

**For: IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
July 21, 2020

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## **COLLABORATION AMONG SOCIAL SERVICE, EDUCATION, AND ARTS ORGANIZATIONS BRINGS CREATIVITY THROUGH FULLY INCLUSIVE DIGITAL CLASSES**

**AKRON, OH (July 21, 2020)** – Service and cultural organizations are thrilled to announce a collaborative effort to bring a digital workshop series, taught by professional artists, to residents in Summit County.

Running weekly in Aug. 2020, a series of digital classes is launching to ensure Summit County residents of all ages and abilities have the opportunity to create, connect, and celebrate the arts.

Two separate digital classes will launch in Aug. including Aging is an Art Form, hosted by Direction Home Akron Canton Area Agency on Aging & Disabilities, and Live From the Living Room: Classes, hosted by Summit DD.

Aging is an Art Form is an exciting new initiative that is aiming to change the narrative around what it means to grow older. In Aug., local Summit County artists will be holding this FREE series of classes for adults 60+ and their caregivers.

“Our 60 and over population are valuable, vibrant and creative people in our communities, yet also at a higher risk for social isolation, especially in today's environment,” said Lori Smith, training coordinator for Direction Home Akron Canton Area Agency on Aging & Disabilities. “Aging is an Art Form will provide stress relief, connection with other older adults, and an opportunity to showcase creativity, even while physically distancing.”

Partners of Direction Home include ArtsNow, Summit Artspace, and Summit Metro Parks thanks to support from Akron Community Foundation.

**Live from the Living Room: Classes include** digital classes on creative journaling, movement and dance, storytelling, and visual art.

“Summit DD is excited to partner with ArtsNow to present the Live From the Living Room classroom series,” expressed Summit DD’s Director Community Supports and Development, Drew Williams. “This series of creative classes comes at a perfect time while we are all staying at home. More importantly, it offers something for everyone and of every ability. Opportunities like these are the foundation of community inclusion.”

Artists for this first round of classes include: Dara Harper and Diane L. Johnson (Art Only Boutique), Julie Buckeye (BalloFlex), Alexandria Couch, Yoly Miller, Greg Milo, Danette Rushboldt, Lindsey Jo Scott, and Wandering Aesthetics Theatre.

Thanks to a partnership with the University of Akron’s EX[L] Center, two students will be assisting ArtsNow in implementing the work for Live from the Living Room. Anna Jeannine Kemper, an arts administration graduate student, and Alexandria Couch, a senior in Myers School of Art, will be assisting with project management and teaching courses through Summit DD.

“I am looking forward to using art, which is core to who I am and how I view the world, to bring joy into the lives of people of all abilities and backgrounds,” said Alexandria Couch. “The arts are intended for all of us- we all have the ability to create.”

“These partnerships are a direct result of Akron’s cultural planning process,” said Nicole Mullet, executive director of ArtsNow.” “Direction Home and Summit DD came alongside the cultural organizations to share expertise and ensure the arts are threaded throughout our collective work. And what is most exciting? We’re just getting started.”

Akron Community Foundation, a supporter of both efforts, recently finished their arts and culture grant cycle with an investment totaling \$521,000. “During this time of crisis, we realize that all nonprofits are struggling with lost revenue and cancelled events so we wanted to make sure our arts and culture grantees had continued support from ACF to get them through these difficult times”, said John Garofalo, Vice President of Community Investment for Akron Community Foundation. “We support and applaud this collaboration for innovative initiatives that continue to spotlight the arts in our community during these past few months.”

For additional information or to register for Aging is an Artform, visit <https://bit.ly/2Wx88fD> or contact Lori Smith at [lsmith@dhad.org](mailto:lsmith@dhad.org).

For Live from the Living Room Classes, contact Nicole Mullet at [Nicole@ArtsNow.org](mailto:Nicole@ArtsNow.org).

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**Akron Community Foundation** embraces and enhances the work of charitable people who make a permanent commitment to the good of the community. In 1955, a \$1 million bequest from the estate of Edwin Shaw established the community foundation. It is a philanthropic endowment of more than \$218 million with a growing family of more than 680 funds established by charitable people and organizations from all walks of life. The community foundation and its funds welcome gifts of all kinds, including cash, bequests, stock, real estate, life insurance and retirement assets, just to name a few. To date, the community foundation’s funds have awarded nearly \$177 million in grants to qualified nonprofit

organizations. For more information about Akron Community Foundation or to learn more about creating your own charitable fund, call 330-376-8522 or visit [www.akroncf.org](http://www.akroncf.org).

**ArtsNow** works to leverage the arts and culture in Summit County to support and strengthen the region's economic and social vibrancy. Learn more at [ArtsNow.org](http://ArtsNow.org)

**Direction Home Akron Canton Area Agency on Aging & Disabilities** (Direction Home Akron Canton) is a private, non-profit organization that provides choices for older adults and people with disabilities thrive in the places they want to call home. With a comprehensive network of service providers, access to the most up-to-date information and a unique person-centered approach, we make sure our clients feel safe and comfortable. We also provide family caregiver support programs, consumer protection and educational opportunities.

**Summit Artspace** is a non-profit arts organization that provides studio, exhibit and programming spaces in Summit County and the surrounding area for local artists and arts organizations; and is a center for art education open to all residents. Contact Summit Artspace at 330-376-8480. On the Web at <https://summitartspace.org>. Find us on Facebook, on Twitter @AkronAreaArts, Instagram and Snapchat.

**Summit DD** is the community resource that makes meaningful connections for more than 5,000 adults and children with developmental disabilities and their families. It is the Agency's mission to help people of all abilities reach their full potential, one person at a time. More information regarding the Agency is available online at [SummitDD.org](http://SummitDD.org)

**Summit Metro Parks** Headquartered in Akron, Ohio, Summit Metro Parks manages more than 14,000 acres, including 16 parks, several conservation areas and more than 150 miles of trails, with 22 miles of the Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail. Annual attendance averages 5 million visits.

**The University of Akron** Celebrating 150 years in 2020, The University of Akron (UA) offers a wide range of unique, in-demand and top-ranked associate, bachelor's, master's, doctoral and professional degree programs in engineering, the arts and sciences, business, health care, law and education. Its beautiful metropolitan campus, located in the heart of Ohio's fifth-largest city, is surrounded by thousands of businesses, providing diverse experiential learning opportunities — such as internships, co-ops and part-time employment — to students from throughout the country and around the world. With award-winning residence halls, hundreds of student organizations, championship-winning NCAA Division I sports teams, and a highly ranked Student Recreation and Wellness Center, UA provides the full campus experience.