



Michael Banks of Apple Orchard Knewz has dedicated his work to uplifting community voices through film, radio, and podcasting. Through his radio show and podcast, Michael creates platforms where real stories are heard and meaningful conversations take place. He also offers mentorship at Alive Community Outreach Peacemakers and Amp Lab, guiding young emerging creatives in media, leadership, and entrepreneurship.



Chris Catalogna is a Fort Wayne-based artist and muralist. He graduated from Indiana University with a BFA in painting in 2021. Over the past 5 years, Chris has completed over 15 murals within the state of Indiana for clients, including Turnstone, Indy Arts Council, Black Canyon, and Summit City Climbing Co. He has also provided artist talks and lessons for interior designers, the students at Huntington University, and Junior Achievement.



Fort Wayne Trails' Accessible Trail Maps were born from a conversation with a trail user with a color vision deficiency, which sparked a full review of how accessible Fort Wayne Trails' print materials are and the trail network as a whole. Through partnerships with WindSwell Foundation, The League, CASS Housing, Citilink, and The Inclusion Institute, the Fort Wayne Trails Accessible Map was launched. The standard map was re-imagined and split into quadrants, incorporating patterns instead of relying on highlighted colors, higher contrast, larger text, and other thoughtful design updates to better serve all users.



Elaine Gerken is a Fort Wayne native and has been active in the local arts community since childhood. She has taught English Language Arts and Drama at Hicksville Schools since 2009 and directed eleven high school musicals and two middle school musicals, including *Into the Woods*, *Les Misérables*, and *The Addams Family*. Elaine has been volunteering with Fort Wayne Youtheatre since 2022, when her daughter, Avery, was cast in *Frozen Jr.*



The Fort Wayne Museum of Art and Bill Blass Legacy, Inc, presented **“Ghost Army: The Combat Con Artists of World War II”** August 2 through October 26 in the Museum’s galleries. Through archival photography, sketches, and a full-scale replica, the exhibition told the story of the 23rd Headquarters Special Troops, a top-secret WWII unit—the first mobile, multimedia, tactical deception unit in US Army history. The unit waged war with inflatable tanks and vehicles, fake radio traffic, sound effects, and phony generals, using imagination and illusion to trick the enemy while saving thousands of lives. Fort Wayne’s hometown hero, Bill Blass, was featured in the exhibition as an official member of the 603rd Camouflage Battalion.



Googly: a sensory theatre experience, was a collaboration with Kitchen Sink Theatre and Life Adult Day Academy (LADA), that embraced the diverse ways that humans can connect and communicate with each other. By using senses of sight, sound, touch, smell, kinesthetic, and taste, audience participants experienced the magic of theatre in a way that best resonated with them. Performed up close with live, original music, the immersive and interactive journey explored the world of the legendary googly eyes. This program reached community members with the most access barriers to experiencing live theatre, whether that be due to age, disability, sensory differences, or financial or transportation challenges. Nearly 350 audience participants experienced the show, including 144 with disabilities, over the course of seven performances.



Emma Humbarger is a multidisciplinary artist whose creative journey began on stage before expanding into tech, production, and design. She currently works at Fort Wayne Youtheatre, where she supports young performers in their artistic growth, and serves as a graphic design intern in Ivy Tech Community College's marketing office. Alongside her professional work, Emma is pursuing a degree in Visual Communications at Ivy Tech, integrating design, organization, and visual storytelling across her practice.



Jonathan Lowden has demonstrated his passion and dedication to the craft of acting, beginning in second grade with his involvement at Fort Wayne Youtheatre, to his current junior year of high school for a variety of organizations, including Arena Dinner Theatre, Fort Wayne Civic Theatre, and First Pres Theater, which primarily cast adult performers. When Jon was an 8th grader, he served as a designated student leader, playing a crucial role in planning after-school drama club meetings for the largest extracurricular club at Blackhawk Middle School.



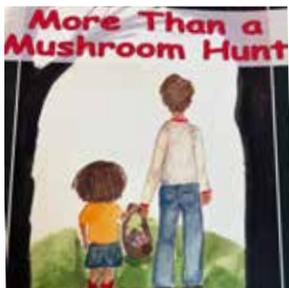
Susan Keefer is a retired choral-general music educator whose teaching career spanned from 1973 to 2016 at Wabash Jr.-Sr. High School (Wabash City Schools). Over the years, Susan has served the Wabash community in a variety of roles through music. Mrs. Keefer founded the Wabash High School Symphonic Voices & Debonairs, served as interim music director for Wabash Christian Church during her time as the choir accompanist and organist, and was a part-time choral music director until 2021 at Southwood Jr. Sr High School (MSD of Wabash County) post-retirement. Susan is active in the Wabash Musicale Club, recently directing the chorus in rehearsals and performances, and performs in other community events, such as the Madrigal Dinner at Honeywell Center and the Jolly Trolley.



Kim McCutchan combined her love of performing arts and volunteering over many years. She has served on the Steering Committee for the Taste of the Arts Festival for the past 13 years, predominantly working on the Stages committee. She was a Board member for Gaslight Playhouse in Kendallville for four years and served as President for two years. She enjoys directing and choreographing whenever she has the opportunity. She has also been a local director for the past 20 years for the Miss Fort Wayne Scholarship Program as part of the Miss America Organization, and recently added the Miss Northeast titleholders to her pageant family as they vie for the titles of Miss Indiana and Miss Indiana's Teen.



Monarch Creative Ink is a purpose-driven publishing company founded by Amanda McNamara, dedicated to transforming the way individuals understand and communicate their inner emotional world. At the heart of the brand is a signature line of mental health journals built on color psychology – a visually intuitive system that empowers clients to identify, track, and articulate emotions that are often too complex for words alone. Designed in close alignment with therapeutic practice, these journals serve as active communication bridges between individuals and their care providers, supporting deeper clinical conversations and more meaningful treatment outcomes.



More Than a Mushroom Hunt is a sensory-rich children's book that focuses on author Tonalee Shinabery King's childhood memory of her first real adventure with my dad, written for children to explore it as a first-person story. Tonalee collaborated with five selected college students to illustrate the book in a single color palette. Each student selected portions that resonated with them. The published book is showcased as part of a three-state region tour that Tonalee leads as a free story time in libraries, classrooms, festivals, and nature preserves.



George Morrison, after retiring in 2008 from the architectural firm he founded in 1981 (Morrison Kattman Menze, Inc better known now as MKM Architecture and Design), became a prolific artist in the mediums of ceramics, wood, and 3D printing. He worked as a full-time sculptor, and he has been commissioned for public art throughout his artistic career. George has shared his expertise as an adjunct instructor of ceramics at the University of Saint Francis and across the United States.



The **Open Streets Live Broadcast** was a powerful collaboration between W.E.L.T. 95.7 FM and the Open Streets initiative, transforming a 20-block corridor into a shared soundtrack for the city. Michael Banks DJed live on air while simultaneously broadcasting Open Streets throughout the event.



Kristi Unger is celebrating her 30th year in education, bringing experience as a former classroom teacher into nearly a decade of service with Honeywell Arts & Entertainment, where she has worked since 2017. In 2018, she expanded her knowledge by becoming a certified Arts Integration Specialist. Kristi now serves as the Director of Education at Honeywell Arts & Entertainment, where she leads initiatives that inspire creativity and learning through the arts.



Dick Stoner, The Magical Laughmaster, has been a staple of Fort Wayne arts, culture, and entertainment for more than eighty years. Inspired by his father to become a magician, Dick has performed his comedy magic act at shows, concerts, and events worldwide since 1943. He founded Stoner's Funstore in 1949 and has been satisfying Fort Wayne's taste for the unusual and offbeat ever since.



Fort Wayne Youtheatre's Something Happened in Our Town was a powerful and timely artistic endeavor that used theatre as a catalyst for dialogue, reflection, and community engagement. Presented in partnership with United Front and Fort Wayne Urban League, the production explored the aftermath of a police shooting of an unarmed Black man through the eyes of children, inviting audiences to consider issues of race, justice, grief, and civic responsibility in an age-appropriate yet deeply meaningful way. These partnerships reinforced that the production was raising awareness and connecting audiences to real-world resources, support, education, and action.



Jen Poiry Prough has been an active member of the theatre community since 1988. She has performed in nearly 90 productions with almost every theatre group in the Fort Wayne area. She also maintains the Green Room Online website, connecting the theatre community and audiences with upcoming productions and auditions. She is currently working on a theatre database listing cast members and production teams of every theatre production in northeast Indiana.



Brandon J. Porter is a stage and music director, conductor, arranger, pianist, and vocal coach whose work spans theatre, choral and church music, and arts education. He is the Co-Producer and Artistic Director of Genesis Outreach Presents, an arts organization committed to ambitious works that amplify minority artists and underrepresented stories. He also owns BP Music Productions, where he supports performers, programs, and organizations through arranging, coaching, and creative consultation. Brandon is known for artist-centered leadership, high standards, and building meaningful artistic experiences.



Colleen Phillips, known to her students as Ms. P, has been a music educator in Fort Wayne Community Schools for the last 21 years. She has taught middle and high school students orchestra, concert band, jazz band, pep band, marching band, and choir, growing and improving these programs to the benefit of thousands of students. As orchestra director at Memorial Park Middle School, Colleen started the Hot Mess Mariachi program, one of the only student mariachi programs in Indiana, and is highly involved in the B Instrumental program. In addition to her work for FWCS, Colleen is also the program director for Believe In A Dream's Master the Music program, providing students the opportunity to jam with their strings at community events and play on a stage with hundreds of other young string players at the String Dreams Concert.



Dawn Yingling has been dancing since she was a little girl and began teaching at the Fort Wayne Dance Collective in 2018. She teaches the onsite adult tap classes and seated tap dancing at assisted living facilities in the area. She played a large role in the creation of Silver Taps, an innovative program designed for dancers ages 55 and older. This program provides older adults with a creative outlet, opportunities for social connection, and the chance to experience the physical and emotional benefits of dance.