

Indy Arts Council announces 2026 ARTI Award recipients & Start with Art entertainment ahead of their annual fundraiser on August 20

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Indianapolis (August 11, 2026) — The [Indy Arts Council](#) announced today the recipients of its 2026 ARTI Awards, along with the artists and performers who will take the stage at Start with Art on Thursday, August 20, from 3–6 p.m. at the Indiana Roof Ballroom.

Now in its 39th year, Start with Art, presented by [Schahet Hotels](#), brings together hundreds of arts, business, civic, and community leaders to celebrate central Indiana’s creative sector and kick off the fall arts season. More than 800 guests are expected to attend this year’s event, which highlights the people, organizations, and partnerships making an impact in arts and culture across the region.

Limited tickets to Start with Art 2026 are [available for purchase](#) and the community is [invited to donate](#). All gifts will be generously matched by the [Efroymsen Family Fund](#) and support the work the Indy Arts Council does to nurture a culture where artists, arts organizations, and residents thrive.

The annual ARTI Awards at Start with Art

The ARTI Awards honor people and organizations who are advancing equity and innovation in central Indiana arts and culture. The awards are presented each year at Start with Art by Indy Arts Council with generous support from the [Central Indiana Community Foundation](#) (CICF).

The 2026 ARTI Award features the song “Beautiful Souls” by Indianapolis-based jazz artist [Brandon Meeks](#). He is recognized as a key figure in the city’s jazz scene and is known for his work with the hip-hop jazz trio Native Sun.

The 2026 ARTI Award winners are:

- Cultural Entrepreneur: [Epicurean Indy](#)
- Neighborhood Impact: [Downtown Indy Alliance](#)
- Artist / Activist: [Alexa Adamson](#) of [Alley Cat Ceramics](#) & [Patina Gallery](#)
- Corporate Leadership: [First Merchants](#)
- Community Partnership: [Indy Indie Book Crawl](#)
- Christel DeHaan Lifetime Achievement: [Deborah Asante](#)

Start with Art 2026 entertainment

Start with Art provides a unique opportunity to showcase local arts and culture talent. This year’s lineup includes:

Pre-show reception:

- On the street: musician [Taylor Hall](#) welcomes attendees to Start with Art.
- In the elevators: [Teresa Reynolds](#) leads a karaoke experience and [Defiance Comedy](#) and [IF Theatre](#) invites attendees to try improv.

- Reception music: DJ and producer, [Kyle Long](#), drums up [a playlist](#) of his favorite local sounds.
- Photo booth artwork: 3D paper flower collage by [Mary Mindiola](#).

Program highlights:

- Mainstage performances by [Summer Stock Stage](#), [Pulse Dance Theater](#), and [Pavel & Direct Contact](#)
- [Olivia West](#), emcee
- Remarks from Mayor Joe Hogsett, City of Indianapolis
- State of the Arts delivered by [Judith Thomas](#), Indy Arts Council President & CEO
- Post-event lobby music by [Musicians of the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra](#)

Start with Art 2026 Sponsors

The Indy Arts Council would like to thank and recognize all of this year's sponsors:

- **Presenting Sponsor:** Schahet Hotels
- **Matching Grant Sponsor:** Efroymsen Family Fund
- **ARTI Award Sponsor:** Central Indiana Community Foundation (CICF)
- **Platinum Sponsors:** Birge Family Foundation; First Merchants; Indianapolis Airport Authority; The Indianapolis Foundation; J.P. Morgan Private Bank
- **Gold Sponsors:** AES Indiana; Butler Arts & Events Center; Christel DeHaan; Eli Lilly and Company; The National Bank of Indianapolis; Pacers Sports & Entertainment
- **Silver Sponsors:** American Structurepoint; Barnes & Thornburg; Brightstar; Elevance Health; Glick Philanthropies; Indianapolis Colts; Indianapolis Motor Speedway; Markey's; Newfields; Schmidt Associates
- **Bronze Sponsors:** Borshoff; Brenda Horn; Children's Museum of Indianapolis; Citizens Energy Group; CSO; Destination Indy; FlashPoint Leadership; Herbert Simon Family Foundation; Ice Miller; Indiana Sports Corp; IndyStar; IU Health; JD Foundation; Lacy Foundation; Lilly Endowment Inc.; The Mind Trust; Mirror Indy; Music for All; NFP; Pile CPAs; Purdue University in Indianapolis; Ritz Charles; Shiel Sexton; Taft; Visit Indy

About Indy Arts Council

[Indy Arts Council](#) is central Indiana's leading arts advocacy and services agency. Their mission is to champion arts and culture. Indy Arts Council believes every resident should experience arts and culture in a way that nourishes and inspires them. This vision of a creative life for all is central to the work they do to support artists, arts organizations, and the community.

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