

Member Spotlight:

ArtWorks Cincinnati
Colleen Houston
Chief Executive Officer

ArtWorks

Tell me a little about your agency, yourself, your career, and your current position.



ArtWorks is an award-winning Greater Cincinnati nonprofit that transforms people and places through investments in creativity. The organization creates jobs for youth, ages 14-21 with the majority from underserved households, providing competitive 21st-century career-readiness skills through mentorship by professional artists. Since 1996, ArtWorks has employed nearly 4000 youth and 3,500 creative professionals, and the organization has completed more than 14,000 public and private art projects that include 200 permanent outdoor murals.

Colleen Houston

Colleen Houston, CEO & Artistic Director of ArtWorks, (and former youth apprentice alumna) has led ArtWorks creative impact for 18 years including launching ArtWorks award-winning mural program producing over 200 public murals and hundreds of other public art projects in the Cincinnati region.

She serves on the Boards of Mini Microcinema and Wave Pool, two community focused arts organizations. Colleen and her husband Andy, an elementary art teacher, are the parents of two girls. Colleen is also a photographer and loves the outdoors.

How long have you been a LC member and what prompted you to join?

ArtWorks joined LC in early 2020 due to leadership transition and a renewed focus on strengthening our staff professional development, bolstering our staff networks and to access services available to our non-profit community.

How has membership in Leadership Council been of value to you?

As soon as ArtWorks joined Leadership Council, I personally met with Jenny Berg to learn about all of Leadership Council's offerings. I jumped at three opportunities: first to be matched with a mentor. My mentor is Lisa Fitzgibbon and she has been invaluable on my leadership journey and we meet monthly. I applied for BOLD (Board Orientation and Leadership Development) and I am a proud graduate of Class 3. This was a foundational program for me as a new CEO to maximize working with my board of directors at ArtWorks, and also to strengthen my knowledge as a leader for boards I serve on in support of our community. I also joined a leadership roundtable and encouraged my entire leadership team to join Leadership Council roundtables. This peer group of local leaders is an incredible sounding board and supportive group for any leader seeking to gain perspective (or stay sane through challenging times, such as a pandemic).

What is the best leadership advice you have received or given?

I believe leadership is a life-long journey of learning. One quote that has resonated with me and I continue to reflect on regularly in my own work and leadership style is by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. "Life's most persistent and urgent question is, 'What are you doing for others?'"

Has your agency developed any notable partnerships, initiatives, and/or collaborations with other organizations (for profit or not for profit) to further your agencies work?

Every project ArtWorks creates is in direct partnership with other organizations both profit and not for profit as well as community groups across our community. We design art projects to employ artists and to create transformational public and civic outcomes where there is a community need and a partner who helps drive the focus for this work forward. In 2020, for example ArtWorks produced a project called Switch on Avondale, to activate Avondale's Quality of Life Plan, enhancing safety and civic pride with permanent light installations along a walking trail behind Hirsch Recreation Center. On average we work directly with 30+ community partners annually and we are always developing new partnerships for new projects. If you are interested in partnering with ArtWorks, please reach out anytime!

<https://www.artworkscincinnati.org/public-art/request-a-project/>

Please feel free to share any additional information, announcements, or news with the Leadership Council community.

ArtWorks is hosting our 25th Anniversary Online Art Auction with Everything But the House, August 6 – August 12. The auction, co-chaired by Cincinnati's favorite artists, Pam Kravetz and Gee Horton, will feature original works of art by ArtWorks alumni and friends.

ArtWorks has moved to historic Peebles Corner at the intersection of Gilbert and McMillan and we have a new gallery and storefront. Visit the ArtWorks V² Gallery in Walnut Hills from Wednesdays – Saturdays, noon – 5 p.m. The gallery is the region's only local gallery focused on showcasing the work of youth artists. The current exhibit, Student Power, was led by acclaimed printmaker Terence Hammonds and features the work of eight emerging youth artists. The show runs through July 31. For more information, visit <https://www.artworkscincinnati.org/get-involved/artworks-gallery/>.