

### ***Organization Overview***

Founded in 1992, ArtReach St. Croix began as the River Valley Arts Council, a grass roots organization focused primarily on the visual arts in the greater Stillwater area. It then evolved into ArtReach Alliance and began integrating the literary and performing arts, building connections with other arts organizations in the area. Nearly nine years ago, conversations about ArtReach's growing role were set in motion and ArtReach St. Croix's mission of *connecting communities and the arts* took on a valley-wide and multi-disciplinary focus. As a network weaver, ArtReach builds on the notion that we can collectively do things that our stakeholders cannot do alone.

Defined by a river that unites the arts and the communities of the lower St. Croix, ArtReach recognizes and celebrates the unique landscape within which the arts flourish. In this spirit, we partner within, and beyond, the arts sector to find ways to work at the intersection of arts and nature – two things that make the St. Croix Valley truly unique.

Through the Mobile Art Gallery and other ArtReach programs, we expand people's understanding of the many art resources, events and venues in the St. Croix Valley. In this way, we share our knowledge of, and enthusiasm for, the Valley's visual, performing and literary arts. Taking the Mobile Art Gallery on the road is a unique and fun way to increase the numbers of people who are directly engaged with our work. The Mobile Art Gallery gives people an arts experience in an unexpected place.

### ***Project Description***

With seed funding from the St. Croix Valley Foundation and others, ArtReach set off on an artful adventure and the Mobile Art Gallery hit the road for the first time in 2016. The Mobile Art Gallery extends ArtReach St. Croix's regional outreach as a dynamic public engagement venue. During a busy 2017 season, ArtReach took the "show on the road" with a Fresh Art Roadside stand at the Food Truck Extravaganza, a performance and exhibition at Music on the Overlook and a fair booth at numerous art fairs and festival weekends. We also hosted exhibitions and Pop-up Performances in three state parks including Afton, William O'Brien and Interstate. To date, we have featured Pop-up Performances by fiddler Brian Wickland, contemporary bluegrass band, Blue Hazard and the St. Croix Jazz Orchestra.

With this application, ArtReach St. Croix seeks support from the St. Croix Valley Foundation to present three Pop-up Performances in the Mobile Art Gallery during the summer 2018. Once again, will partner with park naturalists and rangers. Potential venues include Prescott's Freedom Park, Willow River State Park, Interstate Park (WI) and Afton. Taking the performances to St. Croix Valley parks means that we can reach locals, campers and daytrippers of all ages.

The summer's Mobile Art Gallery tour of Valley parks will feature local fingerstyle guitarist and singer-songwriter David Harland. His music has been described as introspective and expressive in the tradition of great innovators like Michael Hedges, Nick Drake, David Wilcox and Billy McLaughlin. David's musical journey began at age 5 when he was gifted a plastic guitar. This seemingly simple gift sparked a lifelong connection with music and songwriting. By age 14 David was playing bass guitar and singing in a local rock band. It wasn't long before he became completely enamored with acoustic guitar music.

Michael Jeris of Guitar Review describes David's music as, "Smooth - relaxing - like watching waves at the beach with a thunderstorm brewing in the background." This description can help one imagine the tone and tenor of David's park performance in a glade of trees or along the banks of the St. Croix. David has new instrumental and singer-songwriter albums in the works and he is currently exploring concepts of connecting his performances to themes of resiliency and overcoming obstacles. In 2015, David lost part of his finger in an accident. He didn't know if he would ever play guitar again, let alone fingerstyle. Unknowingly, ArtReach hired David to play at our spring fundraiser in April 2016. At the end of the gig, David let ArtReach's Director know about his injury and admitted that it was his first public performance

since the accident. Needless to say, we were overwhelmed to hear his story and proud to provide an opportunity for him to flex his performance muscles after a difficult and emotional recovery. Since then, David Harland has regained his busy playing, performing and recording schedule.

For the Mobile Art Gallery Pop-up Performances, David will engage guest musicians. He will tailor the evening's set list based on whether the guest is a vocalist, a bass player or a poet/songwriter/spoken word artist. David has many musical and artistic connections to draw on that will showcase his repertoire and deepen his current musical explorations and partnerships.

### ***Timeline***

#### Spring 2018

- confirm park venues and contract with musician and guest artists
- publicize grant with press release announcing programming and itinerary for summer schedule
- host first performance during National Get Outdoors day – June 9

#### Summer 2018

- host two more pop-ups at area state parks in partnership with the naturalists/rangers
- post art news items from the road and encourage Mobile Art Gallery visitors to share their experiences on social media with hashtags such as: #artreachgoesmobile or #freshart

#### Fall 2018

- evaluate activities with input from surveys, artists, volunteers and park staff
- close trailer for the season and store for winter at ArtReach

### ***Goals***

One of our organizational values is *to cultivate surprise and originality in our work*. By presenting Pop-up Performances in the Mobile Art Gallery we reflect and extend our organizational goals including:

- highlighting the work of artists (including musicians) who live and work in the St. Croix Valley.
- sharing the confluence of arts and nature that give the region its unique identity,
- connecting visitors to a sense of place and residents to a sense of home through the arts.

ArtReach demonstrates our commitment to “doing more together” by building partnerships that help us work at the intersection of arts and nature. The mission-centric Mobile Art Gallery program can also be:

- **a StCroixSplash kiosk** – letting visitors know about what else is happening through Splash,
- **a “Fresh Art” Roadside Stand** – as with a roadside produce stand our trailer showcases locally-produced art to feed the soul,
- **an info/activity “tent” for Take Me to the River fairs** – in many cases this replaces our 10x10 tent and attracts more people because it is fun, engaging and delightful,
- **a traveling art gallery** – unexpected art in unexpected places, the traveling art gallery takes micro-exhibitions to our area parks and other cool places,
- **an impromptu parade float, venue for poetry slams, musician jam-mobile or tourism kiosk**

### ***Letting People Know***

By making our trailer a little outrageous and a lot of fun, people find out about Mobile Art Gallery events through press coverage, social media outreach and word of mouth. The charismatic novelty of the Mobile Art Gallery appeals to print media, new media and even TV. ArtReach is experienced with outreach to the media and we have earned coverage in local and Twin Cities media markets. Even so, some people will happen upon the Mobile Art Gallery by chance. This experience of discovery reinforces our tagline, “Art at Every Bend in the River.” Most importantly, people will learn about the Mobile Art Gallery because it will bring programming to communities and rural spaces that are underserved in the arts. In these ways, the Mobile Art Gallery and the Pop-up Performances are ArtReach's mission in action. Of course, this

and all Mobile Art Gallery events are listed and highlighted on StCroixSplash.org, the region's online event calendar launched by ArtReach in 2012.

### ***Project Personnel***

During the Mobile Art Gallery's full year of activity, we learned a lot about what works well and how visitors interact with the Mobile Art Gallery. ArtReach staffers and volunteers coordinate and plan a menu of Mobile Art Gallery offerings to fit different fairs, festivals, community events, etc. The Mobile Art Gallery programming and calendaring are under the auspices of the Visual Arts committee which includes: printmaker Diana Hatchitt, painter/graphic painter Barbara Schotl, jeweler Phyllis Hunter, painter Bev Marx, and mosaic artist Gil Graggert. ArtReach's Program and Marketing Manager, Syndie Sorensen is the staff liaison to the Visual Arts Committee. Syndie has worked at ArtReach since July 2012. Her experience with press relations, web design, building systems and coordinating volunteers has been integral to the success of Take Me to the River, the Pop-up Shop and rotating gallery shows. ArtReach's Executive Director, Heather Rutledge joined ArtReach in October 2011. Her experience in visitor services, partnership building, arts advocacy and programming has been valuable to the success of Navigate, StCroixSplash, Mobile Art Gallery and The Big Read. Alana Cuellar joined the ArtReach team in July 2016 getting us to our staffing goal of 2 full-time equivalents. Together Alana, Syndie and Heather work alongside the artists, board members and volunteers of ArtReach to accomplish our work.

ArtReach staff and volunteers have gained experience as music presenters, roadies, trailer hitchers, curtain speech givers and venue troubleshooters. The Mobile Art Gallery provides its own challenges and opportunities when hosting live music. Overwhelmingly, the musicians and audiences love the intimacy of the venue and the off-the-beaten path qualities that the mobile venue provides.

### ***Need, Impact, Evaluation***

Building on support earned by its valley-wide service model, ArtReach St. Croix explores ways that our programs can "walk the walk" when it comes to being truly valley-wide and multi-disciplinary. During board retreats our big dreaming often revolves around "being mobile" and during our January 2016 Stakeholder's Forum & Action Planning session, we dug a little deeper into the realities and possibilities of a mobile art gallery. Within 9 months we had designed, fundraised and built the Mobile Art Gallery which demonstrates organizational initiative, but also speaks to community need and support.

We evaluate the success of the Pop-up Performances beginning with quantitative measures such as attendance figures and survey responses. We also track Facebook comments and hashtag activity as a way to measure virtual "water cooler" discussions. The analytics on ArtReachStCroix.org and StCroixSplash.org help determine the project's reach. We gather newspaper and new media clippings. We are curious to know if the Mobile Art Gallery extends our outreach programming by attracting participation from St. Croix Valley audiences and valley visitors. We track zip codes and ask people to add a pin to our regional, national and global maps to represent their hometown. Qualitative measures include anecdotal information gleaned from visitors, volunteer committee members, program participants, and the participating artists. Evaluation questions:

- In what ways did the Mobile Art Gallery successfully connect people to the arts?
- In what ways did it deepen the person's connection to this place?

### ***Conclusion***

As the first funder to jump on board with the Mobile Art Gallery, ArtReach is looking to the St. Croix Valley Foundation to help us animate the mobile venue in 2018. With your support we can bring music to the river, the forests and the people of the Valley. Help us take the show on the road in 2018 with the mobile venue that is a little outrageous and a lot of fun!