



Photo by Madeline Keckler

“The Joy of Running Together,” a Spokane landmark by David Govedare, is curated by Spokane Arts and celebrates the city’s annual Bloomsday run. Pieces like the iconic statues are familiar to visitors and locals alike.

# Local organizations push Spokane in a creative direction

By Madeline Keckler

New York, Chicago, Los Angeles and Seattle are widely recognized as national artistic hotspots. Artists young and old flock from all corners of the country for the opportunity to leave a mark on the creative consciousness of the country. While cities like Seattle are leading the pack in terms of artistic output, smaller communities are making themselves known; in Spokane, the arts are not only a significant part of the community, but are quickly developing their own culture.

Despite being a city without an official department of arts, Spokane’s artistic community is thriving. From public art to small galleries in coffee shops, live theatrical performances to spoken word poetry, creatives of virtually all mediums have found a way to channel the spirit of Spokane into their work.

Much of the city’s enthusiasm for the arts can be attributed to the organizations established solely to foster creativity and support artists. Spokane Arts is one of the most prominent voices in support of the arts. Spokane Arts is a 501c3 non-profit, works to cultivate the artistic community of the Spokane by focusing on four main pillars: arts leadership, advocacy, networking and support.

Shelly Wynecoop, grants administrator for Spokane Arts, explained how the organization uses its resources to nurture the arts, especially through the Spokane Arts Grant Awards (SAGA).

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-Jacqueline Mallene, local artist

“SAGA gives artists skills to apply for other grants,” Wynecoop said, “The main issue I’ve seen, and experienced personally when I was applying for grants as an artist, was that there was no feedback.” SAGA applicants can now expect detailed feedback on their grants, whether or not the selection committee chooses to fund them. Applicants are evaluated on their

artistic merit, community impact, and effectiveness. Some grant proposals come in and are just shy of the mark, Wynecoop explained. The committee is very interested in the work, and the artist has a clear passion for what they do, but the grant itself isn’t quite up to par with what SAGA is looking for. That’s where Wynecoop’s passion for mentorship and empowerment comes in. “After they apply for a grant, each applicant is individually evaluated. Then they get specific feedback that shows them where they compared to the other grants that were submitted to give them a better idea of where they should focus for the next grant cycle.” Wynecoop emphasized her dedication to Spokane Arts’ emphasis on programming. Through SAGA, she facilitates grant-writing workshops and meets with applicants throughout the grant-writing process. Another important aspect of Spokane Arts is their mentorship programs. Wynecoop explained that Spokane Arts wants to help artists with their professional development; to do this, the organization helps to develop relationships within the artistic community. “So for example, if we have a young artist who’s looking to get into public art, we try to introduce them to another artist who’s maybe already broken into that world so they can develop this mentorship,” she said. While Spokane Arts is one of the most prominent players in the local arts scene, they aren’t the only organization actively working to help artists connect

with each other and their communities; Terrain, another arts-oriented Spokane organization, is founded on fostering relationships between emerging artists and seasoned professionals. According to their website, Terrain began as a one-time event in 2008 that focused on bringing artists of all experience levels and mediums together. Since then, Terrain has grown into a non-profit that strives to build community and cultivate a sense of pride in the area. Terrain as an organization now has three main events throughout the year: Terrain, Bazaar and Uncharted. Additionally, they have three flagship programs: Window Dressing, Range, and the permanent Terrain Gallery space. Jackie Caro, director of operations for Terrain, has seen the impact the organization has had on bringing the arts community together. “We’re an active participant in the arts community. Our programs and events are open to all, whether they’re a new artist or they’ve been working for years,” she said, “I think that there’s many other things going in the community, but I think our flagship event continues to grow, and I think that’s where people can have their first touch with the arts

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Photo by Madeline Keckler

Construction crews put the finishing touches on the Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts Center. The new addition to Gonzga’s campus is set to house its first production, “A New Season,” in April.



# PAC

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community in Spokane.”

Caro spoke specifically to the growth she has seen in local arts within the past several years.

“It’s continually growing,” she said of the artistic community in Spokane, “You can see more and more artists submitting to our events.”

Looking forward, both Wynecoop and Caro anticipate continuing support and need for the arts in Spokane.

“Funding is always an issue, and I would love to see funding grow for the arts,” Caro said, “I think people participating in the arts, and knowing that that’s a vital part of our community, that’s where we see the most growth.”

With the initiatives of organizations like Spokane Arts and Terrain, and the construction of Gonzaga University’s Myrtle Woldson Performing Arts Center (PAC), Spokane is quickly building a reputation as a place for young artists to hone their skills in an environment that welcomes new ideas.

Jacqueline Mallene, a local theatre artist and GU alumn, spoke about the new opportunities the PAC presents for young artists.

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According to the university website, the Woldson PAC is intended to be a space for Spokane and the Inland Northwest as a whole to come... together to experience the performing arts.

Molly Quillin, a junior political science major and theatre arts minor at Gonzaga, emphasized the impact she believes the new building will have on both the GU arts community and the Spokane community at large.

“I am very optimistic for the impact of the PAC on the Spokane arts community,” Quillin said, “I think we have been blessed with an incredible donation to create an incredible space.”

Funding for the PAC was left to the University by Myrtle Woldson, a local entrepreneur who was passionate about the Spokane community and the arts. The Woldson family has also donated to the Martin Woldson Theatre at the Fox, the Edwidge Woldson Park on the South Hill, and the Jundt Museum Art Endowment.

“We have been given an opportunity with this space to leverage its power and sustain the creative atmosphere in Spokane,” Quillin said.

Spokane is a rapidly growing city. As new voices and thoughts become more and more present in the community conversation, local artists young and old interpret Spokane’s culture in creative, relatable and impactful ways. Organizations like Spokane Arts and Terrain, along with support from community members like Myrtle Woldson, continue to give artists the opportunity to explore their mediums and channel the spirit of Spokane.