

ENVISION WITH US

an arts haven where members of
West Haven's diverse community come together
to share their talents, stories, art,
and cultural heritage...

ArtsWestCT

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Dear Committee Members:

We have noticed a momentous thirst for cultural connection in the 115th, 116th and 117th Districts where West Haven is located. In one year since ArtsWestCT held its first Artists Roundtable attracting 40 participants to the vocational arts program known as [Coffee Haven West](#) run by Bridges Health Care to discuss how we might organize, our mailing list has more than tripled with organic sign-ups. We now have a dedicated Facebook page @westhavenarts, and social media efforts have been met with excellent engagement.

As an example of Arts, Culture & Tourism functioning even during the pandemic, the City of West Haven successfully signed on as a promotional partner for the first-annual, national Artists Sunday. Held on Nov 29, 2020, this was a coordinated effort to raise visibility for artists as a source for local gift-buying during the busiest shopping weekend of the year. Eligible artists were covered in a press release issued by City Hall, which got picked up by the [New Haven Register](#). All of this laid groundwork for our working artists and arts-related small businesses to meet virtually, talk about common issues and become known to new audiences.

Since then, with seed funding from the Community Foundation of Greater New Haven, ebcasts full of news and opportunities for and about West Haven artists have been going out every two weeks, with subscribers getting in touch during the interims to say hello, pitch ideas, make editorial suggestions and send along their own announcements in spirited, Westie fashion. (We

recently learned of a US patent for a new method of piano instruction called the KeyTab system, from our friends at the Rock House School of Music!)

Meanwhile, productive communication is moving along with the Economic Development Commission, whose experimental tagline “Miles of Shore and So Much More” acknowledges the value of our City’s cultural assets. West Haven High School alumni are founding theater companies and performing arts schools, welcoming our support for getting word out about their efforts. And nonpartisan civic groups such as West Haven United have offered volunteers and camaraderie when we are able to have events again on the Center Green. Eventually, as we follow the strategic briefs laid out early last Spring with artists’ input and adjusted over the Summer, to be updated and adjusted still further with broader input from the whole community, we will begin running cultural programs, arts services and a tourism booth out of our beautiful building in the heart of West Haven’s Downtown Village District, pending some capital improvements.

This upcoming year will be an important one, as Connecticut’s youngest city celebrates its first Centennial and strives to welcome and orient an influx of new residents, including COVID-motivated New Yorkers plus a significant share of Connecticut’s immigrant and refugee populations. The quiet time we have had to miss live performances and gatherings can be seen, in the words of West Haven poet Antionette Brim-Bell, as something of a “great gestation.” We are growing into the vision of the kind of community we always wanted to be when we grew up, with a steady stream of powerful, culturally-informed art to share and celebrate, making our community more attractive and economically viable in the process.

This is not a time for legislators to be timid about funding the arts. Art is revealing itself to be not only the heartbeat and soul but the very marrow, bone and breath of every community in Connecticut. It is what our people are getting out of bed to show up for these days, and this is how we stay hopeful. If there were ever a time to raise arts funding two-and-a-half fold via a designated Arts, Culture and Tourism fund, this is it.

Artists are our state’s true Living Monuments. They are our security force, empowerment program, educational resource, beautification committee and sustainability plan, all wrapped up in one. Please do everything in your power to see that CT’s Representatives recognize the value of the arts institutions and agencies that serve them best by giving Bill 6119 every consideration.

Sincerely,
Sue McCarthy, Board Chair, ArtsWestCT

Examples of our recent newsletters, fyi:

- Vol9 - Feb 2, 2021 <https://mailchi.mp/b1f3179ce2cd/west-haven-artists-news-opportunities-vol9>
- Great News - US Patent for West Haven Music Instructor <https://mailchi.mp/5139a5514eec/great-news-from-the-rock-house>

- Who is Making Monumental Sand Drawings on West Haven Beach?
<https://mailchi.mp/0c019499e783/vol8-with-lead-story-revised>
- Audience Reviews for Abundancia by Matchbox Theatre Company
<https://mailchi.mp/24a6a8f9c3b4/abundancia-reviewed-by-west-haven-audiences>
- Vol7 - Happy New Year West Haven!
<https://mailchi.mp/24a6a8f9c3b4/abundancia-reviewed-by-west-haven-audiences>
- Vol6 - Dec 9, 2020
<https://mailchi.mp/3dd87b76d54f/west-haven-artists-news-opportunities-vol6-3275730>

