

# LAUREL ARTS COUNCIL YEAR IN REVIEW

January – December 2019

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## Meeting Statement

The Laurel Arts Council meets the second Tuesday of each month at the Laurel Municipal Center, 8103 Sandy Spring Road, Laurel, MD 20707. The public is welcome and encouraged to attend. For information regarding agendas or related information, call the Department of Parks and Recreation at 301-725-7800.

## Mission

The City of Laurel Arts Council encourages the advancement of the arts to benefit all people in the City of Laurel, organizes the display of art in public places throughout the City, provides diverse high-quality arts programming to engage all residents, and increases advocacy and opportunities for local artists and arts organizations.

## Goals

Coordinate financial support and advocacy for the arts through artistic programs and creative partnerships with government, business, education, and residents:

- Cultivate participation in the arts across all ages, races, cultures, and other dimensions that define the City's rich diversity.
- Promote artistic achievement and creative expression in all forms of the visual and performing arts.
- Support life-long learning through the arts, particularly in arts education for young people.
- Ensure that the arts are accessible to all residents and foster awareness of arts resources and opportunities throughout the Greater Laurel area.

## Vision

Create a vibrant arts community that enriches the lives of those who live in, work in, and visit the City.

## Approach

Establish links within and outside the City to exchange ideas, coordinate scheduling, and develop sponsorships for arts programs, events, and displays.

Working within Laurel: The LAC will inventory and build on existing resources within the City of Laurel, including local arts organizations and venues, arts education programs, and individual artists and performers, to coordinate plans and to develop and stage exhibits and events.

The LAC will draw on and emphasize the unique features of Laurel as a source for art themes and inspiration: The City's extraordinary diversity, its deep historical roots, and its landscape of parks, preserves, and natural history sites.

The LAC will work with other elements of the City and with local businesses, such as Parks & Recreation and the Laurel Board of Trade, to ensure that LAC activities capitalize on and

synchronize with the City's planned events, infrastructure, commercial development, and use of open spaces.

Linking outside Laurel: The LAC will reach out to arts councils and organizations in neighboring cities to exchange ideas and coordinate schedules for arts events. In addition, the LAC will communicate with and seek sponsorship from county and state levels: Prince George's County, the National Capital region, and the State of Maryland. We will consider national sources as well, for example, the online and social media resources offered by Americans for the Arts.

## Financial Report

- The LAC drafted and provided to the City a funding policy with procedures for accounting for funds received as well as guidelines for selecting public art pieces for the City. This policy directs the use of government funds by the LAC to ensure that selection of projects and performers is equitable and open.
- Members purchased, and were reimbursed by the City for, materials used in several projects in 2019: the completion of the Laurel History Bench, an exhibit of art by Laurel high School students, and a showcase of theater and readings by, and a showcase of theater and readings by Pallotti High School students. The City also covered, on behalf of the LAC, part of the cost of travel by Laurel High School dance students who had won places in a mid-Atlantic regional high school artistic dance competition. In addition, the LAC expended funds from a \$2,000 Prince George's County Special Appropriations Grant to create and install a glass mosaic mural at the Laurel Municipal Swimming Pool.
- We collected \$68 in donations from the general public.
- We were awarded \$385 from the Laurel 150th Celebration Committee to provide a mural celebrating the City's diversity, to be created by art students at Laurel High School.

## Event Participation Report

The LAC continued its tradition of participating in various City of Laurel events to announce our presence to the community, bring more art to the City, and provide opportunities for local artists. Events in 2019 included:

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### City of Laurel Open House (spring 2019)

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- We represented the LAC at the City's Annual Open House

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### City of Laurel 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Planning:

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- We served on the City's 150th Anniversary Planning Committee and the LAC Chair attended Executive Planning Committee meetings, to help plan arts and entertainment projects for the anniversary celebration in 2020.
- We placed arts events on the Laurel 150th Anniversary calendar, which is published on the City's website and widely distributed to draw residents and visitors to the celebration.

## Public Art & Arts Education Report

In addition to participating in City events to provide art activities and bring opportunities to artists, the LAC completed two substantial pieces of public art, initiated in 2018, and launched two new collaborative events with local high schools. As part our commitment to arts education, the LAC invited members of the community to participate in all these activities.

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### Laurel History Bench

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Community volunteers led by Laurel Arts Council member Cheryl Dyer (middle) help grout the History Bench.

The tiles were applied to a granite bench backed by a concrete wall, fixtures provided by the Dept of Parks and Recreation and installed at McCullough Field by Parks and Recreation Facilities and Grounds staff.

To dedicate the bench, the City held a ceremony in spring 2019 at McCullough Field, attended by the Mayor, City officials, neighborhood residents, and many local artists.



Laurel Arts Council member Cheryl Dyer explains how the History Bench tiles were crafted by community members.

The LAC's first public artwork was a clay tile history bench now permanently installed at McCullough Field. To create tiles for the bench, community members ranging from youth to seniors came together in a series of public workshops directed by LAC member and art teacher Cheryl Dyer, who led additional workshops at Laurel Elementary School to collect tiles from fifth graders. The tile designs and colors reflect Laurel's rich history and distinctive flora and fauna, using historical images furnished by the Laurel Historical Society.



History Bench detail.

The story of how the bench was developed appeared in the *Laurel Leader* (*Baltimore Sun*) and on Laurel TV in video spots depicting community tile-making workshops and showing the completed bench (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cNesgxa9mzk>).



*Laurel Mayor Craig Moe (left) dedicates the History Bench at McCullough Field. Also in attendance (left to right) four members of the Laurel Arts Council, Parks & Recreation Director Joanne Barr, and Councilwoman Valerie Nicholas.*

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## Glass Tile Mosaic Mural

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*Laurel Advanced art students at St. Vincent Pallotti High School cut and arrange glass for the mosaic, which celebrates Laurel's river heritage.*

The LAC completed its second public artwork in summer 2019: a glass mosaic mural with water-themed colors and textures to celebrate the Patuxent River as a core natural resource for the town. The work was conceived by LAC member Cheryl Dyer and carried out by advanced art students at St. Vincent Pallotti High School. Supported by a \$2,000 Prince

George's County Special Appropriations Grant, the mural is installed as part of the outdoor entry wall at the Laurel Municipal Swimming Pool.



Completed mural at the Laurel Municipal Swimming Pool.

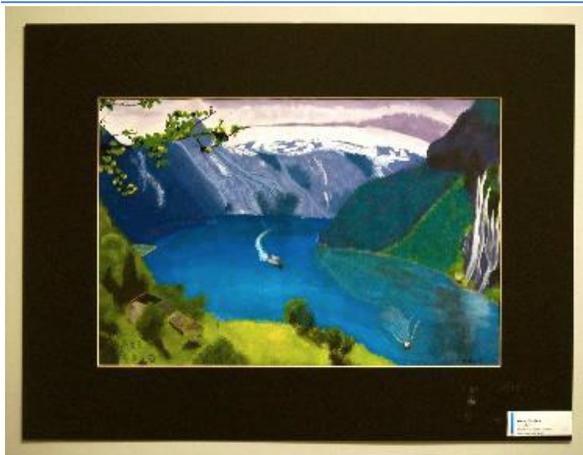
The LAC enlisted specialized local artists who contributed time and expertise to the project: the lead art teacher at Pallotti High School, who is a stained glass artist skilled in glass cutting and mosaic techniques, and a glass mural builder who had engineered the mosaic wall at Baltimore's American Visionary Arts Museum. Also distinguished is the Pallotti student who sketched the water motif for the mural, who won a national art award for her design, which included an African river goddess. The finished mosaic

panels were emplaced in the entry wall at the Municipal Pool by the Parks and Recreation Facilities and Grounds staff.

The story of the mural's creation was covered in a sequence of articles in the *Laurel Leader* (*Baltimore Sun*), including photo spreads of the work at various stages of completion. The project was also spotlighted by Laurel TV in two feature videos: In the first, Pallotti High students described their design process and the technical steps involved (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U7c55Gja7ac>). In the second (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xvjLmiGHU14>), Cheryl Dyer showed the installed mural at the Municipal Pool, pointing out the river goddess and the dedication plaque, which called the goddess "an homage to the enslaved people who picked the cotton processed at the Laurel Cotton Mill [situated on the river]."

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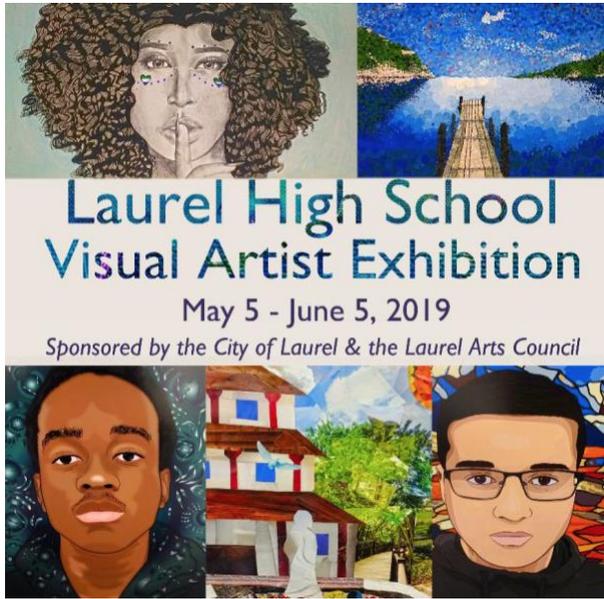
### Laurel High School Art Exhibit



Student work: pastel.

The LAC partnered with the Laurel High School Visual Arts Department to organize and mount a public exhibit of students' artwork, including paintings, sculpture, and ceramics, selected by teachers for quality and originality. The exhibit displayed thirty-six pieces of art by students of all five visual art teachers, including work that had won positions in regional juried shows.

The Laurel Municipal Center housed the exhibit, which was open for a month to visitors.



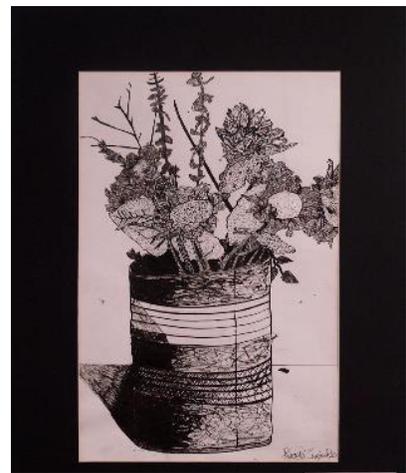
Flyer for showcase.

To launch the exhibit, the LAC joined with the Dept of Parks and Recreation to hold a public reception, attended by City and school officials, art teachers, Laurel High students and their families, and other members of the community. The Mayor gave welcoming remarks and presented participating students with certificates of appreciation from the City. The Laurel High Assistant Principal and the Head of the Laurel High Art Department both spoke about the importance of the school's art program and its growing recognition.

Because of the enthusiastic community response to the exhibit, the LAC designated the Laurel High Art Exhibit as an annual public event.



Students receive certificates of appreciation at the opening reception at the Laurel City Municipal Center from Mayor Craig Moe with Laurel Arts Council member Melissa Holland in attendance.



Student work: Collage, ink, ceramics, and sculptural.

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## St. Vincent Pallotti High School Theater Showcase

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*Mayor Craig Moe (front left) with Principal Palumbo (front right) gather with Pallotti students and Pallotti teachers Alan Ernstein and Chris Dwyer, for presentation of certificates of appreciation from the city.*

The LAC partnered with the Pallotti High School Theater Department to offer a public showcase of dramatic monologs and ensemble pieces by Pallotti students. Organized by the Pallotti theater teacher, the program included performances by students who had won national honors at high school theater competitions.

The showcase was held in the meeting hall of a local restaurant, Sip at C Street, and followed by a reception and presentation of certificates of appreciation from the City. Attending were City and school officials, members of the public, and Pallotti High students and their families.

Given the universally positive response to the program, the LAC designated the Pallotti High Theater Showcase, like the Laurel High Art Exhibit, as an annual event.

By instituting collaborations with local high schools, the LAC aims to further our goals of expanding opportunities for young artists and performers, increasing community access to the arts, fostering awareness of local talent, and raising appreciation of the school programs that nurture that talent.



*Pallotti drama students perform theatrical selections at the Spring 2019 Theatre Showcase held at C St. in Laurel under the direction of drama instructor Christopher Dwyer.*

## Communications & Public Relations Report

- The LAC publicized community events on our Facebook page, including local theater productions, art shows, and concerts. We promoted selected events to the Dept of Parks and Recreation to reach their wider Facebook audience.
- We published a bi-annual e-newsletter announcing upcoming Laurel art events. The newsletter was sent to over 150 email subscribers collected since the LAC's inception. [View e-newsletter archive.](#)
- We worked with Laurel TV to publicize LAC projects in a series of videos covering the development and installation of both the Laurel History Bench and the Glass Mosaic Mural, as well as video spots on the Laurel High art exhibit, featuring interviews with student artists and views of the works of art.
- We gained press coverage, including a front-page article, by The Baltimore Sun's *Laurel Leader* of several LAC projects throughout the year: the Laurel History Bench, the Glass Mosaic Mural, and the Laurel High Art Exhibit.

## Organizational Development Report

- The LAC drafted recommendations for a percent-for-art ordinance to provide the City of Laurel with revenue to support public art projects. The ordinance requires that developers who receive incentives from the City pay a fee, which is set aside for acquiring and maintaining art in public places. These recommendations were provided to the Office of Economic Development, which is building them into new City code for review by City Council.
- Members completed training by the City of Laurel Ethics Commission Chair on the ethics code that governs the City's volunteer committees. This code ensures that use of government funds is transparent and that individual members avoid conflicts of interest.