



ARTS COUNCIL OF
PRINCETON

Neighborhood and Community Report May 2016



The Princeton Parklet, located in front of small world coffee, was a popular Witherspoon Street destination from May to October 2015. It was created through a partnership between the Town of Princeton and the Arts Council of Princeton.

Introduction

We are pleased to present this report on the Arts Council of Princeton's (ACP) programs for the Princeton community and activities related to the Witherspoon-Jackson (W-J) Neighborhood. This report covers the year since our last Neighborhood Report in April 2015.

We are pleased to report that the Arts Council has again been recognized this past year with the NJ State Council on the Arts "Citation of Excellence" and has been designated as a Major Service and Presenting Organization for the state. We are also proud to have been awarded the Discover Jersey Arts People's Choice Award for Favorite Art Gallery for the fourth out of the past five years. Plus, our arts education program was recognized as the runner up for best in the state. These successes have been made possible because of the excellence of our staff and the generous support provided by our Board of Trustees and the Princeton community.

In past years we have reported in some detail about the many programs that serve both the Witherspoon-Jackson Neighborhood and the broader Princeton community, but this year because of increased activities around the Witherspoon-Jackson Neighborhood, and in consideration of its newly created status as a Historic Preservation District, we will focus primarily on our programs and projects serving the neighborhood and the few programs serving the broader Princeton community that are new since last year. The full range of programs are reported in the Arts Council's Annual Report and on the Arts Council website at www.artscouncilofprinceton.org. A PowerPoint slide show in support of this report has been prepared to help illustrate the creative and community value of these programs.

Programs and Events 2015/16

COMMUNIVERSITY ArtsFest: On April 17th Princeton's annual festival of the arts was held again in downtown Princeton, organized by the Arts Council with participation from the students of Princeton University and support from the municipality of Princeton. The police estimated attendance of over 40,000, and by many accounts it was the most successful event ever. The festival featured over 250 artists, musicians, performers, crafters, merchants and food vendors, nonprofit and student organizations, and numerous free activities for children. The proposed dates for Communiversity for the next three years are: April 30, 2017, April 29, 2018 and April 28, 2019.

Artist-in-Residence Program: Our Artist-in-Residence Program currently features Diana Weymar, who organized the spring 2016 exhibition in the Paul Robeson Center gallery entitled *Every Fiber of My Being*. This exhibition, with a focus on stitching and fiber arts, served as the center of a community-based project, *Interwoven Stories: A Princeton Community Project* that includes over 230 participants, including such notables as Mayor Lempert and Joyce Carol Oates. Each participant is creating a page depicting a personal memory or story, utilizing the medium of stitching. An installation of all the finished pages will be on display in our gallery in the fall of this year.

Public Art/Princeton Parklet: We increased our public art programming during the past year, building on the visibility of the *Underground Railroad* and *Continuum* murals and the *Bee Banner* on the construction fence of the Avalon Princeton project at the site of the former hospital. The most recent and significant of these new public art projects was the **Princeton Parklet**, which was on view from May through October on Witherspoon Street, in front of small world coffee. A collaboration of the Town of Princeton and the Arts Council, the enthusiastic response to the parklet was overwhelmingly positive. Based on the success of the 2015 parklet, a process is currently underway to determine the location of the 2016 parklet.

Witherspoon-Jackson Neighborhood Stories Project: A highlight of the past year has been the new Witherspoon-Jackson Neighborhood Stories Project, which was inaugurated last February with a Black History Month program that featured Shirley Satterfield, Florence Broadway, Tommy Parker and Michele Tuck-Ponder. In March a second event featured a "Story Slam" with students from Princeton High Schools Poetry Club, a reading by Dr. Cecelia Hodges, and stories presented by Joe Moore, Dana Hughes, Olive Giles and others. Subsequent events included a Robeson birthday event at One Table Café, as a collaboration with the Paul Robeson House, a presentation of photo collages by Romus Broadway at the Robeson Center, as part of a Joint Effort/Safe Streets event, and a panel discussion with African-American elected officials at the Princeton Public Library.

The most recent W-J Stories Project event was a Paul Robeson Birthday celebration featuring a historical presentation by the Paul Robeson House and the author, Lindsey Swindell, who presented her book *Paul Robeson: A Life of Activism and Art*, along with her collaborator, actor Grant Cooper.

The W-J Stories project is ongoing and we are recording stories by current and former neighborhood residents that will ultimately be accessible in a centralized website through the Arts Council and partner organizations, which include The Paul Robeson House, The Princeton Public Library, the Historical Society of Princeton, as well as faculty and students from Princeton University. Members of the W-J Stories Project committee include: Ben Colbert, Evelyn Counts, Maria Evans, Rich Robinson, Shirley Satterfield, Hannah Schmidl, and Michele Tuck-Ponder.

Conclusion: The Arts Council of Princeton continues to provide a positive impact through arts and cultural offerings for our community through the projects we have just outlined, plus much more, including: classes, workshops, scholarships, free community events, exhibitions, performing arts, Arts and Health programs and free programs for at-risk youth. We appreciate the partnership and support we receive from the Princeton municipality and look forward to working together in the coming year to keep Princeton the culturally rich and vibrant community that has earned a reputation of one of the best places to live in the United States.