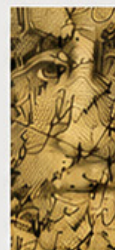


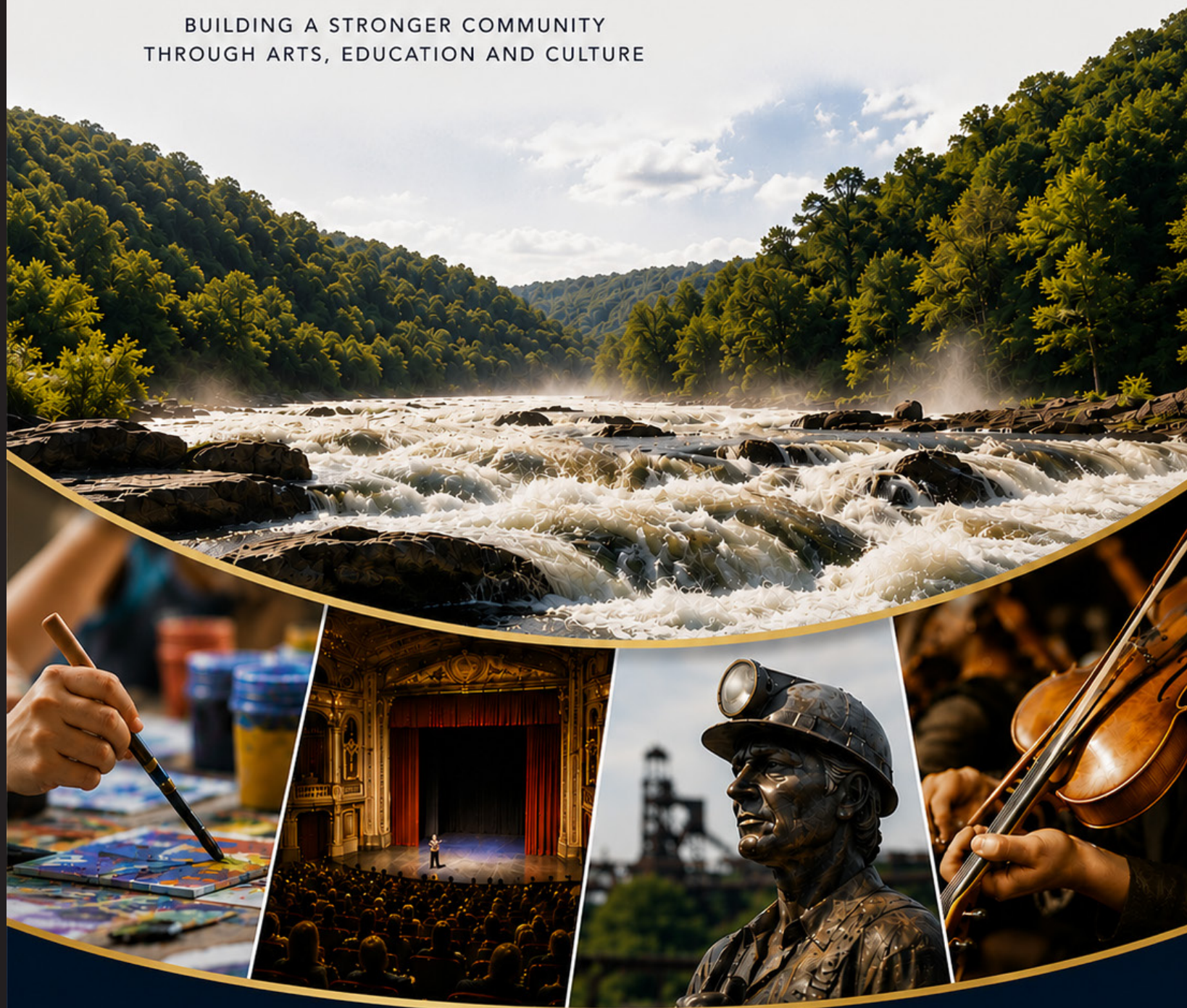
PRESERVING OUR HERITAGE. ENRICHING OUR COMMUNITY. INSPIRING OUR FUTURE.

2025 IMPACT REPORT

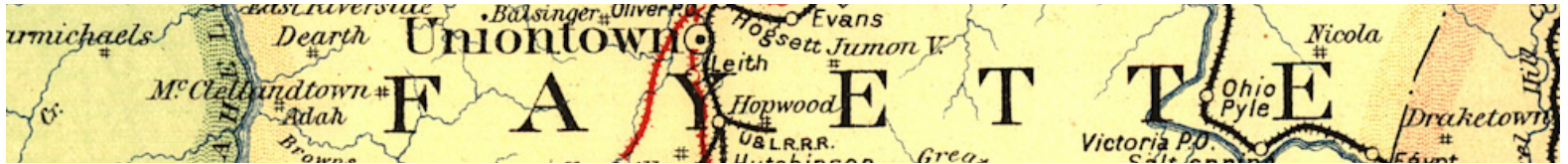
BUILDING A STRONGER COMMUNITY
THROUGH ARTS, EDUCATION AND CULTURE



Fayette County
Cultural Trust
www.fayettettrust.org



CELEBRATING OUR PAST • CULTIVATING OUR PRESENT • CREATING OUR FUTURE



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Fayette County Cultural Trust

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The Fayette County Cultural Trust serves as a catalyst for community transformation by bringing together history, arts, education, entrepreneurship, tourism, and strategic partnerships to improve the quality of life throughout Fayette County.

The Fayette County Cultural Trust is a 501(c)(3) and its mission is to enrich the area's quality of life by promoting our cultural, artistic, historic and natural assets and by creating partnerships to revitalize communities and further economic development. The Downtown Connellsville initiative focuses on the historic preservation of Downtown Connellsville as well as promoting Connellsville as a great destination within the Laurel Highlands of Pennsylvania. The Connellsville Canteen preserves the history of the Fayette County men and women who served not only in the War but at the homefront. The Rural Arts Collaborative was formed to place local professional artists into a classroom setting. The Fayette County Cultural Trust brings all walks of life together in the Fayette County area to preserve the history and collaborate working relationships with other like minded organizations.

The Connellsville Canteen is the only WWII Museum in South-western Pennsylvania. It is also the home of Harry Clark's Indian Creek Valley Railroad Display. Since opening, it has received the Pennsylvania Downtown Center award for community enhancement. The Canteen has also been visited by the *Travel Channel*, *Mysteries at the Museum* and News Center 4 from Cleveland, Ohio.

ConnellsvilleCanteen.org



DowntownConnellsville.org



RuralArtsCollaborative.org



**Fayette County Cultural Trust
FayetteTrust.org**



President's Message

2025

Impact Report

Fayette County Cultural Trust

X

Executive Director

Daniel Cocks

President

J. Michael Edwards

Vice President

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John Coleman

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Connellsville Crossroads Editor

S. Joy Lewis

X

President's Message

J. Michael Edwards

President, Fayette County Cultural Trust

As President of the Fayette County Cultural Trust, I am proud to reflect on another year of growth, partnership, and community impact. The accomplishments of 2025 demonstrate what can happen when people come together with a shared vision for preserving our heritage while creating opportunities for the future.

This year, we expanded our work in education, entrepreneurship, historic preservation, and the arts. Through the continued growth of the Fayette Entrepreneurship & Educational Center, partnerships with the University of Pittsburgh and Seton Hill University, and the development of the Black Box Theater, we are building new opportunities for learning, innovation, and cultural engagement in Fayette County.

Our efforts in Downtown Connellsville continue to strengthen the heart of our community through beautification, business support, and signature events like the Soup and Chili Walks. At the same time, the Connellsville Canteen remains a cornerstone of heritage tourism and education, welcoming visitors from across the country to experience our remarkable WWII story.

The Rural Arts Collaborative and Better Together Initiative continue to create meaningful connections—whether by inspiring students through the arts or uniting nonprofits to better serve our communities.

None of this work would be possible without the dedication of our board, volunteers, partners, and supporters. Together, we are preserving the past, strengthening the present, and building a brighter future for Fayette County.

Thank you for believing in our mission.

Executive Director's Message

Daniel Cocks

Executive Director, Fayette County Cultural Trust

The year 2025 was one of momentum, innovation, and meaningful community engagement. At the Fayette County Cultural Trust, we continued to build on our mission of preserving history, supporting the arts, and creating opportunities for education and economic growth throughout Fayette County.

This year saw important progress at the Fayette Entrepreneurship & Educational Center, which has become a growing hub for business workshops, lifelong learning, and cultural programming. From AI training programs to Osher classes through the University of Pittsburgh, the FEEC is helping connect our community to the tools needed for the future.

At the Connellsville Canteen, we welcomed Road Scholar groups, mystery tours, veterans, bicyclists, and visitors from across the region—using history as a way to educate, connect, and inspire. Programs like Lunch & Learn, Train Days, and our veterans breakfast continue to strengthen the Canteen's role as both a museum and community gathering place.

Through our Rural Arts Collaborative, students in rural schools experienced the power of creativity firsthand, while our Better Together Initiative continued building stronger partnerships among local nonprofits and service organizations.

What makes me most proud is the collaboration behind all of this work. Every partnership, volunteer, and supporter has helped move our mission forward. Together, we are proving that history, arts, education, and community are powerful tools for transformation.



Neighborhood Partnership Program

The Fayette County Cultural Trust is proud to be supported through the Neighborhood Partnership Program (NPP) by three exceptional corporate partners: Somerset Trust Company, TriState Capital, and PNC Bank. This program, administered through the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, provides tax credits of up to 80% to businesses that commit a minimum of \$50,000 annually for six years to approved revitalization initiatives. These long-term investments have helped breathe new life into Connellsville.

Founded in 1889, Somerset Trust Company is a community bank rooted in southwestern Pennsylvania with a mission to serve local residents and businesses with integrity and care. With a tradition of supporting projects that improve community infrastructure and livability, Somerset Trust has played a key role in transforming historic properties into functional spaces that benefit the entire region.

TriState Capital Bank, established in 2007 and headquartered in Pittsburgh, has built a strong reputation for its focus on private banking and commercial services. Its commitment to economic development aligns closely with the Cultural Trust's mission, and its support has fueled innovative projects that attract investment and create opportunities for growth in Connellsville.

As one of the largest and most respected financial institutions in the nation, PNC Bank traces its roots back to 1852 in Pittsburgh. PNC has long demonstrated a commitment to community reinvestment, financial education, and urban revitalization. Their ongoing support of the Neighborhood Partnership Program has helped to advance inclusive, sustainable change in underserved communities across Pennsylvania, including right here in Connellsville.

Together, these three institutions exemplify the positive impact of public-private partnerships, and the Fayette County Cultural Trust is deeply grateful for their shared vision and investment in building stronger, more vibrant neighborhoods.



Fayette County Cultural Trust Impact at a Glance

- Community Investment
- Historic Preservation
- Arts Education
- Heritage Tourism
- Lifelong Learning
- Community Partnerships
- Downtown Revitalization
- Entrepreneurship

Some 2025 key statistics include:

- \$23,500 distributed to seven local nonprofit organizations through the Neighborhood Partnership Program
- 10th Annual Downtown Soup Walk and Chili Walk
- 11th Annual Fayette County Achievement in the Arts
- Six Lunch & Learn educational programs
- University partnerships with the University of Pittsburgh and Seton Hill University
- Rural Arts Collaborative artist residencies in local schools
- Better Together Initiative strengthening nonprofit collaboration
- Continued development of the Fayette Entrepreneurship & Educational Center and Black Box Theater
- Thousands of visitors welcomed through heritage tourism, educational programming, and downtown events

Neighborhood Partnership Program Check Presentation

In February 2025, the Fayette County Cultural Trust proudly awarded a total of \$23,500 in funding to seven Connellsville-based nonprofit organizations. This funding is made possible through the Neighborhood Partnership Program (NPP), administered by the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED). We extend our sincere gratitude to the corporate partners who make this vital community support possible—Somerset Trust Company, TriState Capital, and PNC Bank. Their continued investment in Connellsville through the NPP has allowed us to fund impactful local initiatives that strengthen the fabric of our community. We also acknowledge and thank UPMC Health Plan for their generous contributions during the first six years of our program, helping us lay the foundation for long-term success.

Since the inception of our NPP involvement nine years ago, the Fayette County Cultural Trust has awarded a total of \$236,950 in direct funding to nonprofit organizations serving the Connellsville area. These funds have supported a wide range of essential services and community needs, from public safety to education and food security. The organizations receiving this year's funding include: Connellsville Parks & Recreation, which enhances quality of life through green spaces and community events; the Connellsville K-9 Unit, which provides critical law enforcement services; Wesley Health Center, offering accessible healthcare to residents in need; the Connellsville Carnegie Free Library, a pillar of education and enrichment since 1903; Alternatives.Yes, which supports at-risk youth; The Learning Lamp, which provides early childhood education and academic support; and Connellsville Community Ministries, a lifeline for families facing food insecurity and financial hardship.

The Cultural Trust is honored to act as a bridge between our generous corporate partners and the dedicated nonprofits working on the ground every day. These partnerships exemplify how strategic investments in people and places can yield powerful, long-lasting change. We look forward to continuing this tradition of giving and collaboration in the years ahead.

Neighborhood Partnership Program Partners

Connellsville Community Ministries

The Connellsville Community Ministries serves low income individuals and families. They operate a Care & Share Boutique and currently run the largest food pantry in the area. The Connellsville Community Ministries is managed by an executive director and a board of directors.



Neighborhood Partnership Program Partners

Connellsville Carnegie Free Library



The library opened its doors on April 30, 1903, thanks to the generosity of Andrew Carnegie, who believed that education is the cornerstone of success. At that time, Connellsville was the leading coke producer in the world and immigrants were flocking here to work in the mines and coke works. Built of sandstone in the Italianate manner, the building housed books and magazines and offered early patrons both educational and recreational reading, as well as musical evenings in the second floor auditorium. The library was named to the National Register of Historic Places in 1981. Library patrons now have access to more than a million volumes including magazines, e-books, audio books, music and movies through the WAGGIN network.

Wesley Health Center



Wesley Church Health Center, Inc. (WHC), a mission of Wesley United Methodist Church, was founded in 1993 by the Rev. Eugene Ankeny and parishioner Dr. J. Miller Oppy. WHC has been in continuous operation since that time and is the only clinic in southwestern Pennsylvania that provides free primary health care for individuals without health insurance or who are underinsured. WHC is managed by a volunteer Board of Directors and a volunteer Executive Director. Part-time paid staff consists of a Nurse Practitioner, Office Manager, and a Medical Assistant. Dr. Mouhanad Al-Fakih is WHC's Medical Collaborator and, over the years, WHC has added services through collaborative agreements including those with Connellsville Counseling and Psychological Services for counseling, Dr. John Ellis for eye care, Dr. Francis Jacobyansky for dental care, and Excelsa Health's Frick Hospital for blood analysis. An elevator makes WHC's second floor accessible for additional services such as dental and vision screenings, patient education and health classes.

Connellsville Parks & Recreation

The Connellsville Parks & Recreation Board is responsible for enhancing community wellness through recreation, open space and natural resources. The Connellsville Recreation Board provides quality recreation opportunities for all citizens of Connellsville.

This year NPP funding was allocated to the 12th Street Park.



Neighborhood Partnership Program Partners

Connellsville Police Department

K-9 Unit

The Connellsville Police Department K-9 is a “dual-purpose” dog that is trained for patrol and narcotics detection. They also provide demonstration visits to the local schools.



Alternatives.Yes

Alternatives.Yes Pregnancy Support Center is a non-profit charitable organization that has been serving the community since 1987. They provide FREE and CONFIDENTIAL services to women and men experiencing a pregnancy or caring for an infant. Their trained client advocates and staff provide information to help you make an informed choice about your pregnancy. Feeling pressured? This is a big decision. Don't let anyone rush you. Give yourself the time to make an informed decision. They listen without judgment and offer a calm voice of understanding in the middle of your situation. Ours is a caring environment where you will feel comfortable and supported.



The Learning Lamp



The Learning Lamp's mission is to engage all children in the support they need to succeed. They believe success in the classroom is the foundation for success in life – and that no child should go without the opportunity to reach his or her full potential. Founded in 2003 with a single program, The Learning Lamp now serves thousands of children each year, working with families and schools to meet the needs of students.

The **Fayette County Drug and Alcohol Commission** continues to be one of the valued partners in the Better Together Initiative, playing a critical role in improving the health and well-being of individuals and families throughout our region. Their work in prevention, education, intervention, treatment, and recovery support addresses one of the most pressing challenges facing our communities today and provides hope to those working toward healthier lives.

Substance use and addiction affect every part of a community—from families and schools to workplaces and neighborhoods. Through their comprehensive programs and services, Fayette County Drug and Alcohol helps individuals find pathways to recovery while also working to prevent addiction before it begins. Their commitment to education and awareness has helped reduce stigma and open important conversations across Fayette County.

As a Better Together partner, their collaboration with schools, nonprofits, healthcare providers, and local organizations strengthens the county's overall response to substance abuse and recovery. By sharing resources, building partnerships, and supporting one another, they help create a stronger network of care for those in need.

The Fayette County Cultural Trust is proud to work alongside Fayette County Drug and Alcohol as part of this collective effort. Their dedication to healing, prevention, and community support reflects the very spirit of Better Together—showing that when organizations unite around a common purpose, real and lasting change can happen.

The Fayette County Cultural Trust is proud to recognize **Domestic Violence Services of Southwestern Pennsylvania** as one of our valued Better Together partners, providing essential support, advocacy, and hope to individuals and families throughout Fayette County. Their mission to protect survivors, promote awareness, and help build safer communities aligns closely with our shared commitment to strengthening the lives of those we serve.

Domestic violence impacts every community, often leaving lasting emotional, physical, and financial effects on victims and their families. Through emergency shelter, counseling, legal advocacy, prevention education, and supportive services,

Domestic Violence Services of Southwestern Pennsylvania offers critical resources that help survivors find safety, healing, and the opportunity to rebuild their lives with dignity and confidence.

As a Better Together partner, their work goes far beyond crisis response. Their focus on prevention, education, and community outreach helps raise awareness about the warning signs of abuse and promotes healthier relationships across all generations. By working collaboratively with schools, healthcare providers, nonprofits, and other community organizations, they help create a stronger network of support for those in need.

The Fayette County Cultural Trust is honored to stand beside Domestic Violence Services of Southwestern Pennsylvania in this important work. Their dedication to protecting vulnerable individuals and strengthening families embodies the true spirit of Better Together—demonstrating that through partnership, compassion, and shared purpose, we can create a safer, stronger, and more caring Fayette County for all.

The Fayette County Cultural Trust is proud to recognize the **Community Foundation of Fayette County** as one of our valued Better Together partners, whose dedication to strengthening our communities has made a lasting impact across the region. Through their leadership in philanthropy, community investment, and charitable giving, the Foundation continues to serve as a vital resource for nonprofits, families, and local initiatives working to improve the quality of life in Fayette County.

The Community Foundation plays an important role in connecting donors with meaningful causes, helping to build permanent resources that support education, health, human services, community development, and the arts. Their commitment to local giving ensures that investments remain in Fayette County, directly benefiting the people, organizations, and programs that make our communities stronger.

As a Better Together partner, the Foundation's collaborative spirit has helped create opportunities for organizations to grow, innovate, and expand their reach. By supporting projects that address both immediate needs and long-term community goals, they help foster sustainability and encourage partnerships that multiply impact across the county.

The Fayette County Cultural Trust is grateful for the Community Foundation of Fayette County’s continued partnership and shared vision for a stronger future. Their belief in the power of local philanthropy and community collaboration reflects the heart of Better Together—proving that when we invest in one another, we build a more resilient, compassionate, and thriving Fayette County for generations to come.



Fayette County Cultural Trust Better Together Initiative

Better Together: Building Stronger Communities Through Shared Purpose

The Better Together Initiative, a growing program of the Fayette County Cultural Trust, continues to strengthen the fabric of Fayette County by creating a space where nonprofit organizations, community leaders, educators, and service providers can come together to share ideas, resources, and solutions. In 2025, this initiative evolved into an even more dynamic network of collaboration—proving that when organizations work collectively, communities benefit in deeper and more lasting ways.

At a time when rural communities face increasing challenges—from housing insecurity and workforce shortages to mental health concerns and access to services—Better Together has become an important connector. By convening organizations from across multiple sectors, the program encourages open communication, identifies overlapping needs, and sparks partnerships that may not otherwise happen.

Throughout the year, Better Together gatherings focused on practical collaboration, helping organizations align efforts rather than duplicate them. These conversations have led to stronger partnerships, new referral systems, joint programming opportunities, and a greater understanding of the collective impact being made across Fayette County.

What makes Better Together especially valuable is its ability to create relationships before there is a crisis. By building trust and communication among nonprofits and community partners in advance, the county is better prepared to respond to both immediate needs and long-term challenges. This proactive approach helps create a more resilient and unified nonprofit sector.

The initiative also continues to serve as a reminder that no single organization can solve every problem alone. Whether addressing youth opportunities, family support, the arts, health care, or economic development, Better Together reinforces the importance of working across sectors and recognizing that community success is shared success.

As the Fayette County Cultural Trust looks toward the future, Better Together remains a cornerstone of its mission to build stronger, healthier, and more connected communities. In a world where division can too often overshadow progress, this initiative stands as proof that collaboration, compassion, and shared purpose can move Fayette County forward.

Because when we come together—not as separate missions, but as one community—we are stronger, more effective, and truly Better Together.





**Fayette County
Cultural Trust**
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Fayette County Achievement in the Arts: Celebrating Creativity and Excellence

The Fayette County Achievement in the Arts (AITA) program continues to recognize and celebrate the outstanding artistic achievements of high school students throughout Fayette County, honoring excellence in music, theater, and visual arts. Now in its 11th year, this important initiative remains committed to encouraging young talent, supporting arts education, and inspiring the next generation of creative leaders.

A proud partnership between the Fayette County Cultural Trust and the Rotary Club of Connellsville, the Achievement in the Arts program highlights the vital role the arts play in education and personal

development. Each year, participating schools across Fayette County select students who have demonstrated exceptional talent, dedication, and passion in their chosen disciplines. These students represent the future of the creative community and serve as an example of how the arts continue to shape lives and strengthen our region.

The program recognizes students from Albert Gallatin, Brownsville Area, Connellsville Area, Frazier, Geibel Catholic, Laurel Highlands, and Uniontown Area High Schools, ensuring that artistic achievement is celebrated countywide. By placing value on creativity and self-expression, the initiative not only honors student accomplishment but also reinforces the importance of maintaining strong arts programs in our schools.

FayetteTrust.Org/Achievement-In-The-Arts.html

**Fayette County Achievement in the Arts
2025 - 11th Annual**

**Albert Gallatin High School
Music - Emily Jacobs
Theater - Sarah Nuttall
Visual Arts - Riley Rhodes**



**Brownsville Area High School
Theater - Talen Bagwell**

**Connellsville Area High School
Music - Kadance Mickey
Theater - Laken Burnsworth
Visual Arts - Emily Bloom**



**Frazier High School
Music - Olivia Girasia
Theater - Brayden Basso
Visual Arts - Kyrie Fabus**



**Geibel Catholic Junior - Senior High School
Music - Cortni Tinkey
Visual Arts - Sophia Albert**

**Laurel Highlands High School
Music - Hunter Sova
Theater - Emma Miller
Visual Arts - Lena Venersky**

**Uniontown Area High School
Music - Taiyun Galloway
Theater - Donata Lancaster
Visual Arts - Addison Miller**

Supporting the Future of the Arts

The Fayette County Achievement in the Arts program continues to recognize and celebrate outstanding high school students in music, theater, and visual arts throughout Fayette County, encouraging the next generation of artists and creative leaders. To help sustain and grow this important initiative, a dedicated fund has been established through the Community Foundation of Fayette County. This fund provides an opportunity for individuals, businesses, and community supporters to invest directly in arts education and student recognition. Donations are always welcomed and greatly appreciated, ensuring that this meaningful program can continue inspiring young artists for years to come. Through this support, we are not only honoring talent—we are investing in the creative future of our community.

Fayette Entrepreneurship and Education Center 139 West Crawford Avenue



In 2025, the Fayette County Cultural Trust continued to make meaningful progress in advancing the vision of the Fayette Entrepreneurship and Education Center at 139 West Crawford Avenue, adjacent to the historic Connellsville Canteen. What began as an ambitious concept is steadily evolving into a dynamic center for education, entrepreneurship, and cultural engagement—creating new opportunities for community growth in the heart of Connellsville.

One of the most significant accomplishments this year was the continued development of the Black Box Theater, a flexible performance and program space that will serve as a unique cultural asset for Fayette County. Major interior improvements moved the theater closer to completion, including the installation of seating infrastructure and preparation for technical systems. While the space is not yet operational, as the completion of public restrooms remains a critical final step, the progress made in 2025 has brought the project substantially closer to opening.

A major milestone this year was the generous support of the **Eden Hall Foundation**, which awarded the Fayette County Cultural Trust a substantial grant to help equip the Black Box Theater with seating, lighting, and a professional sound system. This investment represents a major step forward in transforming the theater into a fully functional performance and educational venue. We extend our sincere gratitude to the **Eden Hall Foundation** for their generosity and belief in the importance of arts and cultural development in rural communities.

We also wish to recognize **TriState Capital** for their substantial financial support toward the overall

development and renovation of the Fayette Entrepreneurship and Education Center. Their investment has played a critical role in helping move this project forward and strengthening the foundation of this important community asset. Their commitment to revitalization, education, and economic growth in our region is deeply appreciated.

Once completed, the Black Box Theater will provide an intimate setting for performances, lectures, educational workshops, and special programming—with a strong emphasis on initiatives geared toward women and children. In a community where access to dedicated creative spaces is limited, the theater will serve as an important platform for storytelling, learning, empowerment, and artistic expression.

Beyond the theater, the broader Fayette Entrepreneurship and Education Center continues to grow as a hub for lifelong learning. Through partnerships with universities, business leaders, and community organizations, the center is expanding opportunities in entrepreneurship training, workforce development, and educational enrichment for residents of all ages.

With critical infrastructure improvements now in place—including the new roof completed through the support of Bridgeway Capital—and major investments continuing to shape the interior spaces, the Fayette Entrepreneurship and Education Center is no longer simply a vision for the future. It is becoming a reality: a place where education, entrepreneurship, and the arts come together to strengthen community, inspire opportunity, and help shape the next chapter of Fayette County's story.

OSHER Classes through the University of Pittsburgh were held at the Fayette Entrepreneurship and Education Center

Lifelong Learning with the University of Pittsburgh Osher Institute

In 2025, the Fayette Entrepreneurship & Educational Center (FEEC) continued to serve as an important center for adult education and community enrichment through its partnership with the University of Pittsburgh's Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI). Throughout the year, the center hosted a variety of Osher classes in its main classroom, welcoming adult learners from across the region who sought meaningful educational experiences in areas such as history, business, wellness, culture, and the arts.

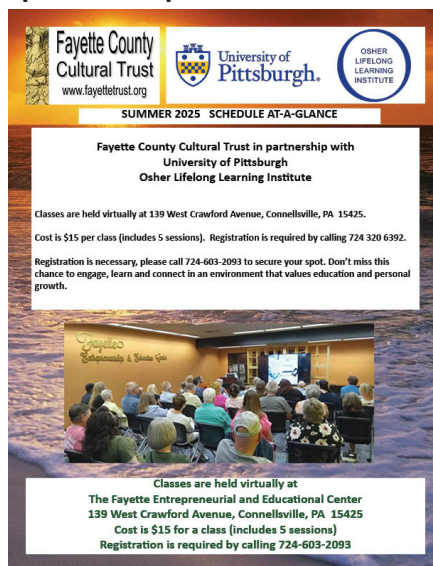
This partnership with the University of Pittsburgh reflects the Fayette County Cultural Trust's ongoing commitment to bringing high-quality educational opportunities directly into the heart of Connellsville. By connecting local residents with university-level enrichment programs, the FEEC helps make lifelong learning more accessible while strengthening the relationship between higher education and rural communities.

The Osher classes have become a valuable resource for adult learners, offering more than knowledge—they create opportunities for social connection, personal growth, and continued engagement with new ideas. Participants not only benefit from the expertise of University of Pittsburgh instructors and guest speakers but also from the shared experience of learning alongside peers who value curiosity and community.

As educational opportunities continue to expand, the FEEC remains proud to partner with the University of Pittsburgh in creating pathways for lifelong learning. Together, this collaboration helps ensure that education remains a vital and accessible part of community life in Fayette County, proving that learning truly has no age limit.

Next Chapter Business Lab: Preparing Entrepreneurs for the Future

In 2025, the Fayette County Entrepreneurship & Educational Center (FEEC) launched the Next Chapter



Business Lab, a hands-on workshop series designed to help entrepreneurs and small business owners understand and apply the growing power of artificial intelligence in today's marketplace.

Led by Seton Hill University's Professor Lyz Marshall, MBA, along with guest AI experts, the three-part series introduced participants to AI fundamentals, marketing and content creation tools, and data analysis for better business decision-making. The workshops focused on practical, real-world applications that business owners could immediately put to use.

This program is especially important for rural entrepreneurs, helping them stay competitive in an increasingly digital economy. By offering this training free of charge, the Fayette County Cultural Trust and Seton Hill University are giving local businesses the tools, knowledge, and confidence to adapt, innovate, and grow in a rapidly changing business world.



Downtown Connellsville



Downtown Connellsville Vision & Mission Statement
Downtown Connellsville is an initiative of the Fayette County Cultural Trust

Downtown Connellsville Vision Statement:

Connellsville is a community of rich natural and historic resources where all embrace: local history, the benefits of tourism centered on the Great Allegheny Passage and the Youghiogheny River, the beauty of the environment, the advantages of local services, businesses, artists and crafters; so that both the quality of life and vitality of businesses are improved through increased visitors and active members of the community.

Downtown Connellsville Mission Statement:

With the current business community, natural and historic resources and our cultural diversity as a solid foundation, the Downtown Connellsville Program will provide opportunities for existing and future businesses to expand and flourish by encouraging economic development and revitalization through the promotion of our heritage, the arts and tourism.

Investing in Beauty, Identity, and Accessibility: Enhancing the Heart of Connellsville

Downtown Connellsville: Enhancing Place, Strengthening Community

The Downtown Connellsville Initiative, led by the Fayette County Cultural Trust, continues to play a vital role in the revitalization and long-term sustainability of Connellsville's historic business district. Through strategic beautification, business support, and community engagement efforts, the initiative remains focused on creating a downtown that is welcoming, vibrant, and economically resilient.

One of the most visible components of this effort is the annual placement and maintenance of seasonal flower planters throughout Main Street and key gateway entrances into downtown. These colorful displays do more than enhance aesthetics—they create a strong sense of place, foster community pride, and reinforce Connellsville's identity as a destination for residents and visitors alike. The planters have become a signature element of the downtown experience, reflecting the care and investment being made in the city's future.

Accessibility and connectivity also remain at the forefront of the initiative through the continued development and distribution of the Downtown Connellsville Walking Map. Produced each spring, the map serves as a valuable resource for residents,

tourists, and trail users, highlighting local businesses, historic landmarks, dining establishments, and cultural attractions. By encouraging exploration and supporting local commerce, the map strengthens the connection between downtown businesses and the growing number of visitors discovering Connellsville.

To further support economic development and historic preservation, Downtown Connellsville continues to offer its matching grant program for façade improvements and business signage. These grants provide property owners and entrepreneurs with the resources to enhance storefronts, improve curb appeal, and invest in the long-term success of their businesses. In 2025, this program remained an important tool in encouraging reinvestment while preserving the architectural character and charm that make downtown Connellsville unique.

Together, these efforts represent more than simple improvements—they reflect a larger vision of community revitalization rooted in pride, partnership, and progress. Through beautification, accessibility, and direct business support, the Downtown Connellsville Initiative continues to strengthen the city's core, ensuring that downtown remains a place where history, commerce, and community come together to thrive.

Stirring Up Community Spirit: Downtown Connellsville's Signature Culinary Walks Downtown Connellsville: Celebrating Community Through Food and Tradition

One of the most anticipated traditions in Downtown Connellsville continues to be its signature culinary events—the Spring Soup Walk and the Fall Chili Walk—bringing together residents, visitors, and local businesses in a celebration of flavor, fellowship, and hometown pride. In 2025, these popular events marked their 10th anniversary, a milestone that reflects a decade of community support and growing enthusiasm for one of Connellsville's most successful downtown traditions.

Held each spring and fall, the Soup and Chili Walks once again welcomed hundreds of participants who traveled from throughout the region to sample signature soups, chilis, and specialty dishes prepared by local restaurants, cafés, pubs, and businesses. What began as a creative way to bring people into downtown has evolved into a cornerstone event that showcases the city's hospitality, creativity, and entrepreneurial spirit.

More than just a food event, the Soup and Chili Walks continue to serve as important economic drivers for Downtown Connellsville. By encouraging participants to walk from business to business, the events increase foot traffic, create exposure for local establishments, and introduce visitors to the diverse shopping, dining, and cultural experiences available throughout the downtown district. Many participants leave not only with favorite recipes but also with new favorite businesses.

These events also play a meaningful role in supporting Downtown Connellsville initiatives, helping generate resources that are reinvested into beautification projects, business support programs, and community events throughout the year. In this way, each ticket purchased helps strengthen the very downtown that participants come to enjoy.

As we celebrate ten years of the Soup Walk and Chili Walk, we are reminded that the simplest things—good food, shared stories, and walking together through our historic streets—can have a lasting impact on community connection and revitalization. Downtown Connellsville extends its sincere appreciation to all of the participating businesses, volunteers, sponsors, and attendees who continue to make these events possible year after year. Together, they remain a true recipe for community success.



Fayette County Train Day - Saturday May 10, 2025

The Fayette County Cultural Trust sponsors Fayette County Train Days. Visitors on this day can tour 7 scratch built train displays located throughout this area for free.

MONONGAHELA RIVER, RAILROAD & TRANSPORTATION MUSEUM
412 Church Street
Brownsville, PA 15417
10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

The free museum will be featuring a G-scale six-train layout by the Pittsburgh Garden Railway Society.





MILLSBORO RAILROAD MUSEUM
Rear 119 Lark Avenue
Millsboro, PA 15348
724-366-4963
10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

1902 Victorian railroad station built using a copy of original P&E blueprints. Displays include a model of the Connellsville B&O train station, artifacts from the West Penn Railways, and more.





FAYETTE COUNTY Cultural Trust
ART • CULTURE • HISTORY • EDUCATION

The Mission of the Fayette County Cultural Trust is to enrich the area's quality of life by promoting our cultural, artistic, historic, and natural assets and by creating partnerships to revitalize communities and further economic development.

Connellsville Canteen
café & museum
31 W. Crawford Ave., Connellsville, PA 15422
724-603-2093 • ConnellsvilleCanteen.org

Connellsville Canteen Café & Museum
♦ Café open Mon - Fri, 8 a.m. - 2 p.m.
♦ World War II Museum



FayetteCounty TRAIN DAY
Saturday, May 10, 2025
★ Open Houses ★
FREE ADMISSION!



THE 2026 Fayette County Train Day
will be held on Saturday, May 09, 2026.

If you have a display located in Fayette County you'd like to include in the tour, please contact:

Fayette County Cultural Trust
139 W. Crawford Ave.
Connellsville, PA 15425
Email factrust@zoominternet.net
or call 724-320-6392.

Thank You Bill Sechler
for taking all the photographs.

HARRY CLARK'S INDIAN CREEK VALLEY RAILROAD DISPLAY
Connellsville Canteen
131 West Crawford Avenue
Connellsville, PA 15425
724-603-2093 | ConnellsvilleCanteen.org
10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

It took Harry Clark 40 years to produce this phenomenal display. Everything is scratch-built, including the tracks! Seeing this 25' x 55' display will take you back to a simpler time.





HOB0 CLUB RAILROAD DISPLAY
West Virginia Northern
Connellsville Community Center
201 East Fairview Avenue, Room 112
Connellsville, PA 15425
10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

The Hobo Club started in 1953, and the display at the Connellsville Community Center is its 4th. The track layout depicts the route, businesses and scenery from Connellsville to West Virginia.





HISTORY OF THE NATIONAL LOCOMOTIVE WORKS - CONNELLSVILLE, PA

In the 1870's the National Locomotive Works, of Connellsville Pennsylvania was formed by John Y Smith. John was not new to locomotive design and construction having co-founded the firm of Smith & Porter in 1866 (precursor of the famous HC Porter & Co.).

In 1872 John Smith formed a new alliance with George Dawson and the firm reorganized as 'Smith & Dawson'. The partnership was short lived when Smith withdrew from the firm a year later. The new reorganization brought William Bailey into partnership to form the new firm of 'Dawson & Bailey'. D&B was founded with a view to entering into the lucrative narrow-gauge market, in competition with Porter Bell & Co. and the Baldwin Locomotive Works. Porter built narrow gauge locomotives for industrial as well as mainline purposes. D&B focused on the growing narrow-gauge boom associated with mainline narrow-gauge development.

Through the 1870s, the firm of D&B became known as the 'National Locomotive Works' or 'National Locomotive & Machine Works' of Connellsville.

National locomotives were generally small machines, of size consistent with the work of Porter, but with a level of finish and elegance in keeping with the better known and established firms on the east coast. Through the 1870s the small firm out-shopped some 20-30 locomotives per year. It is said during the slowest years of 1875, 76 and 77, National turned out more narrow-gauge locomotives than Rogers, Grant and Danforth Combined. In 1875, Dawson left the firm amidst financial troubles, when the firm's major financial supporter fell on hard times. Bailey reorganized the firm as 'W.H. Bailey & Co.', and maintained business under the National Locomotive Works banner. At this time narrow gauge markets began to slow and the financial stability of the firm was never again secure. The firm ultimately failed in May 1878.



DAVID GARLICK RAILROAD DISPLAY
HO Scale
209 W. Allegheny Ave.
Basement (Behind Fox's Tavern)
Connellsville, PA 15425
10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

The trains are operating on David Garlick's HO-scale layout, showcasing his unique approach to benchwork construction for supporting the track right-of-way. Explore Dave's innovative techniques and engineering methods that enhance the stability and realism of his model railroad.





TRI TOWN AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY S SCALE
201 Main and Howell Streets
Dawson, PA 15428
10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Scale-S modeler Sam Powell modeled his display after Southwestern Pennsylvania. Donated by his family, the layout was moved from Galtersburg, MD to Dawson in 2016.





Downtown Connellsville Advertising

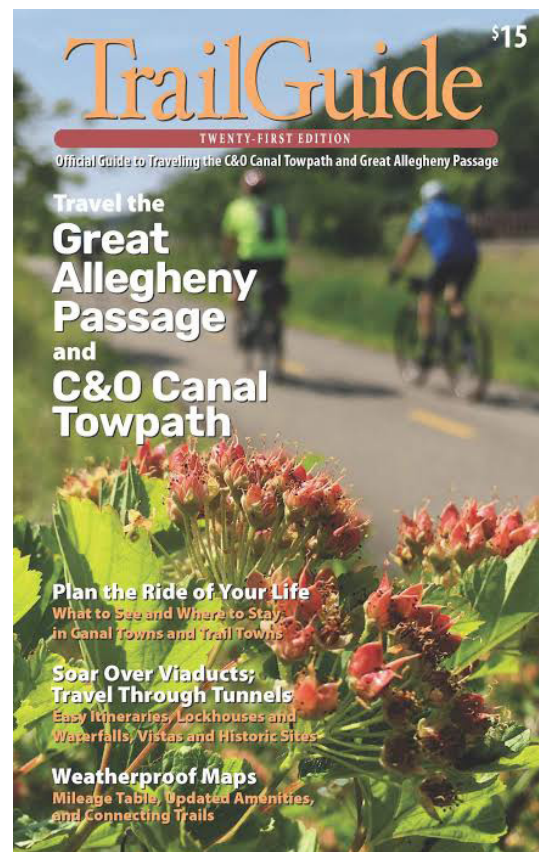
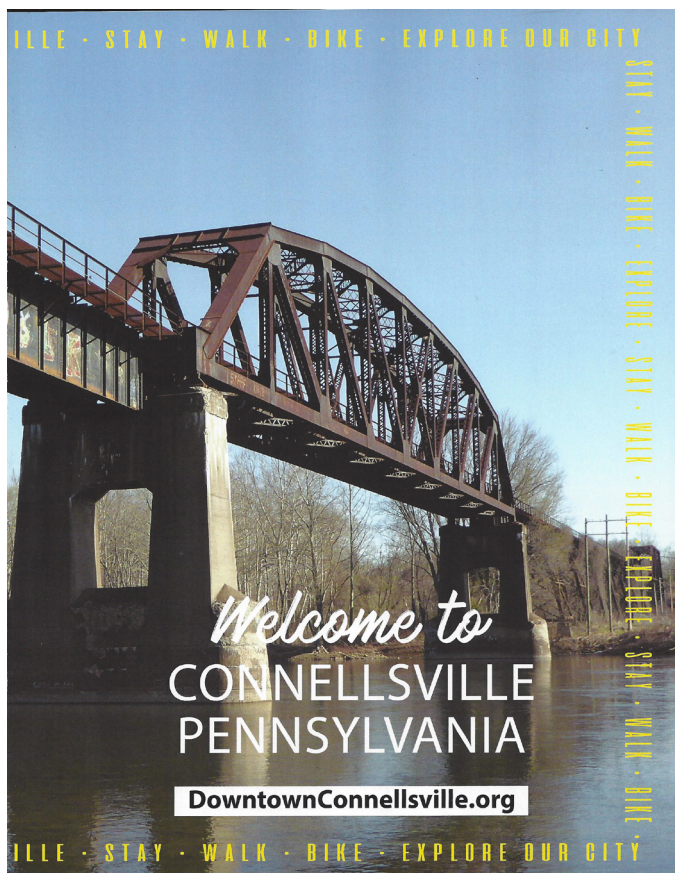
Downtown Connellsville: Connecting Businesses and Visitors Through Strategic Promotion

The Downtown Connellsville Walking Map continues to serve as one of the most valuable promotional tools for strengthening both local businesses and tourism in the city. Produced annually by the Fayette County Cultural Trust, the map is designed to showcase the heart of Connellsville by highlighting local shops, restaurants, cultural attractions, lodging, and historic landmarks, creating an easy-to-follow guide for both residents and visitors to explore the downtown district.

As Connellsville's position along the Great Allegheny Passage (GAP Trail) continues to attract thousands of cyclists and travelers each year, the walking map has become an essential resource in connecting this growing tourism audience directly to local businesses. Many visitors arrive in Connellsville unaware of the variety of dining, shopping, and historical experiences located just a short walk from the trail. The map helps bridge that gap, encouraging trail users to stay longer, spend locally, and discover what makes Connellsville unique.

In addition to local distribution, Downtown Connellsville's advertising presence in the official Great Allegheny Passage Trail Guide has further expanded the city's reach to a much larger regional and national audience. By promoting Connellsville in this widely used publication, the city gains direct visibility among travelers planning their journeys, positioning downtown as a must-stop destination along the trail corridor. This exposure helps drive overnight stays, restaurant visits, retail purchases, and tourism-related spending that directly benefits the local economy.

Together, the Walking Map and Trail Guide advertising work hand-in-hand to strengthen Connellsville's tourism infrastructure while providing affordable, effective marketing opportunities for downtown businesses. These efforts not only help generate foot traffic and economic activity but also reinforce Connellsville's identity as a welcoming, walkable, and vibrant destination in the Laurel Highlands. Through strategic promotion and strong community partnerships, Downtown Connellsville continues to transform visitors into customers—and customers into ambassadors for the city.



**University of Pittsburgh:
Building Bridges Through Community Engagement**

In 2025, the partnership between the University of Pittsburgh and the Fayette County Cultural Trust continued to grow through the ongoing work of the Appalachian Regional Community Initiative (ACRI), led by Bryan Schultz. Under his leadership, University of Pittsburgh students once again immersed themselves in Connellsville and communities throughout Fayette County, using real-world engagement to better understand the challenges and opportunities facing rural Appalachia.

Throughout the year, students from the University of Pittsburgh School of Business traveled to Fayette County to work directly with community organizations, local leaders, nonprofits, and residents. Their experiences went far beyond the classroom, allowing them to study economic development, entrepreneurship, tourism, housing, workforce challenges, and community revitalization through firsthand interaction. By listening, observing, and collaborating, students gained a deeper understanding of how rural communities navigate change and build resilience.

Connellsville served as a key anchor in these experiences, providing students with opportunities

to explore historic preservation efforts, downtown redevelopment strategies, heritage tourism, and grassroots community partnerships. Through visits to the Connellsville Canteen, the Fayette Entrepreneurship & Educational Center, and local small businesses, students witnessed how history, education, and economic development can work together to strengthen a community.

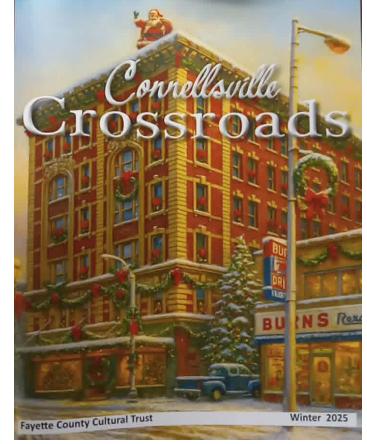
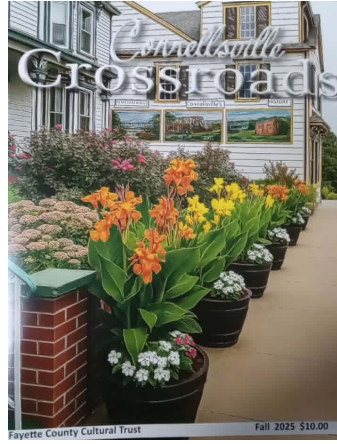
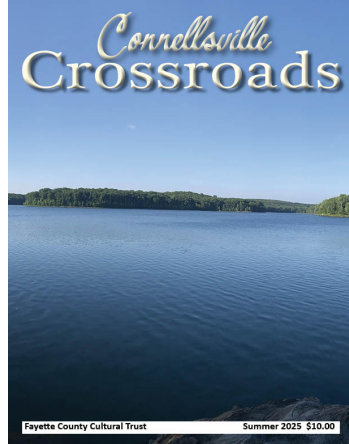
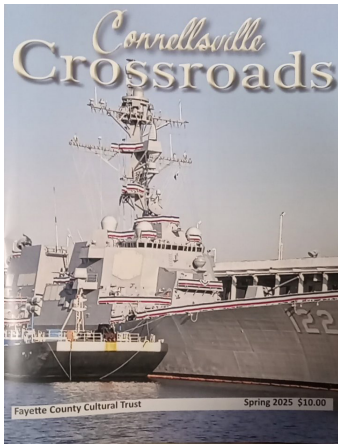
The ACRI program continues to demonstrate the power of long-term university partnerships rooted in trust and mutual learning. Rather than simply studying Fayette County, Pitt students became active participants in conversations about its future—bringing fresh perspectives while learning from the knowledge, experience, and determination of the people who call this region home.

The Fayette County Cultural Trust remains grateful for the continued partnership with Bryan Schultz and the University of Pittsburgh. Their commitment to creating meaningful educational experiences while investing in rural communities has helped position Fayette County as a living classroom for civic engagement, business innovation, and community-driven change. Together, this partnership continues to build bridges between higher education and rural Appalachia, creating lasting impact for both students and the communities they serve.



Connellsville Crossroads Magazine

Connellsville Crossroads Magazine: Preserving the Past, Celebrating the Present, Inspiring the Future
Since its debut in the spring of 2009, Connellsville Crossroads Magazine has served as a treasured publication dedicated to sharing the rich history, dynamic present, and promising future of the Connellsville area.



Connellsville Crossroads: Preserving Our Stories, Strengthening Our Identity

Published quarterly by the Fayette County Cultural Trust, Connellsville Crossroads Magazine continues to serve as one of the most important storytelling platforms in our region—capturing the people, places, events, and history that define Connellsville and the surrounding communities. More than just a magazine, it has become a living archive of local heritage, documenting the moments, memories, and milestones that shape our identity and might otherwise be forgotten over time.

In 2025, Connellsville Crossroads expanded its reach to a growing subscription base of 225 readers across the country, reflecting the strong connection many former residents, historians, and supporters still feel to their hometown. For many, the magazine provides an important link back to their roots, allowing them to stay connected to the people, traditions, and progress of the community they still call home in their hearts.

The importance of Connellsville Crossroads lies not only in preserving local history, but in helping tell the complete story of a community—its struggles, triumphs, traditions, and future. Through in-depth features, personal profiles, historical retrospectives, educational articles, and coverage of community events, the magazine highlights both the legacy of Connellsville's past and the momentum shaping its future. It shines a light on local businesses, organizations, leaders, and everyday citizens who

continue to make a difference.

In an era where local journalism is fading and many small-town stories go untold, Connellsville Crossroads fills a critical gap by focusing exclusively on the stories that matter most to Fayette County. It fosters community pride, encourages civic engagement, strengthens intergenerational connections, and ensures that younger generations understand the history that built the community they live in today.

The magazine also serves as an important educational resource, preserving firsthand accounts, historical photographs, and local narratives that contribute to the broader understanding of the region's role in industry, transportation, culture, and community development. In many ways, it is helping preserve the soul of Connellsville—one story at a time.

As the publication continues to grow, the Fayette County Cultural Trust remains committed to expanding the reach and impact of Connellsville Crossroads, ensuring that the history, spirit, and future of Connellsville remain documented for generations to come. Because when a community tells its own story, it not only preserves its past—it strengthens its future.



The Connellsville Canteen: Preserving History, Inspiring the Community and Beyond



Connellsville Canteen: Preserving History, Serving Community

The Connellsville Canteen Café & Museum continues to stand as one of Fayette County's most treasured historical and educational destinations, serving not only as a museum of remembrance but as a living place of hospitality, learning, and community connection. In 2025, the Canteen welcomed hundreds of visitors from across the country, reinforcing its role as a cornerstone of heritage tourism in the region.

Throughout the year, the Canteen proudly hosted numerous Road Scholar tour groups, offering immersive lunch and dinner programs centered on the story of the Connellsville Canteen and the vital role Fayette County played during World War II. These educational visits gave guests a firsthand look into how over 800 local women volunteers served more than one million troops passing through Connellsville by rail, making the Canteen one of the most significant wartime hospitality centers in the nation.

The Canteen also became a featured stop for several Mystery Tours, bringing visitors into the city to discover one of Pennsylvania's hidden historical gems. These tours continue to introduce new audiences to Connellsville's powerful wartime legacy while contributing to local tourism and economic activity.

As Connellsville's presence along the Great Allegheny Passage grows, the Canteen remained a welcoming destination for traveling bicyclists. Many stopped for meals, rest, and the opportunity to explore the museum's WWII exhibits, while also learning about the region's industrial and transportation history through Harry Clark's Indian Creek Valley Railroad display, one of the most detailed and

engaging model railroad exhibits in the area.

In November, thanks to the generous support of Janney Montgomery Scott, the Canteen was honored to host a free Veterans Breakfast, bringing together veterans from multiple generations for fellowship, gratitude, and recognition of their service. This event continues the Canteen's longstanding tradition of honoring those who served our nation.

The Canteen was also proud to serve as one of the featured sites during Fayette County Train Day in May, joining six other historical and railroad-related displays open to the public. This annual event attracted train enthusiasts, families, and history lovers from throughout the region, further strengthening Connellsville's identity as a community deeply connected to rail history.

In addition to its historical programming, the Canteen remained a vibrant community gathering place through events like Breakfast with Santa, creating lasting holiday memories for local families, as well as a variety of Lunch & Learn programs that brought educational speakers, artists, and community leaders together to engage the public in meaningful conversations.

From welcoming veterans and travelers to educating visitors about wartime history and local heritage, the Connellsville Canteen continues to embody the spirit of service, remembrance, and community. More than a museum, it remains a place where history comes alive—preserving the stories of the past while creating new memories for future generations.



Harry Clark's Indian Creek Valley Railroad Display at the Connellsville Canteen

Harry Clark's Indian Creek Valley Railroad: Preserving Rail History in Motion

A highlight of the Connellsville Canteen Café & Museum continues to be Harry Clark's Indian Creek Valley Railroad Display, one of the region's most remarkable historical and artistic attractions. This extraordinary exhibit remains a major draw for visitors, offering an immersive look into Fayette County's deep railroad heritage through an intricate and highly detailed miniature world that reflects the communities, industries, and rail lines that once defined the region.

Built by Harry Clark over four decades, the display is a one-of-a-kind, scratch-built masterpiece that brings together the landscapes of Connellsville, Dickerson Run, and the Indian Creek Valley, capturing the spirit of a time when railroads were the lifeblood of the local economy. Its craftsmanship, historical accuracy, and storytelling continue to captivate railroad enthusiasts, history lovers, and families alike.

In 2025, the exhibit remained one of the Canteen's most talked-about experiences, particularly for visitors arriving through Road Scholar tours, Train Day celebrations, Mystery Tours, and the many cyclists traveling the Great Allegheny Passage. For many, the display serves as both an introduction to the area's

industrial past and a reminder of how vital rail transportation was in shaping the identity of Connellsville and Fayette County.

As part of the broader museum experience at the Connellsville Canteen, Harry Clark's railroad display enriches heritage tourism by extending visitor engagement and creating a deeper connection to the region's transportation history. More than just a model railroad, it is a living tribute to the ingenuity, hard work, and legacy of the generations who built their lives along these tracks. It continues to inspire wonder, preserve local stories, and strengthen Connellsville's place as an important destination for railroad and WWII history in the Laurel Highlands.

The Fayette County Cultural Trust would also like to recognize and thank the dedicated volunteers who continue to help maintain and operate the display. Their time, care, and commitment ensure that this treasured exhibit remains active, engaging, and preserved for future generations to experience and enjoy. Their behind-the-scenes work plays an important role in keeping this important piece of Fayette County history alive.

"When we invest in our history, we invest in our economy, our communities, and the generations that will follow."



Train Display Volunteers Carver and Alex

Empowering Minds and Enhancing Lives: Educational Programs at the Connellsville Canteen

Lunch & Learn at the Connellsville Canteen: Bringing History, Ideas, and Community Together

In 2025, the Connellsville Canteen Café & Museum continued to strengthen its role as both a premier heritage tourism destination and a center for lifelong learning through the Fayette County Cultural Trust's growing Lunch & Learn series. Over the course of the year, six educational programs welcomed residents, visitors, veterans, educators, and lifelong learners to enjoy lunch while exploring a wide range of topics including local history, World War II, entrepreneurship, music, heritage tourism, Appalachian culture, and community development.

The Lunch & Learn series reflects the Trust's belief that education should be engaging, accessible, and shared. Each presentation provides participants with the opportunity to hear directly from historians, authors, musicians, educators, business leaders, and community experts while asking questions, sharing experiences, and engaging in meaningful discussion. These programs transform the Connellsville Canteen into more than a museum—they create a living classroom where history is not simply displayed, but experienced.

The educational impact of the Connellsville Canteen extends well beyond these monthly programs. Throughout 2025, the Canteen welcomed Road Scholar educational travel groups, hosted numerous Mystery Tour visitors, and greeted hundreds of cyclists traveling the Great Allegheny Passage, many of whom stopped to learn about Connellsville's extraordinary role during World War II. Visitors also explored Harry Clark's nationally recognized Indian Creek Valley Railroad Display, gaining a deeper appreciation for the railroads that helped shape Fayette County and the surrounding region. These experiences have established the Connellsville Canteen as an important destination where history, education, and tourism intersect.

More than educational presentations, Lunch & Learn programs strengthen the social fabric of our community. They bring together people from diverse backgrounds who share a passion for learning, fostering new friendships, civic pride, and a greater appreciation for the people, places, and stories that define Fayette County. In an increasingly digital world,

these gatherings provide something that cannot be replicated online—the opportunity to learn face-to-face, exchange ideas, and build meaningful relationships.

By combining education, hospitality, and heritage tourism, the Connellsville Canteen continues to preserve the past while inspiring future generations. The Fayette County Cultural Trust remains committed to expanding educational opportunities that celebrate our shared history, encourage lifelong learning, and strengthen community connections. Through the Lunch & Learn series and the thousands of visitors welcomed each year, the Connellsville Canteen continues to demonstrate that some of the most meaningful conversations—and the greatest lessons—are shared around the table.

The Connellsville Canteen is more than a museum—it is a place where history is preserved, stories are shared, visitors become friends, and learning never stops.

Creating Community Through Heritage Tourism

The Connellsville Canteen is much more than a museum—it is an investment in the future of our community. Every visitor who walks through its doors contributes to the local economy by dining in our restaurants, shopping in our downtown businesses, exploring our attractions, and often extending their stay throughout Fayette County. Through heritage tourism, educational programming, and community events, the Canteen helps transform our rich history into an economic asset that benefits residents, businesses, and visitors alike.

As a signature initiative of the Fayette County Cultural Trust, the Canteen reflects our belief that preserving history and investing in community development go hand in hand. By promoting heritage tourism, supporting small businesses, creating educational opportunities, encouraging downtown investment, and improving the quality of life for our residents, we are helping build a stronger and more vibrant Fayette County. Every tour group welcomed, every student inspired, every cyclist introduced to our community, and every visitor who discovers Connellsville contributes to a lasting legacy that extends far beyond our museum walls.



Sam Turich
Rural Arts Collaborative
Manager

Rural Arts Collaborative
Founder and Consultant
Carmelle Nickens



Rural Arts Collaborative - Placing teaching artists in schools

Rural Arts Collaborative: Expanding Creativity, Strengthening Communities

The Rural Arts® Collaborative (RAC), a signature initiative of the Fayette County Cultural Trust, continues to redefine arts education across rural communities by connecting students with professional artists in meaningful, long-term learning experiences. With sustained support from the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation, RAC remains a powerful force in bringing arts-integrated education to schools where creative opportunities are often limited but deeply needed.

Since launching in 2013, RAC has impacted more than 75 schools across Southwestern Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Ohio, serving thousands of students through innovative residencies in visual arts, theater, storytelling, music, ceramics, and digital media. In 2025, the program expanded its reach into Bentworth, California Area School District, Albert Gallatin, and South East Greene, while continuing to strengthen relationships with existing school partners.

What makes RAC unique is its commitment to long-term engagement. Rather than one-time workshops, students and teachers work closely with professional artists over extended periods, allowing creativity to become embedded in the classroom experience. These residencies not only enhance academic learning but also foster collaboration, confidence, and critical thinking—skills essential for success both inside and outside the classroom.

This year, RAC also saw a growing emphasis on interdisciplinary learning, blending traditional art forms with emerging technologies, storytelling, and

community history. Through these experiences, students were encouraged to explore their own identities, preserve local culture, and imagine new possibilities for their futures.

Beyond the classroom, the Collaborative continues to strengthen rural communities by building partnerships between schools, arts organizations, local businesses, and cultural institutions. These connections help create a stronger regional arts ecosystem while demonstrating that rural communities can be leaders in innovation, creativity, and educational transformation.

At its heart, the Rural Arts Collaborative is about more than art—it is about giving students a voice, creating spaces for expression, and showing young people that their stories matter. In a time when connection, resilience, and creativity are more important than ever, RAC continues to prove that the arts are not an extra—they are essential.

The Fayette County Cultural Trust is honored to serve as steward of this groundbreaking program and remains deeply grateful to the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation, our corporate sponsors, teaching artists, and school partners for their continued investment in the future of rural education. Together, we are not only teaching art—we are shaping lives, building confidence, and creating stronger communities through creativity.

Participating artists include:

Diane Adams
Glynis Board
DW Gregory
Hiromi Katayama
Rebecca Kiger
Michael McKowen
Laura Jean McLaughlin
James Moore
Frank Morgan
Jess Reger

Michelle Sophia Sabol
James Simon
Heather Snyder
Calvin Stemley
Nancy Tirone
Codi Yoders Vanata
Robert Villamagna

Art Organizations
Attack Theatre
Bricolage



Rural Arts Collaborative - 2024 - 2025 Participating Schools

2024

Jefferson-Morgan, Greene County, Pennsylvania - 2024
Carmichaels Middle School, Greene County, Pennsylvania - 2024
Waynesburg Central HS - Greene County, Pennsylvania - 2024

2025

Bentworth Middle/High School, Washington County, Pennsylvania Spring 2025
California School District – 2025
Albert Gallatin High School, Fayette County, Pennsylvania – Fall 2025
Jefferson – Morgan – Greene County, Pennsylvania – Fall 2025
South East Greene County, Pennsylvania – Fall 2025

Rural Arts Collaborative®
A Signature Initiative of the Fayette County Cultural Trust

RuralArtsCollaborative.Org



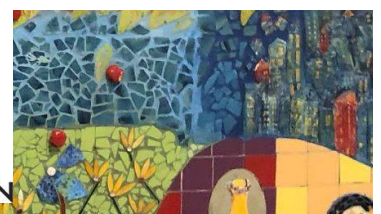
**Primary
Sponsor**



**Corporate
Sponsors**



MID ATLANTIC
ARTS FOUNDATION



Rural Arts Collaborative: 2025 Residencies

In 2025, the Rural Arts Collaborative (RAC) continued to expand its impact by bringing professional teaching artists directly into classrooms across Washington, Greene, and Fayette Counties, creating transformative learning experiences through long-term, curriculum-based arts residencies. These programs remain a cornerstone of the Fayette County Cultural Trust's commitment to arts education in underserved rural communities, providing students with opportunities to explore creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking through hands-on artistic expression.

At California Area High School (Washington County), Attack Theatre led a 10-week dance and movement residency from February through April, engaging 29 students in the classroom and reaching an additional 53 students during the culminating performance. The residency focused on storytelling through movement, visual thinking techniques, and physical learning strategies that helped students connect academic content to creative expression. Teachers involved noted the unique ways movement added to traditional classroom instruction and reinforced the power of storytelling as a teaching tool.

Artist Hiromi Katayama led a 10-week visual arts residency at Bentworth High School (Washington County), where 24 students designed, created, and installed an original gallery of ceramic plates and Japanese-inspired paintings. Students explored the history and techniques of Japanese ceramic and visual art traditions while learning the full process of artistic design, production, and gallery installation. This semester-long project gave students a deeper appreciation of international art forms while creating a lasting visual display for the school.

In Greene County, artist Diane Adams worked with 12 students at Mapletown Junior/Senior High School on a semester-long mural project inspired by the imaginative style of filmmaker and visual artist Tim Burton, particularly his interpretations of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass. Students designed, painted, and installed a permanent mural near the school's main entrance, learning valuable skills in large-scale design, teamwork, and artistic execution. The project also

gave students a chance to build confidence and strengthen their painting abilities through hands-on experience.

Also in Greene County, Hiromi Katayama completed another 10-week visual arts residency at Jefferson-Morgan High School, where 12 students designed and installed a permanent mosaic mural above the school's main entrance. The mural, featuring the school's Rocket mascot set against a star-filled background, provided students with an opportunity to learn mosaic design, material application, and large-scale installation techniques while leaving behind a permanent symbol of school pride.

In Fayette County, renowned jazz musician Calvin Stemley led a 10-week jazz residency at Albert Gallatin High School, serving 45 students through an in-depth exploration of jazz history, improvisation, and performance. Students studied the evolution of jazz, from its roots in New Orleans to the influence of iconic artists such as Louis Armstrong, Miles Davis, and Dizzy Gillespie. The residency culminated in two major performances: the school's annual Holiday Concert, attended by over 150 community members, and a live performance by Stemley's professional jazz ensemble, where students joined the band on stage—an unforgettable experience that connected classroom learning to professional-level performance.

Together, these residencies highlight the continued strength of the Rural Arts Collaborative as a powerful educational model. By integrating professional artists into rural classrooms, RAC helps students build confidence, develop new skills, and experience the arts as a meaningful part of their education and personal growth. These programs not only enrich learning but also leave lasting artistic legacies within the schools and communities they serve.



2025: A Year of Lasting Community Impact

The Fayette County Cultural Trust continues to serve as one of the region's leading nonprofit organizations dedicated to strengthening communities through historic preservation, arts and culture, education, tourism, entrepreneurship, and economic development. For more than two decades, the Trust has demonstrated that investing in people, partnerships, and places creates stronger neighborhoods and a higher quality of life for everyone who calls Fayette County home.

Our work extends far beyond preserving history. We create opportunities that inspire innovation, encourage lifelong learning, support local businesses, celebrate the arts, and build meaningful partnerships that improve the economic and cultural vitality of our communities. Every program we develop is designed with one goal in mind: creating a stronger Fayette County for future generations.

Throughout 2025, the Fayette County Cultural Trust continued to expand its impact across multiple initiatives that serve residents of all ages. Through the Neighborhood Partnership Program, we invested in community revitalization and provided direct funding to nonprofit organizations that address critical needs throughout the Connellsville area. Our Downtown Connellsville initiative continued to enhance the historic business district through beautification projects, façade and business improvement grants, community events, tourism promotion, and business development efforts that encourage investment and strengthen our local economy.

The Fayette Entrepreneurship & Educational Center continued its transformation into a regional hub for education, workforce development, entrepreneurship, and innovation. Through partnerships with the University of Pittsburgh, Seton Hill University, and numerous community organizations, the Center offered lifelong learning opportunities, artificial intelligence workshops, entrepreneurial training, and educational programming while continuing construction of the Black Box Theater, an exciting new venue that will expand access to the performing arts and educational experiences throughout Fayette County.

The Connellsville Canteen remained one of South-

western Pennsylvania's premier heritage tourism destinations, preserving the remarkable story of the community's role during World War II while welcoming visitors from across the nation. Educational programming, Lunch & Learn presentations, veterans' programs, historical tours, and community events continue to make the Canteen a place where history comes alive and inspires future generations.

Our Rural Arts Collaborative continued to bring professional artists into rural classrooms, enriching educational opportunities for students through hands-on experiences in visual arts, music, theater, and creative expression. At the same time, the Better Together Initiative strengthened collaboration among nonprofit organizations, educators, healthcare providers, government agencies, and community leaders, proving that partnerships produce greater results than any organization can achieve alone.

The Trust also celebrated artistic excellence through the Fayette County Achievement in the Arts program, promoted heritage tourism through Train Days and Downtown Connellsville's signature Soup Walk and Chili Walk events, published Connellsville Crossroads magazine, expanded educational programming, and continued promoting Connellsville and Fayette County as premier destinations within Pennsylvania's Laurel Highlands.

The success of the Fayette County Cultural Trust is built upon collaboration. Our accomplishments are made possible through the dedication of our Board of Directors, volunteers, staff, corporate partners, foundations, donors, government agencies, educational institutions, and countless community organizations that share our vision for a stronger future. Together, we continue to demonstrate that strategic partnerships, community investment, and civic engagement create lasting change.

As we look toward the future, the Fayette County Cultural Trust remains committed to preserving our heritage, expanding educational opportunities, supporting economic development, fostering creativity, and strengthening the communities we proudly serve. Every project, partnership, and investment reflects our belief that vibrant communities are built through collaboration, innovation, and a shared commitment to improving the lives of others.

The Fayette County Cultural Trust would like to thank it’s board members, donors and volunteers that helped make 2024 a successful year!

Daniel Cocks - Executive Director

Board Members

Michael Edwards - President
Karen Hechler - Vice President
Bryan Kisiel - Treasurer
Gerry Browell
John Coleman
Margaret Hous
Lori Omatick

Connellsville Crossroads Magazine
Susan Joy Lewis - Editor
Daniel Cocks
Karen Hechler

Downtown Connellsville

Gerry Browell
Michael Edwards
Laurie Hensel
Bryan Kisiel
Leo Rudnik
Pat Stefano

Fayette County
Achievement in the Arts

Gerry Browell
Daniel Cocks
Michael Edwards
Charles Motyka

Connellsville Canteen

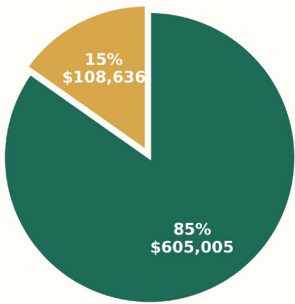
Ann Nicholson
Zach Strauser

Rural Arts Collaborative
Carm Nickens

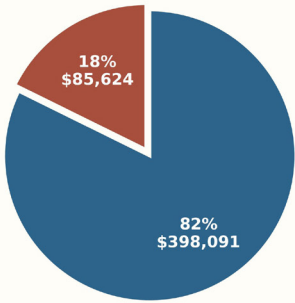


2025 FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

Revenue and Expense Allocation
REVENUE
Total \$713,641



Grants and Contributions — 85%
Other Revenue — 15%
EXPENSES
Total \$483,715



Figures shown in U.S. dollars

2025 Financial Recap

The Fayette County Cultural Trust (“FCCT”) uses the calendar year for IRS 990 and audit reporting purposes. As such, FCCT incorporates two financial cycles in this annual financial report. The IRS/audit calendar year reporting runs from January 1st through December 31st and Pennsylvania’s fiscal year for grant management is a 12-month period that runs from July 1st of the current year through June 30th of the following year. Pennsylvania’s Neighborhood Partnership tax credit program is based on the state’s fiscal year. The financial information reported in this annual financial report for this program only reflects a portion of the income/expense from each state fiscal cycle (the 2nd half of the 2024-25 cycle and the first half of the 2025-26 cycle). Annually, this may result in some years showing a surplus or a deficit resulting from timing differences related to expenses incurred that do not match up in the same calendar year as the receipt of the related grant funding. Any questions may be directed to the FCCT office.

The official registration and financial information of the Fayette County Cultural Trust, Inc. (EIN: 65-1283985), a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll free, within Pennsylvania, 800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

Thank You

to our Neighborhood Partnership Program sponsors!



With Gratitude

The accomplishments highlighted throughout this 2025 Impact Report represent far more than completed projects or successful events—they represent the collective efforts of people and organizations working together to strengthen Fayette County. Every educational program, downtown improvement, arts initiative, historic preservation project, community event, and partnership reflects the dedication of individuals who believe that our communities are worth investing in.

The Fayette County Cultural Trust extends its deepest appreciation to our Board of Directors for their leadership and vision, our volunteers whose countless hours make so much of our work possible, our staff, corporate partners, foundations, individual donors, and the many community organizations that continue to believe in our mission. Your generosity, commitment, and partnership have allowed us to preserve our heritage, expand educational opportunities, support the arts, encourage entrepreneurship, promote tourism, and improve the quality of life throughout Fayette County.

We also extend our sincere gratitude to the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) for its continued investment through the Neighborhood Partnership Program (NPP). This partnership continues to be an important catalyst for community revitalization in Connellsville. During 2025, NPP funding helped the Fayette County Cultural Trust distribute \$23,500 to seven Connellsville-based nonprofit organizations, supporting programs focused on education, healthcare, public safety, recreation, youth services, and food security. These investments strengthened local organizations, expanded services, and reinforced the power of collaboration in building stronger communities.

While the Neighborhood Partnership Program is only one part of our broader mission, it has helped create new opportunities, strengthen partnerships, and leverage additional investments that continue to benefit Connellsville and the surrounding region. We are grateful to DCED and to our corporate partners whose confidence in our community continues to make lasting progress possible.

As we look toward the future, we remain inspired by what can be accomplished when people come together around a shared vision. The Fayette County Cultural Trust believes that every investment in history, education, the arts, entrepreneurship, and community development is an investment in future generations.

Thank you for believing in our mission. Thank you for believing in our community. Most importantly, thank you for helping us build a stronger, more vibrant Fayette County. Together, we are preserving our past, enriching our present, and inspiring our future.