OPEN CALL: ARTISTS AT WORK (AAW) SEEKS APPLICANTS FOR SPRINGFIELD-BASED ARTIST EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

[SPRINGFIELD, MA] – [MAY 2, 2024] – Springfield Cultural Partnership, Springfield Cultural Council and THE OFFICE performing arts + film are excited to announce an open call for artists to apply to Artists At Work (AAW), a workforce resilience program designed to support artists and their communities through artistic civic engagement, that will bring a new opportunity for four artists to work with community members and organizational partners in the Mason Square neighborhood in Springfield, MA.

The Artists At Work program provides an equitable framework – structured as a dynamic network of partnerships between artists, cultural organizations, and community partners – that sets artists up with strong local and national contacts, professional development, and systems of support. AAW Artists are employed with a salary and health benefits for a period of one year to deepen their art practice and work collaboratively in response to local community needs across a range of issues including mental health, antiracism, migrant justice, climate resiliency, substance abuse recovery, cultural preservation, and youth welfare, among others. To date, Artists At Work has employed 70 artists and culture workers across 11 states, leveraging their power and creativity in partnership with over 80 cultural and community organizations throughout the nation.

Beginning on July 1, 2024, Artists At Work will offer 4 local Springfield-based artists a salary and benefits for the period of one year. In addition to continuing their own artistic practices, selected artists will work with local partners within the Springfield TDI District – focused around the Mason Square neighborhood – on artistic civic engagement projects that engage youth around community priorities laid out by the Mason Square TDI Partnership for the area’s future, centering on identity, history and belonging, and community safety and wellness.

These engagements will be led by the selected artists with the support of community partners MLK Jr. Family Services and two local cultural organizations, the Springfield Armory National Historic Site and Springfield City Library, Mason Square Branch. While the exact form of projects will evolve over the term in collaboration with local youth, community, and partners, public-facing programming and projects will amplify and advance MLK Jr. Family Service’s mission and existing services while activating the cultural partners’ space and resources in service of the Mason Square community.
We invite Springfield-based artists of all backgrounds and disciplines to apply and take advantage of this unique opportunity to expand their artistic practice and contribute to the vibrant cultural landscape of their community.

Key details for Artists At Work (Springfield):

- A one-year salary of $35,570 plus health benefits for four selected Springfield-based artists
- Mentorship, networking, and professional development opportunities
- Access to resources to develop projects with your community
- Opportunities for public exhibitions, performances and community engagement

Application Deadline: May 21, 2024
Program Duration: July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025
Location: Mason Square, Springfield, MA

To apply and learn more about Artists At Work, please visit https://www.artists-at-work.org/springfield. For additional details on applying to this upcoming program, please join on Friday, May 10th from noon to 1pm EST for a lunch-time informational session. A registration link is available on Artists At Work’s website.

For media inquiries or further information, please contact Scout Eisenberg, Program Manager AAW at scout@theofficearts.com.

About Artists At Work
Artists At Work is a national workforce resilience program of THE OFFICE performing arts + film and FreshGrass Foundation, that provides artists with a living wage salary, health benefits, professional development, and an equitable framework to leverage their creative skills to address the pressing issues of their local community. Since beginning as a pilot program in 2020, we’ve added 70 artists to our payroll across 11 states with over 80+ cultural and community partners joining the effort. More information can be found at https://www.artists-at-work.org.

THE OFFICE performing arts + film
An independent curation and production company, THE OFFICE develops, produces, and presents art that makes a difference. In partnership with FreshGrass Foundation, its national Artists at Work (AAW) workforce resilience program values artists as workers, invests in communities, and leverages culture for social impact. They will bring matching funds; directly employ 4 Springfield artists; administer salary / benefits; offer administrative support, artistic mentorship and partnership facilitation throughout.

Springfield Cultural Partnership
Springfield Cultural Partnership’s Mission is to foster civic engagement and arts education in the City of Springfield by creating and sustaining a vibrant cultural environment, authentically engaging institutions, artists, and the community. Springfield Cultural Partnership is a convener that connects the dots between community needs, creatives, organizations and resources. Springfield Cultural Partnership mobilizes youth, artists, faith leaders, educators, health professionals, and other trusted community influencers to create culturally relevant and representative arts programming, convenings and collaborative relationships that lead to improved community outcomes related to economic growth and community wellbeing. We leverage Springfield’s cultural assets and respected sources of influence in the community to increase access to resources, programming and to foster hope and healing.
Springfield Cultural Council
The Springfield Cultural Council is designed to serve individual(s) and/or organizations and enhance communities throughout Greater Springfield in cultural and art projects for public benefit. The Springfield Cultural Council is part of a network of 329 Local Cultural Councils, funded by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, serving all 351 cities and towns in the Commonwealth. The LCC Program is the largest grassroots cultural funding network in the nation, supporting thousands of community-based projects in the arts, sciences, and humanities each year. In the artist selection process, Springfield Cultural Council will be responsible for assisting in the development of evaluation criteria, providing targeted local outreach to community artists and representing local priorities and artistic excellence in the interview process. In collaboration with THE OFFICE and SCP, Springfield Cultural Council will offer artistic feedback and mentorship to artists throughout the term.

Martin Luther King, Jr. Family Services
MLK Jr. Family Services offers programs to address some of the most pressing needs of its under-resourced community. It fosters an environment where the aspirations of the community are nurtured and empowered to achieve new realities of peace, social and economic justice, self-determination, and self-sufficiency. As a community partner, they will connect artists to the Mason Square neighborhood, youth in their programs, and guide development of projects and programs in focus areas where they offer services.

Springfield City Library, Mason Square Branch
Springfield City Library actively connects with its diverse community, providing resources and safe space for all. The Mason Square Branch is a trusted hub for free access to information, technology, social and civic engagement, support of well-being and lifelong learning, and is critical to the neighborhood’s cultural life. It looks forward to offering space, resources and staff to support local artists and youth and increase capacity for accessible community-directed projects and programming.

Springfield Armory National Historic Site
Springfield Armory National Historic Site commemorates the critical role of the nation’s first armory by preserving and interpreting the world’s largest historic US military small arms collection, with historic archives, buildings and landscape. Springfield Armory National Historic Site looks forward to opening up its space, facilities and staff to support local artists and youth, increasing capacity for accessible community-directed projects and programming and growing as a community hub for Mason Square.

MassDevelopment Transformative Development Initiative (TDI) Mason Square
The Springfield TDI District sits 1.5 miles east of downtown Springfield at Mason Square, the intersection of State Street and Wilbraham Road where four neighborhoods meet: McKnight, Old Hill, Upper Hill, and Bay. At the center of the district along State Street are strips of service-related retail going north and south that offer high-visibility spaces and potential for catalytic investment. The Springfield TDI District has been positioned as creating a commercial hub serving all four neighborhoods to improve small business development, offer inclusive entrepreneurship strategies, and reduce the area’s reputation as a “drive-through” corridor. The area is a historically important, significantly African-American community with numerous multi-generational families of community leaders and activists.

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