

The logo for Riverworks Art Center features a large, white, stylized letter 'R' on the left. The right side of the 'R' is shaped like a winding river. To the right of the 'R', the words 'Riverworks' and 'Art Center' are written in a white, serif font, stacked vertically.

Riverworks
Art Center

CULTIVATING CREATIVITY AND CONNECTION ■ 2023-2024





When people take hold of the arts, it brings courage, hope, and fullness to their lives. Helping others find that is why we're here. Our vision is art and culture for all—while transforming small-town Poolesville into an arts destination for visitors from across the D.C. region and beyond.

— SANDY WRIGHT
Riverworks co-founder

WELCOME TO Riverworks

Founded as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit in 2022, Riverworks is the newest art center in the D.C. area, and arguably the most ambitious. We're excited to make the small town of Poolesville a hub for art classes, performances, exhibitions, and cultural programs—and we're inviting you to join us.

ELEVATING A COMMUNITY

Riverworks is here for neighbors—with events and programs that bring us together to foster friendships and creative collaborations.

Riverworks is here for families—with classes for parents and children, plus public festivals and activities where kids can grow, learn, create, and maybe even surprise themselves.

Riverworks is here for artists—professional artists, aspiring artists, dabblers, dreamers, and total beginners.

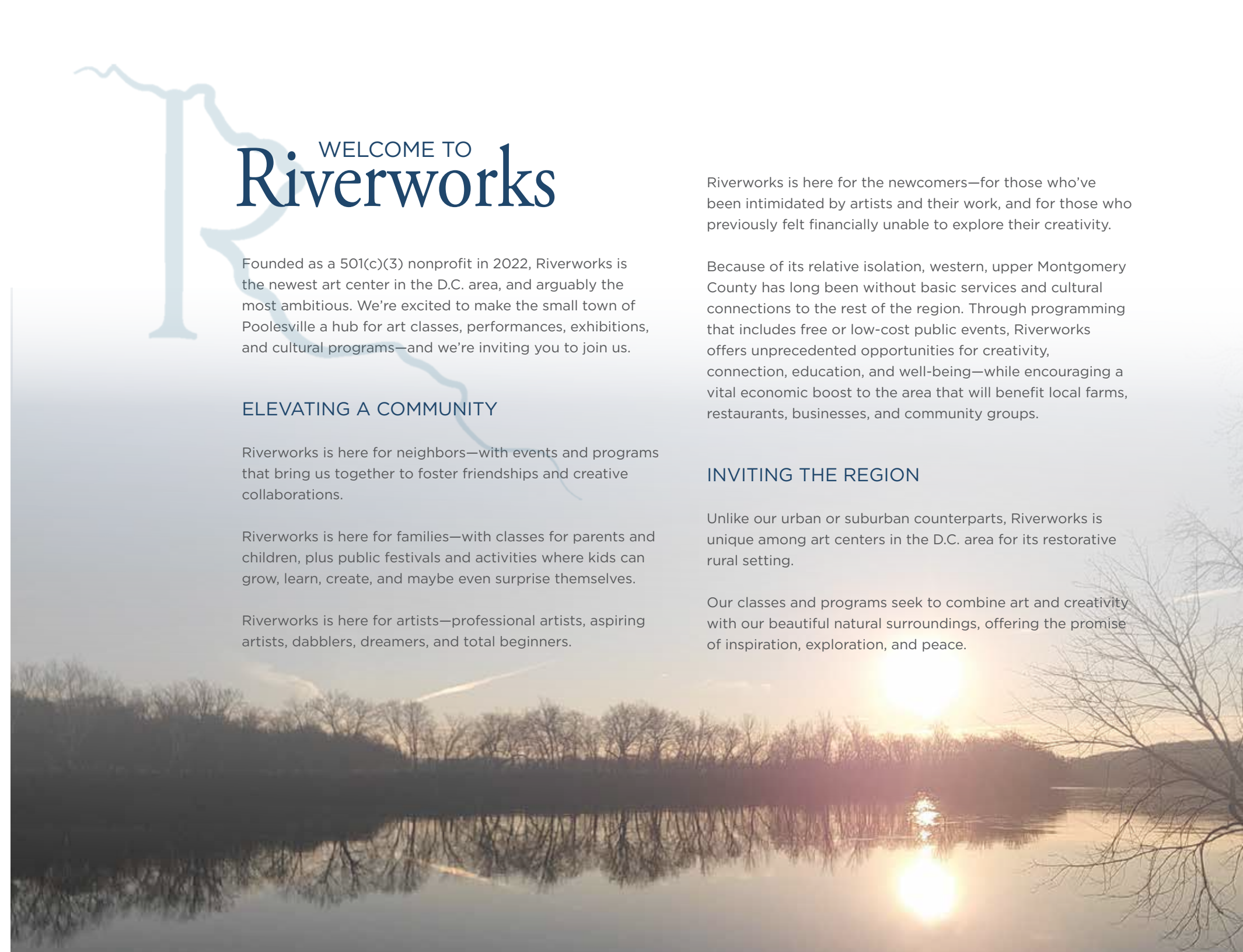
Riverworks is here for the newcomers—for those who've been intimidated by artists and their work, and for those who previously felt financially unable to explore their creativity.

Because of its relative isolation, western, upper Montgomery County has long been without basic services and cultural connections to the rest of the region. Through programming that includes free or low-cost public events, Riverworks offers unprecedented opportunities for creativity, connection, education, and well-being—while encouraging a vital economic boost to the area that will benefit local farms, restaurants, businesses, and community groups.

INVITING THE REGION

Unlike our urban or suburban counterparts, Riverworks is unique among art centers in the D.C. area for its restorative rural setting.

Our classes and programs seek to combine art and creativity with our beautiful natural surroundings, offering the promise of inspiration, exploration, and peace.



Where We Are

Riverworks is rooted in the small town of Poolesville, Maryland, near a bend in the Potomac River within the 93,000-acre Montgomery County Agricultural Reserve, a haven of farms and forests, rolling hills, historic communities, and vast natural beauty. We're only 40 minutes outside the D.C. Beltway and just half an hour south of Frederick, with Sugarloaf Mountain rising eight miles to our north.

Those of us who live and work here believe that western, upper Montgomery County is the best-kept secret in the D.C. region. Explore our rustic roads and you'll find hiking trails, riverside views, farm-fresh produce, independent restaurants, African American historic sites, Civil War trails, local beer and wine served right at the source—and now, a burgeoning arts community.



Where We Gather

Riverworks currently hosts events, classes, and programs at three locations in and around Poolesville, Maryland.

With its event pavilion and inspiring sculpture garden, Alden Farms, located in nearby Beallsville, provides a quiet setting for classes, writing workshops, and artists' studios.

At Locals Farm Market in Poolesville, you'll find rotating art exhibitions, Friday night jam sessions, and a marketplace for the work of local artists.

Our outdoor stage at the historic Methodist church in Poolesville brings dance, music, and other performances to the heart of our small town, with bigger plans in the works: transforming the historic church into a state-of-the-art performing arts center.



The Roots of Riverworks: A Free and Sensitive Spirit

When the Covid pandemic shut down the world in 2020, longtime Poolesville-area residents David Therriault and Sandy Wright had one of their usual contrarian notions.

Recognizing that western, upper Montgomery County needed more than ever to hold together as a community, they took the daring step of opening a new restaurant, even as many others in the region were closing forever. With startling speed, they turned a historic house in the heart of Poolesville into a bustling spot to enjoy coffee, baked goods, and pastries—and, at the time, a rare place where friends and neighbors could gather outdoors. As Covid waned, Locals Farm Market grew into a full-service restaurant with indoor and outdoor seating, seasonal menus with fresh local ingredients, and gifts and décor celebrating the unique character of this tight-knit rural community.

In 2021, the sudden loss of their daughter again prompted David and Sandy to think about the connections that make our lives richer and more meaningful. As a student at the Savannah College of Art and Design, Sydney Therriault was a talented artist who left a vast body of work in a wide range of media. Sensing that their restaurant was only the first glimmer of



what neighbors could accomplish together, David and Sandy honored Sydney and her relentless creativity by again sharing their vision with the community.

Riverworks Art Center was incorporated as a nonprofit within a year and soon began offering

art classes, hosting rotating exhibitions, and bringing together local musicians for weekly jam sessions. In addition to being on permanent display on the ground floor of Locals, Sydney's art appears regularly in promotional materials, a reminder that Riverworks is rooted both in her joy in creativity and her insistence that art can be made and enjoyed by everyone.

"She was very sensitive, and she looked out for the underdog," David says of his daughter. "If there was a kid who was worried no one was going to come to her birthday party, Syd was the one who would go. That was Syd. And that's the spirit that Riverworks is continuing."

Riverworks is growing fast, but free events, low-cost programs, and classes for parents and children will always be part of the Riverworks mission. By design, our programming already includes entry points for those who have felt left out of other art centers, whether because of the price or because making art simply seemed intimidating.

In the rambunctious spirit of Sydney Therriault, Riverworks invites newcomers and veteran artists alike to be fearlessly creative—and to push back on our loud and restless world by cultivating peace, well-being, and human connection.

An Astonishing First Year...

Even with limited funding and minimal staff, Riverworks has offered a wealth of classes, programs, and free community events since the summer of 2022:

- painting and drawing classes enjoyed by hundreds of students
- nine "Artist in the House" gallery exhibitions focusing on painting, drawing, and mixed media by respected regional artists
- free monthly Storytellers sessions featuring writers, artists, folklorists, historians, and other compelling cultural figures
- weekly, low-cost "Made-in-Studio" classes offering guided introductions to papermaking, collage, watercolor painting, and other artistic media
- free Friday night jam sessions open to musicians of all ages and experience levels
- immersive, weeks-long Community Roundtable programs celebrating African American history, women's writing, Native American culture, and collaborations between poets and painters
- "A Taste of Riverworks," a June 2023 community event featuring plein air artists at scenic sites throughout the Agricultural Reserve followed by an art auction, children's activities, and free dance, poetry, improv, and music performances on our outdoor stage
- \$200,000 in first-year funding secured from the state of Maryland
- Riverworks Dinner for the Arts fundraiser attended by county dignitaries, arts leaders, and local and regional supporters
- free "Fire Festival" with glassblowing and pottery demonstrations
- free African dance classes in partnership with Essence Studios Dance & Performing Arts
- creation of an Associate Artists program to provide mutual support for working artists
- partnership with the Upcounty Prevention Network on a youth mural design contest
- home for children's music and drama education in partnership with Yunique Music School
- founding of a Riverworks Poets' Society by writing workshop alumni
- outdoor summer concert series featuring local and regional musicians
- free open-studio time for artists to come together and collaborate



A Taste of Riverworks: Art and Fun for Everyone

On June 10, 2023, Riverworks invited the community to a celebration on the grounds of the future performing arts center. With hours of free activities and entertainment, A Taste of Riverworks was our biggest event to date, bringing together neighbors of all ages and backgrounds to affirm that art is all about cultivating community and connection.

Earlier that day, Riverworks welcomed more than 20 plein air painters to scenic and historic sites across the area and encouraged the public to watch them work. Afternoon visitors bid on their paintings in a silent auction—while also enjoying art activities, food from Locals restaurant, hours of live performances, and a peek inside the future performance space.

A Taste of Riverworks also marked the debut of our custom “sprung stage,” the only outdoor stage of its kind in Montgomery County. Specially designed to minimize the impact on dancers’ bodies, the stage represents a partnership with

Essence Studios Dance & Performing Arts and was paid for by a “Tall and Small Ball” parent-child fundraiser earlier in the spring. For hours, the stage was packed with dancers, musicians, singers, and poets, with acclaimed D.C. band Elikeh bringing everyone to their feet as daylight began to wane.



One participating artist called A Taste of Riverworks the best-organized plein air event she’s ever experienced, and another praised the day for not being “stuffy,” with wet-paint auctions of professional artwork alongside parents and children balancing ice cream while dancing to Afropop. With hundreds of attendees, many of whom stayed past the 7 p.m. closing time, A Taste of Riverworks was made possible by an army of volunteers, as



well as generous sponsorships from businesses such as Fine Earth Landscape, Bally Cliff Farm, Brian Jamison Real Estate, Kettler Forline Homes, M&T Bank, and Claire Howard Fine Art. In keeping with our focus on grassroots support, more than 125 households also committed to being “Riverworks Neighbors” at \$100 each.

Successfully combining fundraising with community celebration, A Taste of Riverworks is primed to become an annual festival, and ideas for newer, bigger activities are already pouring in. We’re excited to see how this event will grow through connections with neighbors and friends.



Small Town, Big Ambitions: Riverworks Performing Arts Center



Built in 1826, the old Methodist church in Poolesville has served many functions: as a telegraph office for the Union Army during the Civil War, a YMCA, a movie theater, a nursery school, a pharmacy, a veterinarian's office, a temporary town hall, and most recently, a thrift shop.

With plans drawn and permits soon to come, Riverworks has begun the exciting, multi-year process of turning this historic structure into a state-of-the-art performing arts center. By preserving a historic building in the heart of town, Riverworks is breathing new life into a beloved landmark long in need of restoration.



As the centerpiece of Riverworks and the organization's most visible building, this historic church will serve as an intimate performance space for an audience of approximately 150, including seating on the restored church balcony. Complementing its custom-designed sound system and an interior beautified by locally milled wood, the site will feature a unique, interchangeable stage allowing performers to face both indoor and outdoor audiences.

Architect: CMW Group, Inc., Frederick, Md.

Builder: Brucy Builders, Frederick, Md.

Estimated cost: \$2.9 million

Estimated opening date: 2025



Looking Ahead: The Near-Future of Riverworks

When developing new programs and events, our staff and board are mindful of what already makes Riverworks unique: our small-town connections, our inspiring natural surroundings, and our commitment to making art accessible and fulfilling for all.

We hope to surprise and delight the community with pop-up events and fun, innovative programs that redefine what an art center can be. To us, an art center is not a single building or any one place, but a state of mind that uplifts an entire community and invites visitors from far outside our area to join us. In time, we anticipate people across the entire D.C. region asking the same question: "What's going on in Poolesville this week?"



OUR GOALS FOR 2024

- Capital campaign to begin transforming the historic 1826 church into a state-of-the-art performing arts space
- Repurposing of vacant walkable space in Poolesville as a music and performing arts rehearsal space and rentable community meeting venue
- An expanded catalog of art classes, including more Saturday classes and creative new offerings for parents and children
- Development of performing arts workshops and classes, with a focus on children and teens
- Partnerships with civic and school groups seeking space for meetings, rehearsals, performances, and classes
- Additional dance and music events on the Riverworks outdoor stage
- Innovative new Community Roundtable events featuring local outings, museum visits, public discussion, and creation of new works of art
- Development of a sculpture walk featuring the work of nationally known artists and a projection show on town buildings, both in partnership with local historical societies and regional tourism authorities
- Yearly continuation of the student mural contest in partnership with the Upcounty Prevention Network
- Continuation of popular programs, including Friday night jam sessions, rotating "Artist in the House" exhibitions, and monthly Storytellers sessions

What People Are Saying

"I am so happy to have an organization like Riverworks Art Center in our community. It means so much as an artist to have the support they provide. It is also wonderful to see other art forms taking shape under their wing, like theater and music, bringing culture to our little town. With their encouragement and the open studio, I am painting or trying out new art forms every week. My relationship with Riverworks has been very rewarding."

~ BETSY CASALENO, ASSOCIATE ARTIST



"I don't say this lightly, but the experience of creating a piece of art while creating a cohort of artists was truly transformative. It culminated with an evening of conversation with the larger Riverworks Art Center community, who were ready to participate and be engaged in our creative process. In a few words: I loved the experience and cannot express enough my gratitude to have been a part of this first community roundtable."

~ S.C.R., PARTICIPANT IN THE COMMUNITY ROUNDTABLE PROJECT: AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY AND CULTURE

"With its purpose, philosophy, and vision, Riverworks truly stands to complete the unique experience that is our small town. It is more than a place—it's a haven for expression, creativity, acceptance, and togetherness."

~ KATIE HORAN, PROPRIETOR OF THE SWEET LEMON BOUTIQUE, FORMER HUMANITIES TEACHER AT POOLESVILLE HIGH SCHOOL



"Riverworks is a place for those looking to explore or expand their creativity. Being part of a like-minded group reignited my desire for making art."

~ JOSH F., WRITER, TEACHER, AND POETS AND PAINTERS COMMUNITY ROUNDTABLE PARTICIPANT

"For me, Riverworks is a dream come true and a bright beacon in this corner of Montgomery County's Agricultural Reserve. The beautiful grounds, friendly atmosphere, and warm staff make the arts accessible, nurturing, and fun for all."

~ CHRISTINE RAI, FOLKLORIST, HISTORIAN, AND PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH AT FREDERICK COMMUNITY COLLEGE



"Riverworks Art Center is fostering broader and more extensive social connections across western upper Montgomery County than previously existed. Art in its many forms is giving us a tangible way to express our humanity. It's evident that love and light are at the root of this means for bonding as a community."

~ KATHY F., RIVERWORKS VOLUNTEER

You Can Help

DONATE

- **FOR BUSINESSES:** Riverworks offers numerous opportunities to sponsor individual classes and programs, portions of events, or entire public events. We'll feature your organization's name and logo on all marketing, promotional, and outreach materials, and we'll make clear to the community—and your customers—that you support art and creativity for all.
- **FOR HOUSEHOLDS AND INDIVIDUALS:** Your contributions make a meaningful difference as we develop new programs and work toward constructing our performing arts center. We're also open to households and individuals sponsoring classes and programs at reasonable rates.

VOLUNTEER

As Riverworks grows, we'll need big hearts and plenty of extra hands. Send an email to contact@riverworksart.org and we'll find a way for you to help. If you have specific experience or professional skills in grant writing, nonprofit development, finance and accounting, information technology, public relations, or other fields, we'd love to have you on the team. Drop us a note and let's talk about working together.



JOIN US

If you're an artist, or if you are interested in how the arts can build community, there's sure to be a place for you at Riverworks. Visit our website at www.riverworksart.org to find out about teaching and exhibition opportunities and the benefits of our Associate Artist program.

SPREAD THE WORD

- **FOR THE PRESS:** Come see what we're all about. Hang out at a Friday night jam session, drop in on a class, and meet the

people who make Riverworks happen. Our founders, board, and staff are here to welcome you and show you around. Reach out at contact@riverworksart.org.

- **FOR NEIGHBORS AND FRIENDS:** Tell everyone you know about Riverworks, follow us on social media, and share the positive experiences you've had here. New events and programs are popping up all the time, and visitors from beyond the Poolesville area are just as welcome as longtime locals.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

An active, engaged Board of Directors has allowed Riverworks to take root quickly and thrive. All board members live locally or have close personal and professional ties to the area. Their wide-ranging experience includes non-profit management, the performing arts, fine arts, finance, music, historical research, education, and community leadership.

Valaree Dickerson, President
Community organizer and former Poolesville town commissioner

Lynn Arndt, Vice President
Nonprofit consultant; former CEO of BlackRock Center for the Arts, Germantown; former COO of Interfaith Works, Rockville

Sandy Wright, Interim Treasurer
Co-Executive Director and co-founder
International trade analyst; co-founder of Alden Farms Garden Shop and Locals Farm Market

Catherine Pickar, Secretary
Retired music professor, George Washington University; founding editor of *Women and Music: A Journal of Gender and Culture*

Rev. Howard "Chuck" Copeland
Pastor and founder of Hosanna Community Church; retired corrections officer

Brian Jamison
Realtor with Jamison Real Estate and accomplished musician

Alex Markoff
Director and co-founder of outdoor educational nonprofit Calleva

Catherine Matthews
Retired Director of the Upcounty Regional Office of Montgomery County Government; co-founder of Foundation for African-American History mobile touring museum

Angela Molfese
Humanities and writing specialist, Montessori Community School, Durham, North Carolina; former Adolescent Guide for Arts and Humanities at Butler Montessori, Darnestown

Robin Salomon
President of affordable housing developer Skyline LLC; former treasurer, Glen Echo Partnership for the Arts; past chair of Silver Spring-based nonprofit Community Bridges

Jeff Sypeck
Writer, editor, historical researcher, and co-author of *I Have Started for Canaan: The Story of the African American Town of Sugarland*

David Therriault
Co-Executive Director and co-founder, sculptor and landscape designer; co-founder of Alden Farms Garden Shop and Locals Farm Market; longtime member of the Countryside Artisans

STAFF

David Therriault
Co-founder and co-Executive Director

Sandy Wright
Co-founder and co-Executive Director

Tara Wise
Performing Arts Program and Events Director
Award-winning songwriter, performer and producer; TedX spotlight performer; music educator and community organizer

THANK YOU

We're grateful to those whose support has been essential to Riverworks' success:

- The Alden-Wright Foundation
- Arts and Humanities Council of Montgomery County
- BlackRock Center for the Arts
- The Butz Foundation
- Claire Howard Fine Art
- David S. Christy, Jr.
- Jim and Carol Clifford
- Curlew Castings, Studio of Walter Matia
- Essence Studios Dance & Performing Arts
- Heritage Montgomery
- Historic Medley District
- Hope Garden Children's Ballet Theater
- Maryland General Assembly Delegation, District 15
- Montgomery County Executive and County Council
- Montgomery County Lynching Memorial Project
- PLENTY magazine
- Poolesville Area Chamber of Commerce
- Third Act Images
- Town and Commissioners of Poolesville
- Upcounty Prevention Network



Riverworks Art Center

riverworksart.org
contact@riverworksart.org
(301) 690-9337

Alden Farms
Studios and Classrooms, Event Pavilion,
Sculpture Garden
19215 Beallsville Road, Beallsville, Md.

Locals Farm Market
Art Exhibitions, Jam Sessions, Artist Marketplace
19929 Fisher Avenue, Poolesville, Md.

Riverworks Performing Arts Center
Outdoor Stage at the Historic Methodist Church
17617 West Willard Road, Poolesville, Md.

