



One-of-kind.
Forged for everyone.

2024 END OF YEAR REPORT



Artists challenge the status quo, envision solutions, and ask, "What if?" They are innovators, dreamers, and disruptors. Artists propel our businesses and economies forward, transforming "Why not?" into "What is." Art connects us to our emotions, fosters empathy, and opens the door to understanding diverse perspectives. Through arts education, students gain the tools to express themselves, embrace different viewpoints, and cultivate compassion.

The journey of creating art often involves challenges and revisions, but it teaches us resilience, perseverance, and the ability to adapt. The world needs doers and "re-doers" – individuals who face adversity with courage and creativity, becoming the architects of their own lives.

This year held special significance as we celebrated the 25th anniversary of Hot Shops. For a quarter of a century, we have been a hub of innovation and connection, creating opportunities for artists and enriching our community through the power of creativity.

In the following pages, explore what we've achieved during this milestone year as we continue to live our mission – catalyzing creativity and putting artistic opportunity within reach for all. Together, we honor the past, celebrate the present, and envision the future of art at Hot Shops.



Ceramic sculpture by California-based artist, Grayson Fair, fired with the expertise and equipment provided at the Hot Shops Art Center.



Focus Area

Build a Creative Pipeline

Gretna Public Schools tour featured a captivating fire demonstration, illustrating how ideas need fuel to ignite and come to life.

Let's create a critical mass of future makers while making a positive cultural impact through our educational and public programming and help Omaha retain its creative talent.

Measurement Report

- 1,023 Educational Programs for 7,436 creative learners in 2024.
 - 946 Workshops/Classes reaching 3,852 creative learners. 38 were held at low/no cost for 699 under-resourced children and children with disabilities
 - 65 tours and 84 demonstrations were given to 3,024 individuals
 - 12 CreativeMornings/Omaha events attended by 560 individuals
- 20 Gallery Exhibitions
- 20 Partner collaborations including: Visit Omaha, Collective for Youth, OPS, Open Omaha, Live on Nebraska, Local Art Plug, UNO, NEXT Foundation, Greater Omaha Chamber

Hot Shops Art Center continues to inspire and engage students, and the broader community with dynamic educational programming. Our efforts reflect a strong commitment to arts education, community collaboration, and future growth.

The Hot Shops was thrilled to welcome Josephine (Josie) Langbehn as our new Education and Program Manager. Josie's experience has already added new depth to the Hot Shops' educational programs, enhancing our ability to deliver meaningful art education and creative experiences that partners are seeking.

For example, UNO's Aim for the Stars Math and Art class visited for their Culminating Event. Students toured the building, observing artists of all mediums at work and listening to a panel of artists discuss how math informs their artistic practice. The students then presented their own creations from the camp to the artists.

Another program Josie developed was in partnership with Completely Kids at Marrs Middle School. Partial funding for this program came from the SNAC program, with additional support from a 2023 grant provided by the Adah and Leon Millard Foundation.

This six-week program offered an engaging visual arts experience, giving students the opportunity to create using a variety of mediums, including clay, watercolor, printmaking, and acrylic paint. In July, the program culminated with a special event where students toured the Hot Shops and showcased their work at an art reception. During the event, students observed the sculpting process and a bronze-pouring demonstration of medallions, which were later presented as awards for the best works created during the program.

Continued

Build a Creative Pipeline



Matthew Shrader teaches glass stamping to a scholar from Nelson Mandela Elementary

We were excited to strengthen our relationship with Omaha Public Schools (OPS) by offering new classes and student field trips to the Hot Shops. The OPS English Learner Family Involvement Program (ELF) collaborated with us for a multi-medium mastery class held at the Tac Building. We also hosted 60 Afghan Studies students from Benson, Burke, and Central High Schools for tours and artist demonstrations. The OPS/ELF Program helps parents and children build community while learning the English language.

Additionally, we welcomed 90 second-grade students from OPS Castelar Elementary for tours, artist demonstrations, and participation in the Hands in Omaha Mural project.

Summer marked the start of more youth educational programming, with ten groups visiting the Hot Shops, including Completely Kids, Marrs Middle School, Child Saving Institute, Boys & Girls Club, and the Step-Up Internship Program. Nelson Mandela Elementary's third and fourth graders also visited, enjoying tours and artist demonstrations. Fourth-grade students even got hands-on experience by creating their own glass medallions during a hot glass workshop. In the Fall, we were excited to once again host eight field trips for Gretna Public Schools, where 5th-grade students explored a variety of creative careers, participated in interactive demonstrations, and learned directly from our artists the importance of generating new ideas and developing their own voice.

We launched a new professional development program for art educators, hosting 23 Millard Public Schools art teachers. The program was designed to be fun, engaging, and hands-on, with practical takeaways that educators could implement in their classrooms. Participants enjoyed a building tour, a panel discussion featuring local working artists, and two hands-on workshops led by local artists. One workshop, led by Les Bruning, focused on sculpture and bronze casting. Les shared insights into the conceptual nature of sculpture while teaching educators the technical aspects of bronze casting.

Survey results for this program were overwhelmingly positive, with 100% of participants giving it the highest score for effectiveness. Educators expressed enthusiasm about connecting with the community, hearing from artists, and learning new art techniques to share with their students. Many were also inspired to pursue their own artistic work, despite the demands of teaching and life.

We were delighted to welcome Takemi Tsuruta as a new ceramic instructor. Takemi has introduced exciting new classes, including hand-building and ceramic sculpture, complementing our existing wheel-thrown pottery offerings.

Continued

Build a Creative Pipeline



Marrs Middle School students watching a bronze pour of the medals they would be presented with later at an art award ceremony.

We have begun to lay the groundwork for future internship programs designed to serve high school and college students. This initiative aims to provide hands-on experience, mentorship, and professional development opportunities within the arts. We are also collaborating with The Union for Contemporary Art to develop future programming to empower artists with the knowledge and tools they need to achieve financial success and sustainability in their creative careers.

We had a unique opportunity to host three major groups this year. First, the Young Presidents Organization of Nebraska (YPO). YPO is a global leadership community of chief executives. The Nebraska Chapter rented the entire Hot Shops for an event for these CEOs and their families to see demonstrations in bronze casting, violin-making glassblowing and blacksmithing. They also scheduled hands-on workshops in pottery, glass, painting, alcohol inks, sneaker and card designing.

We also welcomed members of the National Rural Economic Developers Association (NREDA) for a guided tour of our vibrant art spaces. This visit included artist demonstrations and an engaging nonprofit panel, showcasing the vital role of arts in economic and community development.

We hosted the Global Design Alliance, an international network of design, planning and construction firms, for glassblowing workshops and their networking dinner. The dinner concluded with an award ceremony, where the winner helped create their own glass award. A truly one-of-a-kind experience right here at the Hot Shops Art Center!

Matthew Shrader, our glassblowing studio manager is key to creating a successful pipeline for artists wishing to explore the art of glass. From experiences, to full weekend intensives, the glass studio constantly bustling with artists and students. Our two-day weekend intensive is for those interested in exploring glassblowing beyond the experience to potentially progress into an independent study. Matthew also was out and about in the community with seven mobile glassblowing opportunities: two Art in the Park events at the Gene Leahy Mall, UNO Durango Days, Carter Lake Public Library, OPS Liberty Elementary, Lauritzen Gardens and at a Greater Omaha Chamber event.

These programs reflect Hot Shops Art Center's mission to inspire creativity, foster education, and build a thriving arts ecosystem. As we look forward to the next year, we remain dedicated to expanding opportunities for artists, students, and community members.



Focus Area

Create Space for Artists to Connect and Grow

Dan Toberer, Hot Shops' ceramic studio manager, built a custom kiln for Bemis Resident artist Yumiko Ono and assisting her throughout the multiple firings.

Let's provide our collaborative of creative learners, makers and artists of all ages, ethnicities, races, sexual orientations, and backgrounds that work in a variety of mediums a place and opportunity to be creative, exchanging ideas and developing their voice.

Measurement Report

- 86 Community Studio Uses.
- Provide low-cost working spaces that are well below rental fees currently available in the market
Hot Shops' rates: \$1/sq foot - \$1.40/sq foot
- Hosted 31 events to connect our 103 resident artists with each other and other creatives. We welcomed 44,000 visitors through tourism and events
- Building improvements - new door locking system, building-wide wifi installed

As Omaha's largest artist collective, Hot Shops plays a vital role in making local artists visible year-round within Omaha's thriving arts and culture scene.

We remain deeply committed to providing opportunities for artists to showcase their work, connect with others, and grow their creative practices. In alignment with this mission, we hosted several impactful events throughout the year.

We held four Open Studio Nights that highlighted both our resident artists and group exhibitions featuring fiber artists, Creighton University students, lampworking artists, and more. These events drew lively crowds eager to explore open studios, engage in hands-on art activities, and admire the latest additions to our galleries.

Our largest annual events, the Spring and Winter Open Houses, were significant highlights. Unfortunately, Omaha experienced a devastating tornado outbreak during the Spring Open House, which severely impacted attendance, some of our artists' homes and the broader community. The Winter Open House, while slightly lower in attendance compared to previous years, welcomed highly engaged visitors who were eager to support our artists. Their enthusiasm translated into significant art purchases across all floors of the facility.

A standout moment at the Winter Open House was an inspiring collaboration between our metal and glass artists. Together, they created an experiential glass tree, offering visitors the rare opportunity to witness this unique work of art come to life throughout the day. This collaboration exemplified the creativity, innovation, and sense of community that define Hot Shops.

In June, eighteen Hot Shops Art Center artists participated in the Omaha Summer Arts Festival, showcasing their work through individual booths and the Hot Shops ArtSeen booth. Throughout the three-day festival, Hot Shops artists demonstrated glassblowing, torch work, pottery, painting, and Indigenous beadwork, further engaging the community with live displays of their craft.

Continued

Create Space for Artists to Connect and Grow

Saying farewell to the Omaha Summer Arts Festival marked a significant loss for artists, both in revenue and marketing opportunities. However, creativity is a journey filled with challenges and fresh starts. At Hot Shops, we embrace innovation and problem-solving. Our 'Keepers of the Flame' are already collaborating with an artist that is working to bring back the Festival and ensure that Omaha's artistic spirit continues to thrive.

In addition to public events, we have been actively engaging with our artists to gather feedback on new initiatives, including event planning for 2025, our upcoming fall fundraiser, and the long-term strategic direction of the organization. Their insights are helping shape the future of Hot Shops in meaningful and exciting ways.

To further support our resident artists, we have identified six new shared display areas within the building. These additional spaces offer artists more opportunities to professionally showcase their work beyond their studio walls. Rotating exhibits in these areas will encourage visitors to explore the entire facility and discover a diverse array of art.

We are also focused on enhancing our artists' online presence. Through social media marketing, we are actively educating and assisting artists in effectively sharing their work. By ensuring their posts are visible for resharing by the Hot Shops team, we amplify visibility for both individual artists and Hot Shops as a whole, helping expand audiences and attract new followers.

Hot Shops Art Center has long been a critical resource for visiting artists, offering the expertise, equipment, and collaborative spirit necessary to tackle even the most complex fiery arts projects. The center's unique blend of talent and facilities makes it a go-to destination for artists working in specialized mediums such as ceramics, glass, and metal.

Grayson Fair, who came to Omaha as a Kaneko resident artist, experienced this firsthand when working on a large-scale ceramic sculpture. The sheer size and scope of his project required access to specialized equipment and technical expertise not easily found elsewhere. Hot Shops stepped in to assist, ensuring the successful completion of his ambitious work.

Similarly, Yumiko Ono, a resident artist at the Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts from Japan, turned to Hot Shops for help with an intricate Raku project. With hundreds of pieces to fire and a process requiring precision and patience, Yumiko needed both the equipment and hands-on expertise that Hot Shops provides. Dan Toberer, Hot Shops' ceramic studio manager, went above and beyond by building a custom kiln and assisting throughout the multiple firings needed to complete her project.

These stories exemplify what makes Hot Shops truly exceptional—its unwavering commitment to supporting artists, no matter how unique or challenging their needs may be. The center's collaborative environment and deep well of expertise allow artists to bring their visions to life, further cementing Omaha's reputation as a thriving hub for creative innovation.



Our incredible Metal and Glass Studio artists teamed up to bring visitors to our Winter Open House a one-of-a-kind experience by building a glass wrapped tree during the event.



Focus Area

Strengthen & Sustain

Let's build a strong and broad coalition of support to help us stabilize into the future and renovate the Hot Shops into a world-class facility that evokes pride and better accommodates the needs of the future.

Measurement Report

- Ten board meetings were held and one written monthly report was submitted.
- Increased outreach and grant submissions. 40 grant applications submitted, securing support from 17 supporters. Eight were repeat supporters
- \$291,000 capital raised in public donations, sponsorships, grants and public memberships
- Secured full \$272,500 in Elevator Renovation Funding. Construction began in 4th Quarter
- Secured \$30,000 in funding and completed a Facilities Assessment Study
- Established financial checks and balances, monthly budget reporting, keeping the organization expenses low to build up reserve funds for maintenance and operations.

Over the past year, we have focused significantly on expanding our support base. This initiative aimed not only to broaden our reach but also to cultivate meaningful connections with individuals and foundations who share our commitment to providing affordable spaces for working artists and arts education.

To increase the number of grant submissions, we have engaged a grant writer, and we continue to see positive results, with a steady rise in awarded grants.

The Hot Shops benefits from diverse income streams, which allow us to sustain operations while building philanthropic support. Currently, 40% of our budget comes from philanthropic contributions, while 60% is earned income.

We successfully achieved our fundraising and programming targets, ensuring the financial stability necessary to support both current operations and future growth.

Committed to improving our facilities, we completed the first phase of a three-phase planning process, laying the groundwork for full-scale renovations and expansion. As part of this phase, we conducted a comprehensive facility condition study to assess the state of our buildings and infrastructure. This study revealed significant structural issues in the southeast one-story building, which require immediate attention. We have already begun addressing these critical concerns to ensure the safety of our artists, visitors, and the broader community.

Continued

Strengthen & Sustain



The freight elevator officially closed in December and construction began on the new ADA-accessible elevator.

In addition, we reached our fundraising goal to install an ADA-accessible elevator—a vital step toward making our spaces inclusive and accessible to all. Thanks to the generosity of our supporters and community partners, construction is underway, and we anticipate the elevator will be fully operational by late April.

Other major construction work completed included brick wall and ceiling renovations in Studio 321 and the installation of a new fire sprinkler riser. During this process, we uncovered rotted floor beams beneath Studio 114, which required immediate attention. Dan Toberer, who wears two hats as our dedicated ceramic studio and building maintenance manager, took on this challenging and messy task single-handedly. Despite the complexities of the repair, Dan managed to multi-task, often working through the night while also tending to the gas kiln firing.

These accomplishments reflect our dedication to strengthening infrastructure, sustaining operations, and ensuring the Hot Shops Art Center remains a dynamic, thriving hub for artists and the community for years to come.



Focus Area

Community Awareness and Outreach

Panel discussion on arts and culture in communities for the Rural Economic Developer's annual conference

Let's build our brand awareness and reach to attract more visitors and students.

Measurement Report

- Marketing/Donation booklet created
- Social media audience growth of 3,121 over four channels (FB, Insta, LinkedIn, TikTok).
- Monthly email newsletter. Audience of 2,658 and open rates at 38-48%
- 241,000 page views on our website and approximately 44,000 visitors passed through our doors.
- Creation of a brand story guide to help us more consistently tell our story

We were very fortunate to receive several stories in the media.

[Greater Omaha Chamber Magazine](#)

[Visit Omaha Magazine](#)

KMTV: [Hot Shops Art Center hopes to ignite inspiration for young artists](#)

KMTV: [Hot Shops Art Center: Art Fluid Open Studio Night](#)

Oh my Omaha: [Hot Shops discussion](#)

KIOS Profiles: [Hot Shops Art Center](#)

Omaha Magazine: [Through the Lens: Photographer Terry Koopman's 40 Years of Capturing Nebraska](#)

Only in Nebraska: [The Completely Free Hot Shops Art Center Hiding in Nebraska is a Must-Visit](#)

Visit Omaha: [10 Date Night Ideas in Omaha](#)

Instagram/TickTock Influencer Campaign from Visit Omaha: [Weekend in Omaha](#) - Molly, art & music creator from Kansas City. Videos received a total of 1,277,227 views

We were proud to host the Collage Nebraska exhibition that is an Omaha Entertainment and Arts Award Nominee! Collage Nebraska – organized by Carol Fettin & Lori Elliott-Bartle



Bronze medals that were created for Marris Middle School art awards winners.



Wheel thrown pottery at the Omaha Summer Arts Festival



UNO's Math and Art camp presented heir work to Hot Shops Artists



Sculpture class for MPS Professional Development Day for art educators.



Glassblowing demonstrations at OPS Liberty Elementary



Artist Panel for MPS Professional Development Day for art educators.

MISSION

To be a place where ideas, dreams and what ifs are explored, created and shared.

VALUES

We catalyze CREATIVITY through bravery, honesty and hard work.

We accelerate ACCEPTANCE through inclusivity and celebrating the individual.

We build TRUST by providing a safe place to share and develop ideas and creative expressions.

We create OPPORTUNITY by breaking down barriers, developing voice and building confidence.

We strive for EXCELLENCE and QUALITY in our programs and experiences to the community.

VISION

To be the fire that sparks a more open, creative community where everyone belongs,
by increasing access to visual arts education.

