

SITKA FINE ARTS CAMP 2022



SITKA
Fine Arts Camp



A Letter from Roger

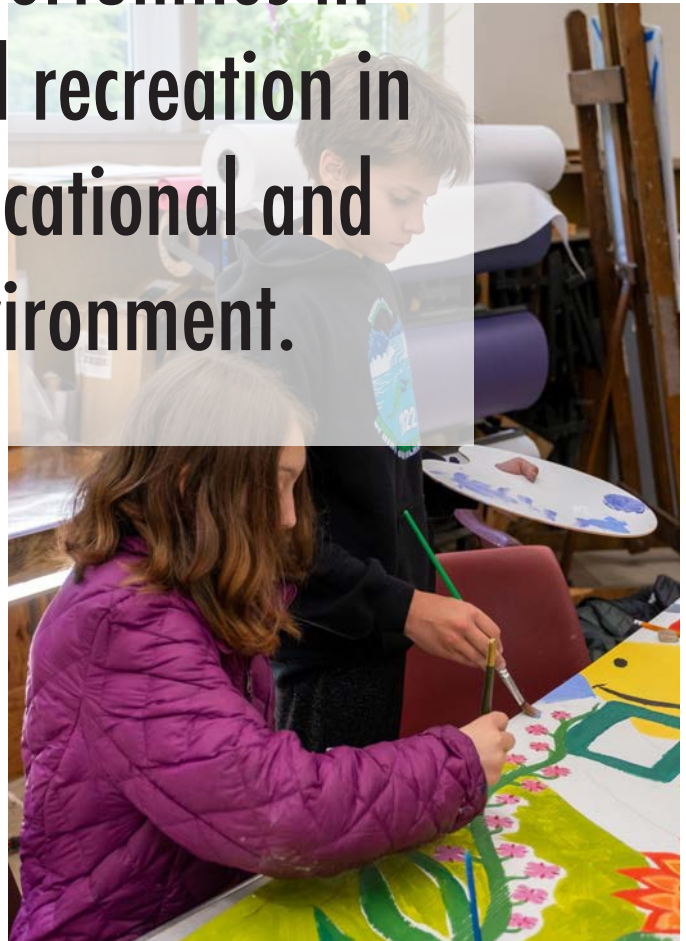
Dear Friends,

First, I would like to thank everyone who has supported the camp this year. Without our teachers, staff, donors, and volunteers who help us in all aspects of Camp we would not be here. This summer has been extraordinary. We have seen the return of 643 young artists whose creativity and passion have inspired all of us. I feel incredibly fortunate to be a part of this community and the work that goes into giving students the space to grow as artists and individuals.

This year, our mantra for the summer was coming to Camp with “a knife in our teeth and a fire in our belly.” After two years of cancelled, delayed, and limited capacity events, we were determined that this year’s Camp would be just as intense, if not more so, than before the pandemic. The past two years have been devastating for the arts. Theaters closed, exhibits moved online, student music classes stopped, and in-person collaboration, something so crucial to artistic development, was suddenly one of the riskiest things a person could do. School music programs were hit especially hard. This year we were able to provide scholarships for Camp to every student who played or sang at the Alaska All State Music Festival. Reviving music programs around the state starts by inspiring young musicians with instructors who give them tools for success. When those students return to their bands in their hometowns, it is my hope that they will pass forward the experiences and knowledge they gained at Camp. The students and staff came prepared to give everything to their art and I believe that we accomplished what we set out to do. I am already looking forward to next summer and seeing the progress students make over this coming year.

Last year marked the tenth anniversary of the Camp’s permanent move to the historic Sheldon Jackson Campus. Now, as we are well into the eleventh year, I am continually impressed and grateful to the community that came together to help us save this special campus. It has allowed the Camp to continue to expand, and this year we hosted a record breaking 250 students for the High School Camp. We continue to offer year-round programming in the buildings for everything from the Young Performers’ Theater program to weddings and ceremonies. AmeriCorps and Outer Coast College make use of the campus during the fall, winter, and spring months. The campus is a vibrant and active part of our community.

This year we will continue to expand the opportunities available to Sitkans to experience the arts firsthand. I also want to recognize our donors who make Sitka Fine Arts Camp and all the related programming possible. Thank you for your support as we look forward to continuing this journey together!



Mission:

**Build community in Alaska
by providing opportunities in
arts, culture, and recreation in
an inclusive, educational and
inspirational environment.**

Sitka Fine Arts Camp was founded in 1973 as a regional arts camp, intent on serving students from all over Southeast Alaska. Access to arts education in Alaska is a problem for many students. Today, 72% of Alaskan schools do not have room for the arts in their budget. Low population density and the remoteness of many communities heightens this problem. For many students, SFAC remains one of the few opportunities they have to engage with the arts and learn from professionals. Building from the original two-week summer camp, SFAC, now a nationally acclaimed program, offers eight weeks of summer camps, in addition to year-round programming for students ranging in age from kindergarten all the way to freshmen in college.



Summer 2022 at a Glance



Registrations

631 registrants representing 22 states
86% of students from Alaska
28% of students from Sitka
27% of students from Anchorage

543 Alaskan students from 45 communities in Alaska
178 students from Sitka
172 students from Anchorage

33% of students identify as non-white or bi-racial which mirrors Alaska's demographics. At SFAC we are proud to embrace and recognize a wide range of students coming from many different communities.

Camps

Elementary Camp: 162 students
Middle School Camp: 198 students
High School Camp: 250 students
Musical Theater Camp: 33 students

"For myself and many of Alaska's youth, this camp is truly a life-changing experience. I believe that SFAC serves as a beacon for students like myself, which gathers us together to create the state-wide arts community which otherwise could not exist." –SFAC Student

This year SFAC was able to give out **\$140,775 in financial aid to 168 students**. Donors make our financial aid program possible, giving kids who may not otherwise be able to attend, the chance to experience camp. Moving forward we are striving towards becoming need-blind. You can help us reach this goal by making a donation to our financial aid today.

Volunteers



Volunteers make up the backbone of our community at SFAC, helping with everything from groundskeeping to restoration to copying thousands of pages of music, poetry, and artwork. When SFAC first took over the Sheldon Jackson Campus, it was only with the help of over 1,000 volunteers who put in 45,000 hours of work that the Campus did not fall into a state of disrepair. Now, 11 years after receiving the keys, volunteers continue to support the Camp's efforts.

Henrietta Van Maanen is one such volunteer. She began coming to Sitka in 1991 as a Volunteer In Mission (VIM) with the Presbyterian church at Sheldon Jackson College. While at the college she worked as the President's secretary, helping with the day-to-day tasks. She was an early adapter to personal computers, and those skills made her a valuable asset to the college. She worked at SJ full time until 1999, after which she moved to North Carolina. However, she returned to Sitka every summer, in large part drawn by the Sitka Music Festival.

Henrietta was in Sitka in 2011 when SFAC took over the Campus. She says she remembers walking over and asking if she could do anything to help. She was familiar with SFAC already because it had previously taken place on the SJ Campus. At that time Henrietta was operating the copy machine, printing and scanning various documents for the Camp. In 2011 she helped with a mailing campaign. She completed it so efficiently that Roger approached her. She says she recalls him saying, "'Henrietta, I know you like to come here, why don't you come work for us.' I asked him if he had a place for me to live. He said they'd find a place. So, next summer I came."

That was the start of many summers at SFAC for Henrietta. Over her time volunteering at the Camp she says her favorite part has been watching children and families grow. Tucked in her office in Rasmusson next to the band room, she has a good view of the comings and goings during the summer. She is now a familiar face to many students and faculty and says she hopes to come back to Sitka as a volunteer in the summer as long as her body lets her.

Student Voices from Camp



Iris Montesano, a rising senior from Anchorage, just completed her fourth year as a camper at SFAC. She was initially drawn to Camp for violin, an instrument she started playing at age five, and ultimately found a larger community of musicians that kept her coming back. Her interests have recently shifted towards vocal music, a passion she hopes to pursue in college. However, before coming to camp this year, she had doubts about her desire to continue studying the arts. "I was thinking it would be better to do something in STEM and give up wanting to conduct." After taking choir and vocal technique with Dr. Ryan

Beeken who "not only taught good technique, but how to teach good technique," she felt reassured that music education is indeed what she wants to pursue after graduating high school.

Camp is the place where she has made most of her friends. In addition, it was also her first introduction to the queer community, a community and group of people she says she had little exposure to before coming to Camp as a middle schooler. She says that Camp is also a place that feels "nurturing." As a true artist community, it is also a place where students are free to explore their artistic expression without outside pressure.

This year, **Daveon Parton**, a third-year camper from Anchorage pushed himself to take classes in areas of art he had never tried before: animation, hip hop dance, guitar technique. This is his first time at High School Camp, and the broad range of classes he's taking is new for him. In middle school, he says he mostly chose classes that he had experience with or had previously enjoyed. This year, however, he wanted to branch out and try new things to explore potential new interests. In addition to trying several new classes, he also took classes in electronic music. Unlike animation, hip hop, and guitar technique, this class is one that he was familiar with already. In his spare time he makes electronic music on his laptop at home. This class, however, was slightly different from previous work he's done since its primary focus was on post production, or making soundtracks to go along with scenes in films, which presented its own challenges. "It definitely requires a lot of effort because you have to watch the video and see what explosion goes here and what orchestral hit goes there and building tension and release."



This is his first time back at Camp since the pandemic and having in-person interactions with other students has been a big part of Camp for Daveon. "My social skills were a bit rusty, but as time went on through the camp, I felt more comfortable, and I was able to talk to people much easier. I've met a lot of new people and I'm making friends." Camp made the challenge of returning to in person interactions easier. "It definitely makes you feel like you belong, and you have a lot of support in multiple areas of art."

Tyler Adres is an Alaska All-State first chair saxophonist from Sitka going into his senior year of high school. He credits Camp as the thing that inspired him to audition for the honor band in the first place. In 2019, he attended both the middle and high school sessions where he took all music classes. "It pushed me in the direction I am now." Then last year, after a conversation with Colin Roshak, a clarinetist who taught at Camp, Tyler said he realized the potential he had to pursue saxophone at a higher level. After winning first chair, he began playing solo music which won him a place at the Alaska State Solo and Ensemble Music Festival. This summer, Tyler also played with the Jazz on the Waterfront musicians who are among some of the best jazz musicians in the country. "I've increased exponentially in my talent just because of this camp, and just getting the opportunity to work with these professional, world class teachers has inspired me to keep going playing."



He says the pandemic has been hard for music programs. "The music programs have been declining. Kids my age don't pay attention to music because of the gap and the lost inspiration. But we're getting back on it. We're playing harder stuff in jazz band and symphonic band." However, despite the hardships created by the pandemic, the arts seem to be making a comeback. "We have 250 students here, everyone wants to get back into it. The arts are thriving again." The support within the community at SFAC has also been crucial for Tyler. He says that being here, he feels like he is part of a safe community where he and other students are supported in their journey through the arts. "Everybody here is super nice and it's really inspiring to see people my age focused on the things they love to do."



For **Hanna Davila**, an eighteen-year-old from Houston, Alaska, the arts have been a constant in her life. Throughout her life, she moved around often, but from sixth grade on, always found her way to the band room. It was there that she discovered her love for the trombone, a passion that she will continue later this year at the University of Anchorage where she plans to minor in music.

In addition to music, Hanna, who is part Yupik and Athabascan, is also a visual artist. At age ten she learned traditional Native beadwork from her mom and grandmother. It has taken many years of hard work and practice, but she now sells some of the earrings, barrettes, slippers, and gloves she makes. Her work is beautiful: intricate beaded earrings with flower motifs and a red and black hair clip with a raven design. She brought several projects to work on in her free time at Camp.

At camp, Hanna took Writing the Weird, but says that writing wasn't always enjoyable for her. She explains that "it took a while to actually love writing" and in eighth grade she began to experiment, sparking a new passion for "writing weird things and creatively mixing up language." She is also trying wheel thrown pottery for the first time. "So far I've made an espresso cup, a small bowl," she pauses, "and another espresso cup." Laughing, she adds, "I like coffee!" Ceramics, Hanna observed, is something that often isn't widely accessible because the materials required are expensive. So, to be able to explore something like wheel thrown pottery alongside other students who share her enthusiasm and passion has been special.



Sitka Fine Arts Camp has been something of a tradition for **Caden Bracken-Sorte**, a fourth-year camper from Irvine, California. His dad was a camper in the 1980s, so when Caden's family came to Sitka on a research grant (his parents are marine biologists), he enrolled in Camp and enjoyed it so much that he has been coming back ever since.

One of his favorite things is being able to see "how much everyone has improved over the course of the camp. I can feel that I am a better trumpet player than I was at the beginning of camp." His main focus is music; he is a trumpet player, and enrolled in three music classes this year. In addition to music, he also took Northwest Coast Carving. Since this art form is hard to find outside of the Pacific Northwest, Caden says being able to take that class was "a really special experience." Camp, he says, "is something everyone should have the ability to experience."

Bronwyn Embree was both an employee and a camper at Sitka Fine Arts Camp this summer. At eighteen years old, she has just graduated from high school and next year will attend college at the Hartt School in Connecticut where she plans to major in musical theater. This past summer, though, she played Donna, Sophie's mother in SFAC's production of *Mamma Mia!*



Acting and musical theater have been part of Bronwyn's life for a very long time. She began acting at just 4 years old with a homeschool theater program, but it was in 4th grade when she saw Elton John and Tim Rice's musical *Aida* that she fell in love with musical theater. After watching the musical she decided that she "was not going to do anything other than this forever." Staying true to her fourth-grade self, Bronwyn has continued with musical theater, and this was her third time attending Musical Theater Camp. Her first performance with SFAC was *Legally Blonde* in 2018, and she returned in 2021 to perform as the Witch in *Into the Woods*. This year she played Donna, the spunky mom of Sophie in *Mamma Mia!* The part was challenging, but Bronwyn says that "everyone here is super supportive of everyone else," which has made it much easier to memorize lines and songs during rehearsals. With such a short time between casting and the performances, she said that being able to jump in and "mentally preparing yourself to try and fail a bunch" before eventually getting it right, as well as not being scared to try something new was key.

This year, in addition to participating in the Musical Theater Camp, Bronwyn also worked in the kitchen preparing food for the Middle and High School Camps. She said, "it was quite fun to get a little more insight into the people here who make things work." In addition, she said "the community that is built as campers also very much goes into the community we have as staff members." Both experiences as staff and camper were exciting, and because this is likely Bronwyn's last year of Camp, she especially liked "getting to play with friends and enjoying one last summer of freedom."



Young Performers Theater

Young Performers Theater began in 2013 as a program for Sitka's youth to gain theatrical experience. Since its humble beginnings, producing the musical *The Tales of Beatrix Potter*, the program has expanded, providing opportunities for students in second grade up until senior year in high school. This season, YPT produced four shows.

The year started with **A Wrinkle in Time** based on the classic book by Madeleine L'Engle. The actors delighted audiences as Meg Curry, Charles Murry and Calvin O'Keefe traveled through time and space to save the Murrays' father from evil forces. **James and the Giant Peach, Jr.** brought audiences into the fantastical world of Roald Dahl's imagination as the actors crossed the sea, facing numerous threats (including sharks!) before finally arriving in New York City. In the spring, SFAC's very own Theater Director Zeke Blackwell wrote and directed the play **Ghostwriters**, which follows a group of paranormal investigators as they examine paranormal activity at a local library. **Matilda**, another favorite by Roald Dahl, rounded out the season this spring. Featuring high energy music and dance numbers with catchy lyrics, this production about a little girl with an extraordinary imagination was a definite fan favorite.

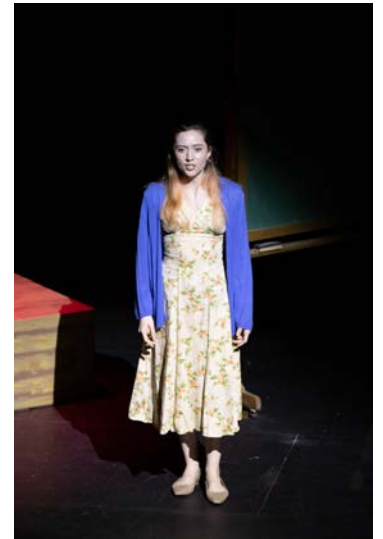
YPT Student Spotlight: Aitana Gluth

Aitana Gluth got her start on the stage with Young Performers' Theater in fifth grade. As she puts it, shortly after watching YPT's production of *East of the Sun, West of the Moon*, "I decided I wanted to be a part of theater, so I auditioned, and I had the time of my life in *Annie*." Having just graduated high school, Aitana is now at Southeastern University where she majors in music. She credits YPT as having a big impact on her choice. "YPT jumpstarted all my singing and my love for the arts. I don't think I would be so involved in music if it wasn't for YPT."

For such a small town, Aitana says the quality of YPT is exceptional. This is due in large part to the instructors: Zeke Blackwell, Rhiannon Guevin, and Melissa Hantke. Zeke is Aitana's favorite director. She says the level of personal attention Zeke gives to each student is spectacular. "He really focuses in on what we need as actors to be successful and tries to give us his vast depths of knowledge." They also create a very positive environment for the young actors. "Getting to hear their support and encouragement has deepened my love for the theater."

Aitana began classes at Southeastern University at the end of August and said that even though YPT is a relatively small program, she felt more than prepared when she arrived for her first day of classes. Because of her level of training, her vocal coach gave her harder music, not realizing she was a freshman. She says it's been fantastic that she has "enough skill and vocal training to run with the top dogs" and hold her own against hundreds of other singers coming from much bigger programs. She says she gained her vocal skills and technique in large part from performing in musicals with YPT.

For any students who are interested in the theater, Aitana says YPT is the best way to start. "YPT is a really, really good way to get involved in theater. It's not scary at all. It's a really good way to see into the world of theater." She also says that everyone, no matter the part they are playing, feels special and like they are an important part of the show. The community aspect of each show is also crucial, and she says that the casts of every show are part of a "tight knit community" where everyone supports everyone else. "It's overall just a really, really positive experience."



Performing Arts Series

Throughout the year SFAC is dedicated to bringing arts entertainment to Sitka and the broader Alaskan community. This year saw a flourishing of artists coming to Sitka to share their extraordinary talents and artistry, bringing a little extra life and inspiration to our already vibrant community.

Little Shop of Horrors started the 2021-2022 season off on a high note, marking a return to theater after a pandemic-caused hiatus. In a little over a week, a cast comprised of actors and actresses from Sitka and the San Francisco Bay area rehearsed and performed the entirety of this part-hilarious part-horrific musical.

In December, the annual **Holiday Brass** concert rang in the holiday season. A long time Sitka tradition, this show brought in 14 of America's finest brass musicians to play pieces as diverse as Vivaldi's "Winter" and "Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer" in one magical evening of music. This winter the musicians also traveled to America's northernmost city, Utqiagvik, where they performed for the community and participated in school outreach, delighting their audiences of kids and adults alike.

Renowned ukulele player **Jake Shimabukuro** graced the stage at Sitka's Performing Arts Center for a night of fast paced, upbeat music. Widely regarded as the best ukulele player in the world, his performance brought joy and happiness amidst the long January nights.

The **BANFF Film Festival**, a fundraiser for the Hames Gym, once again awed audiences with the extent of human capabilities. These inspiring films showcased breathtaking landscapes and action-packed sequences, taking audiences on a journey to some of the most remote places on the planet.



The folk duo **Small Glories** hailing from Canada played some of their award-winning music for Sitka audiences. The onstage presence of singer-songwriters Cara Luft and JD Edwards provided a heartwarming and at times hilarious evening full of music and stories.

Misaki Saito, a piano instructor for the 2022 Camp, presented an evening of piano music in her Visions of the World concert. Playing everything from Say, Yoshimatsu, Villa-Lobos, Debussy, and Mozart, her skills as a pianist are some of the finest Sitkans have had the opportunity to enjoy.

John Denver tribute artist **Ted Vigil** captivated Sitkans with both his music and his looks. A true John Denver look-alike, he has received numerous accolades for his performances and regularly sells out venues. His performance in Sitka was no different, and he played an unforgettable evening of music that brought the audience back to the time when John Denver really was playing.

The annual **Jazz on the Waterfront** concert featuring some of America's best jazz musicians alongside local Sitka talent was a huge success. During this sold-out fundraiser, the audience enjoyed some of the finest French cuisine made by renowned chefs Patti Peck and Olivier Phelupin while listening to all styles of Jazz.

Finally, at the end of July, SFAC's Musical Theater Camp presented **Mamma Mia!** This unforgettable musical filled with ABBA's greatest hits was a resounding success. Showcasing some of Alaska's finest talent. In just three weeks the theater-track students learned everything from the choreography to the libretto, while the technical theater-track students constructed the set and designed lights and sound!



Campus Improvements



This past year we've continued the work on restoring the buildings on campus. Pete Weiland and his crew recently completed work on Sweetland Hall, the main student dormitory. The many improvements include improving the lobby space by replacing the flooring, adding a folding glass wall between the lobby and Jack's Diner to brighten the space, remodeling the lobby bathrooms, and new furniture styled by Galanin and Klein. In addition, the dining space has new tables and chairs, and the commercial kitchen has a new walk-in freezer and redesigned pantry, allowing more space for food storage. The North and West wings of the dormitory have new flooring and finishes as well, complete with remodeled bathrooms and new windows to replace old and rotting ones. The South and West wings have new furniture in the student lounges. Finally, the living and cooking spaces used by Americorp volunteers has been revamped, which allows Sweetland Hall to be a comfortable yet affordable option for the people who serve our community in numerous ways.

Work also continued on restoring Fraser Hall. Originally built in 1911 by Ludlow and Peabody of New York as the dorm for the youngest boys attending the Sheldon Jackson grade school, Fraser is now used for both housing and classroom space. This year, building off improvements completed in 2021 that included refinishing the big classroom on the first floor, Eric Dow focused on improving the classroom in Fraser's entryway. This included installing new, beautiful handmade wainscoting, new flooring, and restoring the walls and ceiling. Additionally, Fraser Hall has a new electrical system. All these improvements will go towards making the space feel more welcoming and restoring its historically beautiful features.

The Oil Story

When SFAC received the keys to the Sheldon Jackson Campus in 2011, it also inherited the campus' many problems: leaky roofs, unheated buildings, deferred maintenance, and a 14,000-gallon oil tank full of congealed oil.

The tank was part of the historic Smokestack building, which was built as part of the original campus in 1910-1911. The building itself was not constructed according to the original designs. Instead of having two wings in the building, a coal storage bunker was built to house fuel for coal-fired burners. However, soon after the campus was completed, SJ switched to oil-fired burners, converting the coal storage into an oil tank. The campus used these oil-fired burners up until a garbage incinerator opened on the college's property in the mid 1980s which provided a new source for power and heating. The oil tank remained, and over the years it became a dumping site for used motor oil.

In 2019, attention shifted towards the 14,000 gallons of bunker oil still on the property. Although it had never been forgotten, other projects, such as building maintenance and repairing leaky roofs were a bigger priority that demanded immediate attention. As reports had shown, the tank's ten-inch-thick walls protected the surrounding soil from oil leaks.

Following an unsuccessful first attempt at oil removal and the COVID-19 pandemic which stopped nearly all operations, work on removing the oil began in earnest in the fall of 2021. This time, the Camp contacted US Ecology, a company with many years of experience in oil remediation efforts in rural Alaskan communities, and Nortech, a Juneau-based environmental consultant, and made plans for removal.

A short time later, in November 2021, the Sitka Sound Science Center spotted oil on their property. Unfortunately, the blame was quickly placed on the Sitka Fine Arts Camp as the potential source of the contamination, and despite the EPA's assertion that the oil was not from the Camp, it remained a significant liability. Accordingly, work on removing the oil accelerated and began in April of this year, the soonest weather would allow. The accelerated plan for removing the oil did not allow time for the Camp to apply for grants, so we took sole responsibility for paying the hundreds of thousands of dollars it took to clean the oil up safely and completely.

In April large 5,000-gallon ISO containers on trucks for the containing the oil arrived on campus along with two pumps strong enough to pull up the congealed oil. Once most of it was removed from the bunker, workers in moon suits descended into the tank and began scrubbing the walls with orange soap to remove every last drop of oil. Then, the tank was filled with drainage rock and topped with soil and replanted grass.

With the oil removed, everyone benefits. There is no longer the potential for oil to permeate the ground soil and contaminate surrounding streams which are home to salmon. Additionally, students can now enjoy the new lawn. With plans to build a covered picnic area in the coming years that pays homage to the roof line of the old bunker, we continue to be dedicated to preserving this historical campus while continually making it safer and more welcoming for students and the community.

What's Next?

Continued Campus Restoration

Although we have made significant progress since 2011 in restoring and revitalizing the campus, there is always more work to be done. Fraser Hall is already in vastly better condition and the work will continue to restore the rest of the building, including the upstairs classrooms and living spaces. One of the major upcoming projects will be installing heating systems in North Pacific, Whitmore, and Fraser. These buildings are all important residential spaces, however, because they are not heated, they cannot be used year-round. With heating systems in place, the campus will be able to expand the number of spaces available for housing for groups and events that take place in Sitka throughout the fall, winter, and spring months. By next summer Whitmore will have a fully functional heating system. Over the next couple years, we will work towards installing heat in both North Pacific and Fraser, transforming these beautiful buildings into year-round spaces alive with creativity and energy.

Fine Arts Camp Endowment

In 2021 SFAC launched the Sitka Fine Arts Endowment. Sam Skaggs, president of the Alaska Arts Southeast Board, made the decision to dissolve his family's foundation and established the Fine Arts Camp Endowment with an extremely generous \$1 million gift. The endowment forms part of a 100-year plan to ensure that SFAC is around for generations to come. It simultaneously honors all the thousands of hours of work that volunteers, staff, and the community have put into the Camp. In 2020 the pandemic showed many just how fragile businesses and organizations are. Sitka Fine Arts Camp was no exception, and the endowment will provide an insurance policy for the Camp. With the funds from the endowment, the Camp will continue to grow and provide arts educations to Alaskans for generations to come.



Creating a Need-Blind Camp

Our mission at SFAC is to bring the arts to students from rural communities in Alaska that may not have access to the arts otherwise. One of the final barriers to accessing arts education is the cost. At SFAC one of our biggest priorities is raising funds for our financial aid program as we work towards being need blind. This year, thanks to many generous individual donors, we were extremely fortunate to give over \$140,000 in financial aid to 168 students. In addition to helping cover partial or full tuition costs for camp, our financial aid program also extends to travel costs which can quickly add up when traveling around Alaska where access to transportation is often limited.

“SFAC is important to a lot of young people who want to be artists when they grow up. I really hope that it’s here for as long as possible. Just to show kids that a career in the arts is a possibility for them. You don’t have to be a doctor or a lawyer if you don’t want to, you can be a singer, you can be an actor. And I think that every kid should be able to have that opportunity, to just know art is there for them.” - SFAC Student

Become part of the SFAC community!

SFAC’s donors and volunteers make up the backbone of our organization and are an important part of our community. Without your support, we would not be able to give kids the transformative experience of the arts. When you donate to the Camp, your donation goes directly into the programs that benefit students and the Sitka community the most. As we work towards providing the highest quality educational experiences in the arts, our goal is to transform the lives of students with the hope that these lives will, in turn, transform the lives of others. You can join us in our mission and become part of our community by donating today.



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