

This edition of NAC News has been taken over by our amazing teens from NAC Teen Association. This board of seven teens has been working to create a lasting arts community for generations to come. They are the future leaders of NAC and we are blessed to have them committed to making a difference in their community. Our teens have volunteered over 1000 hours of service to NAC to date. Our teens are committed to service. They serve as mentors, fundraisers and artists. We have hope for the future of Norwalk arts center and our community.

Hey! So recently Norwalk Arts Center was given the ability to receive tax credits for 4 million dollars. This does not mean that every taxpayer is paying a portion to this 4 Mil. It means that a syndicator or syndicators will get a tax write off for a charitable donation of that sum. So, to reiterate it is not A WASTE OF TAX MONEY because it's not your money. But let's say, for example, it was your money. How would I be able to convince you that theatre is in fact not a waste to the community?

1. First let's break into the Economic Side of things (because money is always on our minds):

Downtown Revitalization: Restoring the Norwalk Theatre anchors Main Street. It increases foot traffic, draws tourism, and supports small businesses nearby: coffee shops, restaurants, retail, etc. A working theatre draws hundreds of visitors per show weekend, which translates into local dollars. For example, when a performance occurs at 22 E Main St (Because, no, the old theatre is not open yet) people will also want to get dinner or stop into other shops on Main, this gives local businesses business that may otherwise not occur, due to a lack of foot traffic.

Property Values Go Up: Areas with walkable, active cultural hubs tend to see a boost in real estate interest. Even passive residents benefit when demand for housing increases around a revitalized town center. Because who wouldn't want to live or open a business close to where all the people and entertainment are?

Jobs & Skills: The arts center isn't just about actors. Set designers, lighting techs, graphic designers, sound engineers, teaching artists, and small contractors all get paid work here — many of whom are local hires. Understandably, you wouldn't know this if you weren't inside the business itself, helping to create fundraising and production- which is no easy task.

Overall, I would say think of it as a stimulus — like infrastructure, but for people's sense of place in the economy.

2. Now secondly, as a young person in the community, I firsthand see issues amongst teenagers and community members still growing up. So, what does theatre do for them? Let's break it down once again:

Youth Development & Crime Prevention: Programs like Teen Theatre and Junior Theatre give young people a place to belong — off the streets, away from their cell phones, and out of trouble.

Studies show that arts-engaged youth are more likely to graduate high school and less likely to engage in risky behavior. Performing builds confidence, collaboration, time management, and public speaking — all of which are highly transferable life and career skills. For example, I have been involved in shows since I was young and the skills and community I've learned from them have given me the confidence to write this, because my passion for the arts is something that will get me to write an essay(s) like I'm in school. More importantly, it has set me up for public speaking and collaborative efforts. I won't blab about my whole resume, but NAC has been a part of my life since it was brought to fruition, and this has had only a positive effect. It has increased my engagement in leadership/volunteer positions and community involvement, because it gives me a good reason to.

So, with that my lovely taxpayers, I ask you:

Would you rather fund more youth activities... or deal with what happens when there aren't any?

3. So now I bring you to my third point, and this is one for the history buffs to learn more about if they go to norwalkartscenter.org (shameless plug I know)

Restoration Is Preservation and it has a Financial Return! Tearing down historic buildings is expensive and permanent. Restoration, especially on a beloved and iconic 1940s theater, with so much work already put in, maintains the cultural and architectural DNA of Norwalk.

Once restored, the building becomes self-sustaining: rentable for weddings, film screenings, lectures, regional events, and of course my favorite, live theatre. Opening up a historic building for new event use is income-generating, not money-sucking.

On the more logistical side of restoration, projects like the 57 E Main Theatre revitalization often attract state and federal matching grants, meaning local dollars get multiplied. Norwalk Arts Center and its passionate, unwavering, and generous board have proven how serious they are about bringing this building back to life, and have already earned some of these grants. Hence the lighting of the Marquee, late last year. And it continues to shine on as a symbol of the continued commitment to bring back a gem. But let me be clear, it isn't just a vanity project, it is a historic asset being turned into a community tool.

4. Now for my fourth and final point, I want to talk about what the theatre will do for the wellbeing of our community members.

Think mental health (scary I know, but we're adults here, so let's talk about feelings). Community arts programs combat loneliness and support wellbeing, especially in rural and small-town America where those issues are growing fast. You may feel isolated in Norwalk, Ohio and that's no surprise.

I've had the pleasure and honor of being involved in NAC productions, and I, like many others, can say I finished each production with a new family, and benefits don't end there. Older adults find meaning through community theatre or volunteering. Kids can find role models and learn new skills. Teens get to express themselves and meet new people. Families get wholesome, live entertainment for far less cost than a trip to Cleveland or Columbus.

There's no price tag for identity, connection, or belonging, but their absence is costly.

So next time you think it's a waste of time or money, consider how it could boost your friends' business, give your kid a place to belong, help your grandparents get out of the house, teach you something new, and build a community that you're happy to be in. If you start to put your guard down around the arts, you learn just how important they can be. If my words didn't inspire you today, maybe they can some other time. Just think about it for me, because this place means a lot to me and so many others, and it's making a difference.

Best regards,
Isaac Cook, NAC Teen Association President

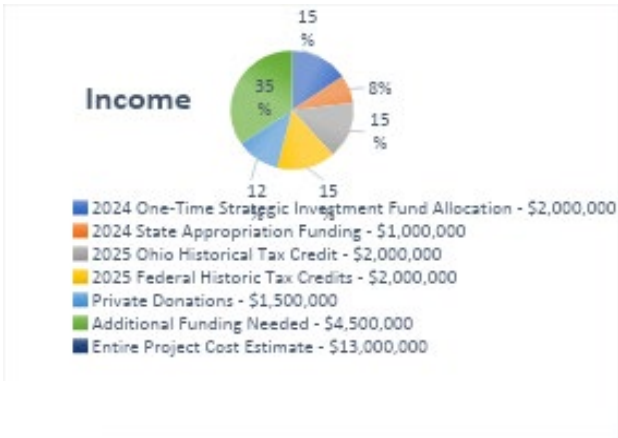
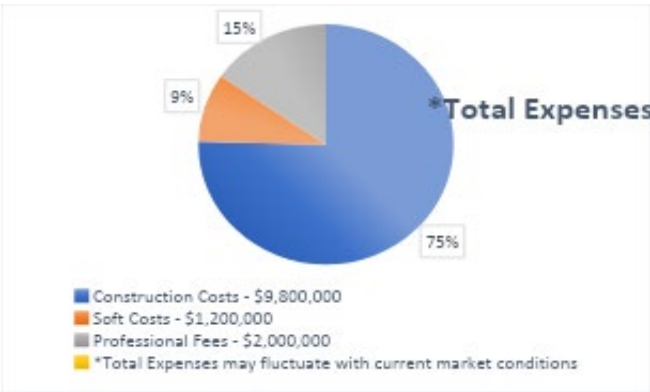
Norwalk walk Theatre Project is awarded State & Federal Historic Tax Credits boosting total fundraising goal to over 60%!

The reality of opening the doors to the historic Norwalk Theatre is becoming more evident by the day. On June 25, the Ohio Department of Development Director, Lydia Mihalik shared the amazing news that the Norwalk Theatre Rehabilitation Project has been awarded \$2,000,000 in Ohio Historic Tax Credits and the National Park Service awarded an additional \$2,000,000 in Federal Historic Tax Credits to the project as well.

So, where does this put us overall with our fundraising efforts for the total project? Pictures seem to work better sometimes for me.

If you read Isaac's article on the front cover, you can clearly understand the importance of bringing this beautiful gem back to life and creating a vibrant arts district that will serve many generations to come. Please reach out to me if you would like to donate to this project or have any questions at all. Together, we can experience life through art!

Sincerely, Dina Lukasko- Executive Director Norwalk Arts Center



NAC Teens Mentor Younger Set



Teens prepare for Arts Explorers Event

Norwalk Arts Center’s arts education programs provide a safe, non-judgmental environment for youth to create and express themselves, and area teens help make that environment even more fun and relatable.

The Arts Explorers program is typically held on a quarterly basis for children in first through fourth grades, a group that needs a little more attention when it comes to learning new things. That’s where our teen volunteers have stepped up, providing assistance to our Arts Education Committee members who develop and teach the programs. The teacher to student ratio is already favorable at these events (6:1),

but when teens volunteer to help, the ratio is stronger (4:1), meaning each explorer has an even more memorable experience.

Summer theatre camp involves even more youth for longer periods, so our teen helpers provide the energy and enthusiasm to keep them engaged and entertained. During this summer’s camp, a generous grant from GeoTrac Foundation and sponsorship from Vargo’s meant teens Aubrey Darovich, Molly McFadden, and Sophia Smith, all who had proven themselves in volunteer positions before, were able to receive a stipend for their work.



Sophia Smith helps with Summer Camp

As teens generously share their time and passion for the arts, they become great role models, providing a strong foundation for and pathway to the future of Norwalk Arts Center’s programming.

Teens share their experience as part of the NAC community:

A Note from Peyton Perry: I was introduced to NAC teen theater the spring of my sophomore year of high school. At the time, the show to be presented was The Drowsy Chaperone. I had never heard of this musical, as I was not very versed in the drama department. I had only started doing drama productions my freshman year of high school. Intrigued, I signed up to audition. To my surprise, I was cast in the show as Trix the Aviatrix! I was excited to play a new role and meet other talented teen actors from around the Norwalk area. I had no idea the impact that the NAC community would have on me.

My first week at NAC was an eye-opening experience. I met dozens of kids from around the Norwalk area who were incredibly talented and extremely kind. They were so welcoming to me and the other new cast members. I was treated with kindness and respect from everyone, including the directing staff, from the moment I stepped in the door. For this reason, and their continued support of me and my acting skills, I have fallen in love with NAC. Not only is it a place to express your love for live theater, it is a place to find family.

At NAC, you are free to be whoever you want to be. NAC is an all-accepting family of everyone that loves theater. Vanessa Cook and Rylie Mullin (NACTA Teen Advisors) have made this environment for all of the teens of our area. There has never been a teen that was rejected simply based on their sexuality, race, gender, or skin color. In fact, I have performed with many diverse people, and would not have had it any other way. To me, NAC has been a safe haven in my life, a place I can go where I know I will have nothing but love and support. My fellow cast members have been a guiding light in my life, especially in some of the hardest times in my life.

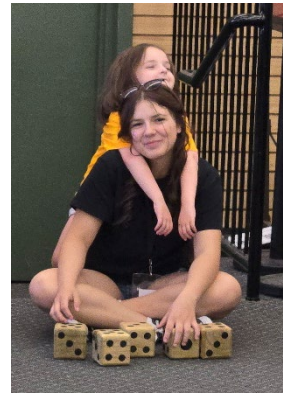


Isaac Cook and Peyton Perry spend time in the 80's

This past show was especially meaningful to me. I was cast as Tiffany Houston, who was the female lead of the show. This was my first time playing a big role. I was incredibly nervous and had no idea what to expect. Yet, even though I was unsure of myself and my abilities, my cast members supported me relentlessly. Every time I did something that I had a low level of confidence in, my friends were there to lift me up and make sure I knew I was killing it. Therefore, by the time the show came around, my self-confidence had grown exponentially, but so did my love for my friends. I would not have been able to perform the way I did without their help. I couldn't be more thankful for all of them. In the end, NAC teen theater has turned into a home for me, and someplace I will always return to. I want to expand and help the NAC community grow to its full potential. It is going to be and already has been very

successful in creating a place for people of all ages to explore theater and the arts. All of the wonderful people who made this possible are only the beginning. NAC will have so much more to offer in the coming years!

My name is Molly McFadden, and I am a board member for the Norwalk Arts Center Teen Association (NACTA). I have been involved with Norwalk Arts Center since 2022, being in five musicals including two Junior shows, two teen shows, and my first adult show this year. NAC has truly impacted my life in many ways and has been like a second home to me. I have found family and community here. I have met so many wonderful people throughout my time here. NAC has always been a safe space for me where I can just be myself and not worry about being judged by others. Being on the NACTA board has taught me a sense of responsibility by letting the teens be a major part of the planning of NAC activities, fundraisers, and future productions. These responsibilities help prepare me for future opportunities down the line. I am so blessed and beyond grateful to be a part of this community that brings many people together through the arts.



Molly McFadden hangs out with a young camper

Save the Dates:

AIM: FREE Art pop-ups @ Sheri's Coffee House #:15-4:15 pm (5th-8th grade): Sept. 12: Card design contest, Oct. 10: Ghost family portrait, Nov. 14: Clay mosaics, Dec. 12: Beaded wreath ornaments (make one, give one)

Theatre Discovery Series: Dec. 5 *Why Zee Won't Quack* open to grades 3 and 4, Feb, 20 *Witch and the Wardrobe* open to grades 5 and 6, May 8 *Stuart Little* open to grades 1 and 2. Registration required for these sessions.

Arts Explorers: Sept. 20, Nov. 22, 2025, Feb. 21, 2026, Apr. 18, 2026 (grades 1-4) Registration required.

Visit our webpage for more information about all of our programs
and to register! [NorwalkArtsCenter.org](https://www.NorwalkArtsCenter.org)

Norwalk Arts Center

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It is the mission of Norwalk Arts Center
to celebrate and increase advocacy for
the Arts in North Central Ohio by
providing education, experiences and
environment for artistic growth.