 young adults, ages 14-19, to create one-of-a-kind headdresses that culminated in a photographic portrait. Devin Urioste first worked with the group exploring what identity means and symbols or expressions of those various identities. Lilian had them examine various styles of headdresses from different cultures and how each culture visually represents their concepts of identity through art. The young adults were given an assortment of upcycled materials to create designs that demonstrate their values and personhood. They also learned the basics of photography and photographing portraits with artist/instructor Adama Bamba and had a final photoshoot with their unique headdresses.



# Graduation 2025



Congratulations go out to all our 2025 YEA graduates! Our young adults continue to impress us by setting goals, overcoming obstacles and reaching their dreams. We saw graduates from 12 different Denver area high schools with many planning to attend post-secondary training or starting their career paths. Our mentorship program assists youth in navigating the challenges that this transitional time can bring. Witnessing the importance of education and seeing the confidence our participants gain from achieving goals is a cornerstone of our YEA mission.



# Graduates Spotlight 2025

Loni L., a YEA participant and her mother are examples of excelling through many circumstances to graduate this year. Loni has been a participant in our Arts Street and culinary programs over the past 4 years. She graduated as valedictorian of her class at Colorado High School Charter, while taking concurrent classes at Community College of Denver, even giving a speech at graduation! Loni's mother is a former participant of YEA, completing programs 17 years ago, and this May she graduated with an associate's degree from Community College of Denver while working as a human services provider. We love to see the continued successes over the years in one family.



We also witnessed the amazing journey of another YEA participant who started with us in 2009. Benjamin Itangishaka graduated from South High School and earned a Daniels Fund Scholarship for a full ride to University of Northern Colorado where he earned a degree in political science & sociology. He then went on to complete a Master of Science in Global Affairs from New York University in 2018 and this year completed his Doctorate in Education in Learning & Organizational Change from Baylor University. Benjamin came to Denver as a refugee from the Democratic Republic of Congo and completed his education in his third learned language. Benjamin has been a Student Success Advisor for Pepperdine University and is currently working for 2U Inc. supporting faculty at multiple universities in improved teaching methods and student success outcomes. He resides in Denver with his wife and two children.



# Career Exploration & Entrepreneurship 2025



A component of all of Arts Street programming includes working with our young creatives in exploring careers and supporting them in their own side hustles. One of the ways we do this is by having working creatives lead our programming and talking about their own career pathways. This year youth have been inspired by Denver artists Chelsea Romaniello, Devin Urioste, Jasmine Wynter, Jessica Early, Juan Fuentes and Lilian Lara. In addition, these artists worked with some of our youth in guiding them in entrepreneurship, learning about marketing and all the other components that go with owning your own business or working for yourself. Several youth were able to sell their work on First Friday on Santa Fe and one artist even created a large commission working with our client Rebel Bread. There are many ways to have a creative career within multiple industries, and our staff work with participants to help guide them in reaching their dreams.

# DCPA Tour and The Wiz

## Spring 2025

This year saw an expansion of our partnership with Denver Center for the Performing Arts and their community engagement program. A group of our Arts Street interns were able to tour DCPA's costuming department, learning about the creation of costumes from conception to performance. Our young artists were excited to see where the professional artists made the large monster costumes and hats. They also loved being able to see the overflowing storage rooms where costume designers can pull clothing for different performances. There was one room that was just shoes! This tour inspired some to think of being a creative in the performance arts arena. In addition, we were gifted tickets to see *The Wiz* performed. An excited group of young people sat in the front row thrilled by the sets, costumes, music and performances. For many, this was their first professional theater experience, and one said, "I will be thinking about this for the rest of my life." A huge thank you to Maria Corral at DCPA who coordinated these events!



# U.S. Congressional Art Competition

Spring 2025



This year thirteen Arts Street interns, ages 14-18, participated in the U.S. Congressional Art Competition. Led by local artist, Chelsea Romaniello, our interns created unique identity pieces based on a social justice issue that was personally significant to them. For this artwork, the interns first designed a symbol and created stencils from the design. Some of the issues represented were mental health, beauty standards, trans rights, homelessness, book banning, black rights and domestic violence. Using wood and paint they then made their bases and screen-printed their symbol. They added painted details and an artist statement. They submitted their pieces and were able to meet U.S. Congresswoman DeGette at the art show where they received certificates of participation. Arts Street intern Parker A., age 17, even won Best Multi-Media piece in show! In addition, one of Arts Street's previous interns from spring 2024, Tre-Zel B, age 17, won Best Drawing piece in show! We are so proud of all the hard work that our interns put into their projects. Participants included: Parker A., Brice B., Shadiamond B., Crishawn C., Erica D., Aubriana G., Lauryn F., Estrella M., Monika S., Mercedes S., Jessamyn J., Trav'ell C., and Aubrey M.

# Colorado Springs Mental Wellness Retreat

Spring 2025



During spring break 2025, a group of young adults were chosen for a trip to Colorado Springs for a weekend Mental Wellness retreat. Led by YEA Youth Advisor, Destini Montez, our youth experienced art and nature and took a closer look at mental health tools and resources. Their first stop on this whirlwind adventure was Cave of Winds. While there, the young adults explored the caves and experienced the amazing sound phenomenon. Back at their lodging and inspired by nature they participated in an identity exploration workshop creating masks and learned how issues with personal identity can affect mental wellness. The next day they took their masks for a photoshoot in the Garden of the Gods, exploring the flora and fauna and finding creative ways to express themselves. Another highlight was a trip to the top of Pikes Peak via the Pikes Peak Cog Railway, an exhilarating (and a little scary) new experience for all. All the young adults had a fabulous time and felt rejuvenated when they returned home!



# Steamboat Springs Art, Nature & Mental Wellness

This August, a group of exemplary YEA participants received the opportunity to travel to Steamboat Springs for 3 days to experience art, nature and the connection to mental wellness. Each of the participants has shown themselves to be leaders in our community and committed to YEA programming. During the trip the young adults experienced the Yampa River Botanic Park, where they photographed plants and wildlife representing different emotions. Coordinated by our outstanding volunteer, Marilyn Searls, these young adults worked with local artists in Steamboat. Led by Dona Steele, the first workshop was held at Steamboat Art Museum where they were able to view the current exhibit on printmaking and then create their own prints using everyday materials like foam, washable markers and water. The second workshop was based on how creating art can change the artist's mental wellbeing. Working with Marion Kahn at Wild Horse Theater, our young artists built and painted birdhouses with discussions on the therapeutic outcomes of art. Other highlights included meeting with Visual Merchandising Manager, Andrea Benavente for Alterra Mountains at Steamboat Resorts retail shops as well as at her home where they learned about her journey as an artist and learned about different creative careers. And we can't forget riding the gondola at Steamboat Resort to the top of Sunshine Peak with a beautiful hike led by Karen Pharris. Thank you to all our amazing partners and volunteers in Steamboat Springs for creating a unique and life-changing trip for our youth.

Summer 2025

