

Incourage Impact: Arts & Culture

A Report to the Community

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Established in 1994 as a community foundation, Incourage has evolved in response to community need from a traditional grantmaker into a values-led, user-centered and place-based organization stewarding and connecting all forms of resources or capital – moral, social, human, intellectual, reputational, financial and natural – toward a powerful shared vision: a community that works well for all people.

According to the Wisconsin Arts Board, a 2012 Arts & Economic study found that nonprofit arts and culture are a \$535 million industry in Wisconsin – one that supports 22,872 full-time equivalent jobs, \$479 million in resident income, and generates \$64.9 million in local and state government revenue. These facts are powerful tools in making the case for state and local funding for arts and culture by demonstrating the significant return on investment.

Since 1994, Incourage has been involved as an advocate, investor and supporter to enhance and enrich local arts organizations, projects and programs in south Wood County.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Arts & Heritage Cluster through the Community Progress Initiative

In October 2006, in partnership with Heart of Wisconsin and with support from the Ford Foundation, 13 local residents and artists traveled to the western mountains of North Carolina to observe the role of arts and culture in fostering economic growth. This group made 20 stops in three small towns that had dealt with the loss and reduction of manufacturing jobs in the textile and furniture-making industries, as well as the loss of tobacco farms. They were inspired by the experience and, upon return to the south Wood County area, formed the Arts & Heritage Cluster. The purpose of the Arts & Heritage Cluster was to look for new economic opportunities to promote our area's rich history of local arts and culture.

Several community art projects can be directly linked to the Arts & Heritage Cluster, including: Grand Banner Project in the downtown, Downtown Historical Murals, the Betty Boop Festival, and the Cranberry Blossom Festival (read more about each project in this paper). Incourage supported regular monthly meetings from October 2006 – April 2009, by not only providing financial support, but administrative support as well.



Downtown Murals



The creation of six historical murals was a project of the Downtown Revitalization Cluster Public Art Group, another group that developed from the Arts and Heritage Cluster. This group of volunteers wanted to see public art on display. The murals project was the first step in bringing outdoor art into downtown. From 2005-2007, Incourage served as the fiscal agent for the Downtown Public Art Fund, where local residents and businesses contributed \$8,625 to support the art murals that have created an art walk throughout the downtown, celebrating the history of our community.

Nekoosa Swiftwater Mural Project

In 2009, Incourage invested in the Nekoosa Swiftwater Mural Project, a true community project in every sense. The idea was created by Laurie Tenpas, Nekoosa art teacher and artist. Bringing people together was one of her main goals for the project, and she did just that. Hundreds of community members worked on the project for several months to create a work of art that is displayed in the Nekoosa community today. Neighbors came together for a common goal; learning about each other and sharing stories as they created their tiles for the mosaic display. As they worked together each week, they built relationships and slowly crafted a beautiful work of art representing the community.

In the mural, one will find the Ho-Chunk origin of the word Nekoosa and the clans of the Ho-Chunk nations. The pieces of the heart are made up of words that describe a strong community. The words are written in English, Ho-Chunk, Spanish and German, symbolizing the unity of the cultural backgrounds in Nekoosa. The pictures around the heart represent the history of



the community and the journey to create the mural. The heart is framed by tiles made by many business owners. The life-giving river, connecting all, symbolizes the backbone of the community. The rays of sun resemble a dream catcher or web and are made up of names from past and present community members. At the beginning of this project, Laurie said, "This project was a gift to the community, made by community members, in the spirit of respect, friendship, and peace."

Park Place Memory Art

One of the greatest tragedies that dementia, stroke and other physical and mental limitations can impose on an individual is losing the ability to communicate. In 2006, Incurage provided funds to introduce the Memory Art Program, which allowed clients of Park Place to express themselves through watercolor painting. Funding paid for



start-up costs, immediate supplies and continuing expenses, such as paper, paint and framing. The process provided structure and support for the artists while allowing them to create their own message on paper. Some artists painted memories from long ago or memories they could no longer find the words for. The method of creating fine art has proven to be an effective and positive outlet for many. At the time of the grant, the executive director emphasized, "the small groups we have brought together enjoyed the chance to paint, reminisce, and get positive feedback from their creation." Through the artwork, participants and their caregivers had lasting keepsakes that communicated their unspoken words.

ArtPlace America Grant for the Tribune Building

In 2014, Incurage received a \$400,000 Creative Placemaking grant from ArtPlace America. Only 55 projects were chosen to receive funding, and the Tribune was the only Wisconsin project chosen.

This grant supports the Tribune project's resident-led vision for the building's future including enhancements to the rooftop, expanded exterior landscaping, and interior storytelling and signage. Incurage's Request For Proposal process recruited artists for the project. Individuals, teams of artists, for-profit businesses and nonprofit organizations from around the world applied. Artist proposals needed to include meaningful resident participation in the planning and implementation process, reflect the culture and traditions of the south Wood County area while embracing the use of local materials that were sustainable, durable and low maintenance.



From an original pool of 111 artist/team proposal submissions, seven were selected. Of these, three are from Wisconsin and four currently reside in or have a direct connection to south Wood County. Additional engagement opportunities for residents have ranged from helping to find materials, to participating in educational classes, to actively taking part in creating art that will be displayed. To view a video about this grant's outcomes go to: [Art In Action](#).

COMMUNITY EVENTS

Betty Boop Festival



Incourage invested more than \$25,000 through Community Grant and Donor Advised Funds to support the Arts & Heritage Cluster and the Betty Boop Festival in 2009, 2010, and 2011. In 2009 and 2010, funding paid for a part-time director as well as other administrative expenses for the event. In 2011, funds helped to enhance the festival by increasing public awareness and greater participation of individuals and families from across all socioeconomic levels in greater south Wood County. The grant specifically supported festival activities and events, such as street banners and an exhibit of fine art paintings and drawings by Grim Natwick, a Wisconsin Rapids native who was the top

Betty Boop animator in 1930. Grant dollars also supported the purchase of computer animation software for a three-week summer school class, where students participated in hands-on animation and cartoon drawing activities. Over 60 students participated in the class. Remaining dollars supported awareness efforts.

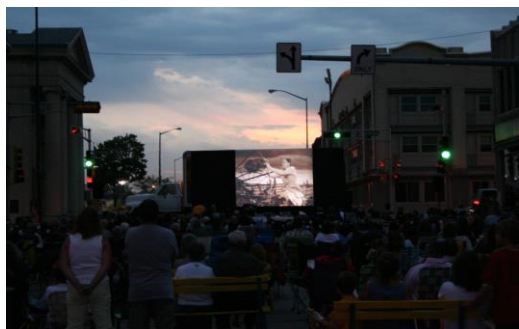
In 2010, \$3,500 from Community Grant Funds helped to establish the Grim Natwick Historical Marker. It is the first historical marker placed in the south Wood County area since the 1960s. Locating the historical marker on South Wood County Historical Museum grounds prompted the upgrade of the Museum's Grim Natwick Exhibit. The marker was unveiled at the Inaugural Betty Boop Festival, held in August 2010.

Cranberry Blossom Festival

Another lasting outcome of the Arts and Heritage Cluster's work was the Cranberry Blossom Festival. In 2007, Incourage supported this newly established event with a \$1,000 grant to purchase "Our Blossoming Community" parade t-shirts. The Festival has become an annual community event, celebrating local agriculture and Wisconsin's #1 fruit crop, the cranberry.



Cinema Under the Stars



In 2006, Incourage supported the Heart of Wisconsin Community Leadership Class with a Community Grant for "Downtown Classic Cinema Under the Stars," an outdoor movie night for the community on the streets of downtown Wisconsin Rapids. Incourage has provided oversight and administration of the funds contributed in support of the event through the Downtown Revitalization Fund. The event is led by a small group of community volunteers and celebrated its 11th anniversary in 2016.

Vesper Summer Movie Nights

Grants through the Vesper Area Progress Fund, totaling \$1,405, provided support for summer movie nights through the Lester Public Library of Vesper in 2013 and 2014. The rural community library provided residents of all age groups across all socio-economic classes the opportunity to enjoy spending time together while watching outdoor movies.

“Influencing the Culture of a Community – How the Arts Play a Role”

In August 2004, Incourage hosted a conversation between south Wood County arts organizations’ boards and staffs and Dr. Jaylee Mead, NASA scientist, noted philanthropist and 2010 Ambassador for the Arts. Jaylee was the spouse of former resident and Incourage board member Dr. Gilbert Mead, who was Stanton Mead’s son.

As a resident and leader in Washington D.C. area, Jaylee chaired or served on the boards of the Washington Theatre Awards Society, Carnegie Institution for Science, the National Children’s Museum and many others. Jaylee drew from her experiences to share examples of current partnerships in the Washington D.C. arts community; cite investments in arts as a pathway to economic growth; discuss tips for successful grant applications and how they might be applied to our local arts organizations; and convey her deep belief that the arts enhance and bring joy to everyday life.



ARTS & CULTURE FOCUSED ORGANIZATIONS

Arts Council of South Wood County

Since 1999, Incourage has invested more than \$138,000 in the Arts Council through Community Grant Funds and other donor funds.

In 2006, Incourage organized and led the Building Better Boards Initiative, a two-year initiative intended to strengthen the effectiveness of nonprofit governance structures and operations. All local nonprofits were invited to participate and one of the organizations who took advantage of this opportunity was Arts Council of South Wood County. The three-part series was led by Dr. Sandra Hughes, a senior governance consultant with BoardSource. It was designed to promote the need for good board governance and provide the resources necessary for continuing board development. The program helped to increase individual board members’ knowledge and skills of board roles, behaviors, and practices, as well as implementation of effective board practices. The costs associated with the initiative were supported by an investment from Community Grant Funds making it affordable for Arts Council and 13 other nonprofits to be able to attend and participate.

In 2007, with a \$14,340 grant from Incourage, the Arts Council purchased and implemented an integrated electronic ticketing system. The system would be the first of its kind for the organization, providing uniformity to ticketing in the cultural community, as well as the use of credit card and on-line ticket purchases. The ticketing system was installed at the offices of the Arts Council and the Wisconsin Rapids Community Theatre, Inc (WRCT) and is still used today. Both organizations offer low-cost use of the electronic ticketing service to other area nonprofit organizations presenting performances such as ODC’s Locals on Stage and the Miss Wisconsin Rapids Area Pageant.

Incourage has supported additional Arts Council efforts over the years. For example, in 2010, Incourage invested in a program featuring national cartoonist David Coverly. Through a three-day workshop, area junior high and high school art students interacted with and learned from this professional artist.

Central Wisconsin Cultural Center, Inc.

For more than 20 years, Incourage has supported the Central Wisconsin Cultural Center in downtown Wisconsin Rapids. Investments totaling more than \$270,000 have been made to support the advancement of the organization.

In October 1994, an anonymous donor contributed \$100,000 to establish the Cultural Center Development Fund. Funds were fully expended as designated by the donor to support planning, development and establishment of a cultural center. As part of the process, Incourage's Board of Directors appointed the Cultural Center Steering Committee. The steering committee initiated three studies that were funded through the development fund: a market, economic and use feasibility study conducted by Arts Market of Massachusetts; an architectural study by Kahler/Slater architects of Madison; and a fundraising feasibility assessment. In 1997, the Steering Committee incorporated as a 501(c)(3) organization and became the Central Wisconsin Cultural Center.

The Cultural Center Endowment Fund was also established at Incourage in October 1994 with a \$100,000 gift by the same anonymous donor to provide permanent support for a Cultural Center located in or near Wisconsin Rapids. A gift of \$50,000 from the Richard S. Brazeau Family Foundation in the form of a matching opportunity was added to this Endowment Fund, for a total of \$150,000. Upon the death of the anonymous donor in 2007, the fund was renamed the Earl and Corrine Otto Cultural Center Endowment Fund as she had instructed. Annual distributions from the fund, since inception, total more than \$140,000. Incourage continues to administer this fund and the Cultural Center still benefits today.

In 2007, Gilbert and Jaylee Mead, through Incourage, supported a consultant to explore organizational planning and collaboration opportunities between the Arts Council of South Wood County and Central Wisconsin Cultural Center. A shared administrative position between the two organizations was one outcome of the planning efforts.

Over the years, Incourage has supported numerous Artist in Education programs, art exhibits and other programming offered by the Cultural Center. Two examples include:

- In March 2006, Incourage supported a University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point (UWSP) Student Sculpture Exhibit and Artist in Education program. The program enabled young people to showcase their art work and attend an educational art workshop. The UWSP Student Sculpture Exhibit attracted about 350 patrons. The Artist in Education component provided the platform for art students from local schools to participate in a sculpturing workshop under the direction of a UWSP Fine Arts Instructor.
- In 2013, Incourage supported the Rivard Art Education “Inspiration in Motion” program, created by skateboard artist and motivational speaker, Mark Rivard. Mark used his own experiences to demonstrate how we can all find our own paths to success by following our dreams and passions. This youth art education program was a collaboration between the Central Wisconsin Cultural Center and area schools. “This program relates directly to existing art curriculum used in our local schools, while taking student learning to a deeper, more engaging level,” said Kimberly Hanson, a junior high school art educator at the time.

Why Skateboards? According to Mark, “The skateboard represents pure self-expression, and I believe that every person, skateboarder or not, strives to express themselves in some way and far more aggressively at a young age.” The skateboard is such a different and unique canvas that even the most un-art-interested students are intrigued and challenged because they feel that the skateboard separates them from “the norm”. At an age when discovery and independence is far more interesting than A’s and B’s, the skateboard taps the wealth of energy that the youthful mind possesses.

Central Wisconsin Symphony Orchestra (CWSO)

In February 2000, Incourage supported a family concert program entitled “Fin, Fur and Feather”. It was held at West Junior High School and available to all schools in south Wood County. This program was a collaborative arts experience utilizing instrumental music, puppetry, and the visual arts. The concert included lobby displays of student art, activities and an instrument petting zoo. Located in Stevens Point, the CWSO worked with the Arts Council of South Wood County to promote this program in our area.

City Band

Incourage has invested more than \$19,000 from Community Grant Funds and other donor funds in the City Band. City Band music has been flowing through the Wisconsin Rapids area for almost 150 years. In 2006, the City of Wisconsin Rapids eliminated funding for City Band. However, the band continues today thanks to the efforts of a number of dedicated members who worked to ensure it would continue. They formed a Board of Directors and the band was organized into a self-directed, self-governing organization responsible for its own funding. Incourage assisted in this process by providing guidance in fiscal management, board governance and funding. In 2014, Wisconsin Rapids City Band successfully earned its 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization status.

Performing Arts Center

In 2000, an anonymous donor contributed \$100,000 through Incourage to provide enhancements to the new Performing Arts Center (PAC) being built at Lincoln High School. The purpose of this gift was to upgrade finishes and acoustical equipment so that the facility could be used and enjoyed by the entire community. Providing the broad opportunity for community participation would also build a larger audience and appreciation for the arts. This gift was contingent upon a \$500,000 match from the SWC2000 organization, thereby resulting in \$600,000 in private contributions to support the center's enhancement. Through the original gift from an anonymous donor to Incourage, and the efforts of Wisconsin Rapids Public Schools, SWC2000 and Incourage we now have a community "jewel" that provides space for performances from local students to nationwide acts. It is admired and appreciated by visiting performers and patrons and offers the opportunity for many generations to enjoy a range of performing arts.

Performing Arts Center Piano from Gilbert & Jaylee Mead

Thanks to a generous gift in the amount of \$70,000 from Gilbert and Jaylee Mead, the Performing Arts Center (PAC) features a Steinway Model D piano. The purchase of the piano was a learning experience in itself. Gilbert hosted a trip to New York City for the Wisconsin Rapids Public Schools superintendent, choir director and two students to assist in the piano selection. This particular piano is the choice of almost all piano soloists and major orchestras and is the instrument used on the stages of Carnegie Hall in New York City and the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C. Visiting artists who perform at the PAC continue to praise the state-of-the-art facility and acoustics and the opportunity to play the "best of the best" piano.



Pittsville Area Community Theater

Since 2003, Incourage has invested a total of \$7,300 to support the Pittsville Area Community Theater (PACT). PACT provides opportunities for residents of this rural community who may not otherwise have the chance to actively participate in the arts. Incourage made its first investment of \$3,250, seeding the new community theater and its first production in Pittsville. The funds supported a director, stage and production manager and rights to a play. In 2004, Incourage provided support for summer programming. And in 2006, Incourage funded two workshops in an effort to increase participation in theater. Volunteer capacity and community involvement was built by providing training for those in the south Wood County area who had talent and an interest in performing, but limited experience.

Pittsville Area Foundation for the Arts

Incourage has made investments totaling \$4,300 from Community Grant Funds and other donor funds to various Pittsville Area Foundation for the Arts (PAFA) projects. One of the projects supported a collaborative effort between PAFA and the City of Pittsville. Grant funds were used for the construction of an official sign for the City

of Pittsville's Information and Notices to inform the public of upcoming events and public notices. The construction of the framework for the sign was a Boy Scout Eagle project.

South Wood County Historical Museum

Incourage has made investments of \$33,300 through Community Grants and other funds to the South Wood County Historical Museum. One of the first investments to the Museum was made in 1999, providing \$17,000 in funding to support *River Cities Memoirs VI: The Home Front*, a publication that captured the life histories of individual achievements in our community and deepened the appreciation for our "River City" heritage. This publication made it possible for relatives, friends and the community-at-large to learn from original accounts of life in the 20th Century. Still enjoyed today, the publication is preserving history for generations to come.

In 2004, Incourage supported the South Wood County Historical Corporation's (SWCHC) effort to preserve a piece of local history. Grant funds helped to sort, catalog and archive multiple boxes of historical material received in 1991 from the Nash family, pioneers in Wisconsin Rapids' history. The intent was to preserve the material as a piece of local history for future generations. This involved utilizing acid-free file folders, storage cartons and photo sleeves for maximum longevity.

Wisconsin Rapids Community Theatre

In 2006, Incourage provided Wisconsin Rapids Community Theater (WRCT) with administrative support for a \$1.2 million campaign to support the construction of a 200-seat theatre in the Centralia Center. Incourage processed over 500 gifts and tracked 76 pledges for the campaign. Incourage also provided guidance for promotional materials, pledge forms and press releases related to the project. Incourage supported WRCT in securing a \$600,000 dollar-for-dollar matching fund challenge from Gilbert and Jaylee Mead, which was central to the campaign.



Very Special Arts

Incourage has supported Very Special Arts (VSA) Wisconsin in a variety of ways, including investments of nearly \$60,000 over the past 15 years from Community Grant Funds, as well as designated funds to support the organization.

Beginning in 1997, Incourage invested \$7,000 for the start-up of the VSA Choir Wisconsin Rapids, which continues today. VSA Choir Wisconsin Rapids gives individuals with disabilities an opportunity to participate in music experiences.

In 2003, grant funds helped support a 10-week Early Childhood Program in collaboration with Building Blocks Learning Center in Wisconsin Rapids. The program helped children, ages 3-6, gain self-confidence and improve listening skills, language skills and attention spans by actively participating in story-acting/drama activities. The interactive program impacted nearly 30 children and their families through activities at school and home.

In September 2010, grant dollars supported artist residencies for elementary students with disabilities in south Wood County. VSA conducted two visual art residencies at Grove and Howe Elementary Schools. Five residency sessions took place using the theme "Building Bridges: Diversity and Inclusion". A total of 400 students participated in learning how to make paper. Additionally, a core group of 40 students with and without disabilities worked together to create a collaborative work of art that engaged sensory experiences, and taught discipline and focus. It also helped participants to understand and appreciate the special gifts each student brings to the table.