

## Richard Brooke Foundation // 2021 Final Report

### Organization Information

The Union for Contemporary Art  
2423 North 24th Street  
Omaha, NE 68110  
[www.u-ca.org](http://www.u-ca.org)

### Contact Information

Brigitte McQueen | Executive Director  
brigitte@u-ca.org  
402-933-3161

**PROGRAM ACTIVITY SUMMARY //** The Union's Youth Engagement Programs are designed to: 1) Arm youth with critical life skills to engage, manage, and lead their communities; 2) Empower youth to advocate for themselves and their neighbors; 3) Inspire lifelong civic engagement through the arts; 4) Nurture future generations of art lovers and arts philanthropists while building a pipeline for more racially and economically diverse arts leaders; and 5) Influence better health outcomes in North Omaha.

Due to the continuation of the pandemic, The Union was unable to return to its normal program offerings for our youth and their families. While we found other impactful ways to remain connected to our stakeholders, most of 2021 found us relying on virtual and outdoor program offerings.

**PROGRAM PIVOT //** At the onset of the pandemic as schools shut down, social distancing became the norm, and families everywhere struggled to keep youth engaged and safe, our staff immediately mobilized to continue supporting the community during this difficult time. We launched Radical HeARTS, an initiative that allowed us to redirect our traditional programming into two main areas of focus: Connected Minds and Dedicated Hands. Together, these efforts represent physical action and virtual support in service of community and the arts during the pandemic. We refocused our Youth Engagement efforts in three primary ways: Art + Life Kits, Creative Time, and Exhibition Explorations + Art at Home:

**>> Art + Life Kits:** The Union launched Art + Life Kits to continue to provide support, connection, and creative enrichment to families who are engaged in our Youth Engagement Programs. Art + Life Kits are creative care packages that include creative prompts/projects, art supplies needed to complete each project, notes of encouragement from Union staff, fresh produce and flowers from our Abundance Garden, and information and resources for accessing social services in our community. Knowing that food insecurity is at an all-time high during the pandemic, we also delivered complete prepared meals from our partner No More Empty Pots as well as healthy snacks, fresh bread, and more from local bakeries and restaurants. In 2021, we distributed nearly 500 Art + Life Kits to North Omaha youth.

>> **Creative Time** is an opportunity for youth to engage with their peers in a virtual environment (via Zoom), under the guidance of a local teaching artist or guest chef. Each session features a different artist and topic, and guides youth through creative projects using common household supplies and materials that have been distributed in Art + Life Kits. In addition to providing a virtual space for youth to engage with their peers, it has also created a vital opportunity to contract with local teaching artists, many of whom have experienced loss of income during the pandemic. In addition to workshops focused on visual and performing arts, we also collaborated with No More Empty Pots to conduct food-focused sessions. In 2021, we hosted 10 “Creative Time” workshops for nearly 80 youth participants (some participants attended multiple sessions). Youth explored projects ranging from cooking and drawing, to comics, monoprinting, and songwriting.

>> **Exhibition Explorations + Art at Home:** At the onset of COVID-19, families everywhere were struggling to strike a new balance. More parents and caregivers were working from home, students were adjusting to remote learning, and everyone was trying to find ways to fill the long hours at home due to social distancing. We expanded the Exhibitions Explorations programming we had been doing in-space prior to our closure and launched Art at Home projects, to support families and teachers by providing enriching creative and critical thinking activities to be done at home. Downloadable from our website, these packets offer a thoughtful look into a wide selection of past exhibitions in The Union's Wanda D. Ewing Gallery, including Nancy Friedemann-Sánchez, Angie Seykora, Alexandria Smith, and many others. Each activity provides background on the artist, their creative practice, and themes explored in their work. Inspired by these works, creative prompts are outlined for exploring similar themes in creative ways, using many easily available at-home materials. Similarly, we created a variety of “Art at Home” projects, also downloadable from the Union website that included downloadable coloring books, art history creative projects, and more. These guides are perfect for families and for educators who are looking for new ways to engage youth at home, in the classroom, and through remote learning. An expansive list of downloadable materials can be found here: <https://www.u-ca.org/art-at-home>

## **NOTEABLE PARTNERSHIPS + PROJECTS //**

>> **No More Empty Pots, Sacred Seed, The Heart Ministry Center + The Union's Abundance Garden //** When food insecurity hit an all time high during the pandemic – locally and nationally – The Union continued its socially-distanced free CSA Drive Thru. Fresh produce was shared for free with families participating in Union Youth Engagement Programs, our neighbors in North Omaha, and local artists who we serve. We conducted the first of our weekly CSA Drive Thrus on June 5 and continued this program through the end of harvest in the first week of November. In total, The Union distributed over 1000 pounds of fresh produce through this initiative. Beyond fresh produce, and Art + Life Kits, we also distributed important PPE equipment, resource sheets for where to access help (health care, food, rent assistance, etc.), and more to help our stakeholders during this crisis.

Partnerships with No More Empty Pots and Sacred Seeds, allowed us to distribute prepared meals to families, and even more fresh produce to our community. While COVID-19 made some aspects of our work impossible last year, in our effort to provide meaningful and direct support in this time of crisis, The Union was able to quickly identify needs, innovate our approach, and forge fruitful working partnerships with other community organizations. Union staff volunteered significant time with these partners, amounting to a total of 632 hours in support of the work done by No More Empty Pots, the Heart Ministry Center, and other organizations on the front lines, helping our community access food.

## **GOALS //**

### **>> Goal: Reduce barriers to arts participation for youth and families impacted by COVID-19**

Strategy: Create accessible, differentiated programs to best meet the current needs of youth and families served in North Omaha

Tactics:

- Provide virtual and remote arts engagement activities
- Provide a safe and healthy environment for in-person activities (following CDC guidelines)
- Develop exhibition resources to support art educators, caregivers, and families beyond our institution.
- Consult with caregivers to address needs and concerns in relation to the impact of COVID-19

Measurable Outcomes:

- 80% of caregivers will report increased accessibility to the arts
- 75% of participants previously served in 2020 continued participation in 2021

While COVID-19 necessitated the innovation of our youth programs, throughout 2021 we worked tirelessly to remain connected with the youth and families enrolled in our programs, supporting their ongoing development through art and civic engagement. Through our Art + Life Kits, Creative Time, and Exhibition Explorations/Art at Home series, we have remained in close contact with youth and continue to support their exploration of culture, cooking, and civic engagement. As with 2020, all of our 2021 participants live in or go to school in North Omaha. Many of our strategies for recruitment and community engagement with the wider public were put on hold in 2021, however, when it is safe to continue these measures we will eagerly do so. Additionally, due to social distancing efforts, we were unable to participate in public events, or host celebrations and other gatherings with Youth Engagement families as planned.

### **>> Goal: Enrich the lives of youth and families through arts and culture**

Strategy: Develop holistic and multimodal arts and cultural enrichment activities to facilitate

creative curiosity

Tactics:

- Provide access to materials, creative prompts, and instruction that support creativity and play
- Consult with youth and families about activities they enjoy to best inform program offerings
- Employ local artists to develop and lead arts and cultural enrichment activities that promotes connection and joy

Measurable Outcomes:

- 80% of participants will report learning something new
- 80% of participants will express joy in art exploration

In 2021, we found ourselves continuing to attend to safety in ways we never could have imagined necessary. Our desire to keep staff and the community safe ultimately led to our decision to close our building. It also informed how we pivoted Youth Programs to meet the greatest needs of our families. Safety, creative thinking, cultural criticism and student-led participation were central to the design of our virtual offerings and at-home projects. And each program/project was designed in a way that invited deeper reflection and space for youth to make their own creative and innovative choices.

**FUNDRAISING UPDATE //** In 2021, we budgeted \$137,823 for our youth engagement programs. We exceeded that budgeted amount by approximately \$7000. In total, we were able to raise \$133,010 for the program, which included a \$50,000 gift from the Fred and Eve Simon Foundation, which is not showing on the attached P+L. The remaining funds needed to cover the program expenses were pulled from general operating. Those expenses were incurred due to the shift of Jessica Freeman from a part-time Studio Assistant role to a full-time Education Coordinator.

**FINANCIALS //** ATTACHED

**OVERALL IMPACT //** The generous support we received from The Richard Brooke Foundation ensured that we could continue to provide arts enrichment and basic support to families enrolled in our Youth Programs during this unprecedented and challenging time. We delivered 500 Art + Life Kits and distributed over 1000 lbs of fresh produce to families in our Youth Programs and our neighbors. In partnership with No More Empty Pots, we delivered prepared meals to families in our Youth Programs each week. Additionally, through our virtual programs – Creative Time, Exhibition Explorations and Art at Home – we were able to support an even broader audience of youth, families, and educators, who were looking for ways to remain engaged and uplifted during the pandemic. While we were unable to conduct our traditional Youth programming after March 2020, we are confident that the demands of the pandemic and the very real needs of our community pushed us to innovate our approach and interrogate the impact of our work in ways that will yield lasting growth and enrichment for Youth Programming. We are certain that when it is again safe to gather

in person, the bonds we've developed with families and community partners during this time will only strengthen the work we do together going forward.

### **Survey Results //**

- 90% of caregivers surveyed\*, reported increased accessibility to the arts during the pandemic through programs offered by the Union.
- However, only 45% of youth participants attended at least one or more event/workshop in 2021 compared to youth served in 2020.
- This was likely due to a lack of interest in virtual programming and limited number of workshops offered in-person with restrictions (outdoor w/masks required). More A+L kits were offered throughout 2020, many of which were delivered to the homes, making connections with families more concrete.
- 100% of participants surveyed\*, reported learning something new during the workshops attended.
- 96% of participants surveyed\*, reported experiencing joy during the activities shared.

\*Please note: due to COVID-19, surveys were shared electronically, with less than 10% completion rate. Therefore these results provide an incomplete representation of all participants.

**FUTURE PLANS //** According to the [CDC's The Social Vulnerability Index](#) -- our neighborhood in North Omaha still holds a designation of having the highest level of vulnerability of being at risk for COVID-19 infections. While The Union has reopened its facility to the public, we are still maintaining strict COVID protocol and running the majority of our programs at a slightly reduced capacity.

In March 2022, we will welcome youth back into our building for the first time in two years... a massive step forward for our organization. To ensure the health and well being of our students and their families, all participants will need to provide proof of vaccination to attend in-person workshops. We understand that this may make our programs inaccessible to some families and intend to continue offering virtual options for the foreseeable future.

In addition to requiring that youth be vaccinated, The Union has implemented a vaccination policy requiring all staff and teaching artists to be fully vaccinated in order to lead in-person sessions. We are 100% compliant with this policy.

**SUSTAINABILITY //** In 2021, we were able to increase our annual donation from the Fred and Eve Simon Charitable Trust by \$10,000. The Union continues to look for new funding opportunities to ensure the long-term sustainability of this program. We believe that a return to in-person programs this year will help with future fundraising conversations.

## **TESTIMONIALS // 2021 Program Offerings**

*"We love everything about the Union. Thanks for everything you do."*

*"We enjoyed the whole experience! The abundance garden was the perfect location for the event. Celeste is always a great teacher"*

*"Thank You for your services provided to our son and the community!"*

*"Thank you so much Royals! For helping to nourish the creative and artistic minds of my children!"*

*"Just keep doing what you are doing. You are a gift to the community."*

*"Highly enjoyed the youth art program for my child."*

# The UNION for Contemporary Art

## Profit and Loss

January - December 2021

	TOTAL
Income	
50300 Direct Public Support - Restricted	
50310 Corporate and Business Contributions	5,510.00
50320 Foundation and Trust Contributions	77,500.00
<b>Total 50300 Direct Public Support - Restricted</b>	<b>83,010.00</b>
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$83,010.00</b>
GROSS PROFIT	<b>\$83,010.00</b>
Expenses	
60200 Program Expenses	
602010 Art Supplies & Materials	3,348.45
60220 Catering & Event Expenses	0.64
60230 Food & Beverage	3,203.47
60240 Supplies	2,397.97
<b>Total 60200 Program Expenses</b>	<b>8,950.53</b>
60300 Bank Charges	128.15
60500 Dues & Subscriptions	1,712.46
60600 Education and Training	1,990.33
60700 Honorariums	11,270.00
60800 Insurance	3,196.75
60900 Legal & Professional Fees	5,491.80
61100 Meals and Entertainment	158.39
61200 Office Expenses	
61210 Computers and Software	1,706.91
61220 Office Supplies	174.38
61230 Art Lease	264.00
<b>Total 61200 Office Expenses</b>	<b>2,145.29</b>
61300 Outside Services	159.91
61400 Payroll Expenses	
61410 Taxes	6,258.35
61420 Wages	81,115.34
61430 Benefits	14,471.43
<b>Total 61400 Payroll Expenses</b>	<b>101,845.12</b>
61500 Postage and Shipping	147.68
61600 Gifts & Appreciation	269.37
61700 Building Expenses	3,557.70
61900 Repair & Maintenance	202.12
62000 Equipment Rental	0.75
62100 Stationery & Printing	488.06
62600 Utilities	2,893.14
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$144,607.55</b>
NET OPERATING INCOME	<b>\$ -61,597.55</b>
NET INCOME	<b>\$ -61,597.55</b>















