

ARTS AND CULTURE

COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAM

2026-2028 GFWC CLUB MANUAL

GFWC est. 1890 GENERAL FEDERATION OF WOMEN'S CLUBS

2026-2028
ARTS AND CULTURE
COMMUNITY SERVICE
PROGRAM

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"THE ARTS ARE NOT JUST A NICE THING TO HAVE—THEY DEFINE WHO WE ARE AS A PEOPLE AND PROVIDE AN ACCOUNT OF OUR HISTORY FOR THE NEXT GENERATION." — MICHELLE OBAMA

The current edition of the Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines the word "ART" as follows:

"art" (noun) 1. "the expression or application of human creative skill and imagination, typically in a visual form such as painting or sculpture, producing works to be appreciated primarily for their beauty or emotional power…"

The same lexicon defines the word "culture" in this manner:

"cul-ture" (noun) 2. "the customs, arts, social institutions, and achievements of a particular nation, people or other social group…"

However one choses to define these words, their collective meaning speaks volumes. Arts and culture bring people together, spark creativity, and preserve the stories and traditions that shape who we are. Combined, the two are subjects of study primarily concerned with the processes and products of human creativity and social life, such as languages, literature, imagination, development of the technical ability to create something from nothing, and the capacity to bridge the things that separate us from one another: age, education, location, religion, or economic disparity.

The arts ignite imagination, build self-confidence in young people, foster empathy, and bring beauty into our everyday lives, whether through multi-media, music, dance, or theater. Culture is the thread that weaves communities together – it connects us to our roots, celebrates our diversity, and shapes our collective identity. By honoring both, we revere our shared humanity by inspiring new ideas, encouraging dialogue, and providing opportunities for expression and connection across generations.

A quote from Phylicia Rashad, "Where the Women go, the Culture goes!" should be the rallying cry for all clubs, Districts, and State Federations within GFWC. Our members should be the vanguard in developing projects and programs to highlight and focus support on all aspects of human expression. Develop local activities like awarding art scholarships, sponsoring community and school art contests, participating in community beautification projects, assisting little theater activities, sustaining library growth and expansion, developing photography contests, and backing local choral performances.

Direct any questions regarding projects that do not involve GFWC Affiliate Organizations to the Arts and Culture Community Service Program Chairman or GFWC Programs Department at Programs@GFWC.org.

Don't just sponsor, but also joyously participate! Festivals, heritage programs, historical preservation, and cross-cultural exchanges all create opportunities for understanding and unity, reminding us that strong communities are built not just on shared geography, but on shared experiences. Reach out to sister clubs in our GFWC International network to learn about their arts, local customs, and culture. By learning from them and sharing what we know, we expand our horizons and deepen our understanding of our world and the people who share it with us.

When GFWC women's clubs champion the arts by lifting up local artists, hosting cultural celebrations, and weaving creativity into community life, we plant seeds of beauty and pride that flourish for generations. By embracing this work, our clubs ensure that service is not only practical but also soulful, leaving behind a legacy as colorful and enduring as the art we support. By supporting our culture, we respect the traditions, stories, and customs that give our communities depth and character, while also welcoming the new ideas and perspectives that keep them thriving.

The Arts and Culture Community Service Program exists to provide creative project ideas, support to ensure greater impact, and encourage club women to participate in and/or otherwise facilitate a love and appreciation for the arts across their community and within their entire sphere of influence.





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2026-2028 UNITY PROJECT

THE OCTOPUS CHALLENGE



STRETCH YOUR REACH

GFWC encourages clubs, State/District of Columbia Federations to participate in a challenge encompassing all areas of the Arts & Culture service project area. The Octopus Challenge invites clubs and federations to stretch their reach throughout all areas of Arts and Culture by **completing 2 projects in each of these 4 areas:**

1. **ART**
2. **MUSIC**
3. **DANCE/THEATER**
4. **CULTURE**

But our Octopus isn't finished yet! For ambitious federations looking to expand their reach a little further, there is a bonus challenge. After all, an octopus may only have 8 arms, but we know she can grow another when needed. **For bonus credit and special recognition, complete 2 additional projects celebrating each of these special areas:**

- Affiliate Organizations
- Lesser-known cultural traditions such as Lei Day, Diwali, Dia de Los Muertos, Juneteenth, and more.

By the end of this administration, those who have completed this Challenge will have left a legacy of service to their communities as far-reaching and embracing as an octopus's arms! Let your ideas flow, make waves of creativity and inspiration, and don't forget to brand your artistic endeavors with your club's name, contact information (where appropriate), and the GFWC Emblem.

The **Octopus Challenge Award Certificate** will be given to any State/District of Columbia Federation, or club that completes the project. Special Recognition will be given to those who have also completed the Bonus projects. Recognition for this Challenge will be given at the Region Banquets during the GFWC Annual Convention in 2028.

Find the form for this challenge in the Digital Library on the Member Portal.

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FEATURED PROJECTS



SIDEWALK CHALK ART

Driven by a desire to provide an interactive and accessible outdoor arts experience, the GFWC Sylvania Junior Woman's Club (GA) initiated a community-wide sidewalk chalk art display. Wanting to expand on the traditional wall mural, the club, in collaboration with the City of Sylvania and the Screven County Chamber, transformed the downtown park into an interactive canvas. Members created engaging chalk designs, and passersby were invited to contribute their chalk creations while interacting with the existing designs.



EMERGENCE – A JOURNEY FROM BROKENNESS TO TRANSFORMATION

Members of GFWC Dover Century Club (DE) experienced how art serves as both a source of healing and a catalyst for awareness in this project. A 3" x 3' shattered heart-shaped mirror represented the fractured lives affected by domestic violence. Rather than discarding the broken pieces, the cracks were filled using small pieces of mosaic glass. This act of reconstruction symbolized healing, resilience, and the beauty that can emerge from brokenness.



WING IT PROGRAM

GFWC Oregon City Women's Club (OR) collaborated with a local theater group to support the "Wing It" program for children. In this interactive show, the young audience helps crew members, dressed as whimsical, winged creatures, get out of a jam while learning lessons about kindness and good behavior. After the performance, children are invited onstage to share a joke, poem, dance, or even just a smile and giggle, fostering creativity, confidence, and joyful participation in a supportive and encouraging environment.



PASSPORT TO ARTS & CULTURE

The GFWC Chapin Women's Club (SC) Arts & Culture Chairman created a "Passport to Arts & Culture," complete with a photo to inspire members to explore the arts. She organized group outings to cultural events, encouraging members to attend as many as possible, whether club-sponsored or on their own. Passports were stamped at club meetings, and at year's end, the member with the most stamps received a $250 gift certificate generously donated by a local art gallery.

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PROJECT IDEAS

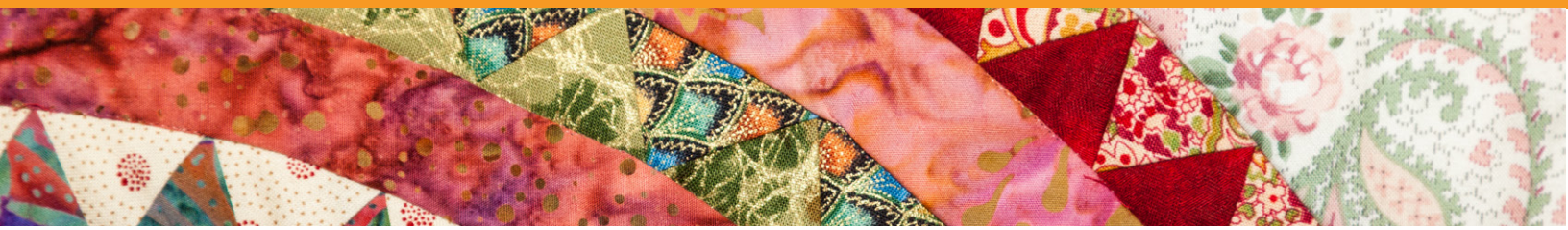
The following list of ideas for how GFWC clubs can support the Arts and Culture Community Service Program will hopefully inspire you.

GENERAL

- Arranging visits to the studios of local artists and musicians is a wonderful way to bring the arts to your community – not only for your club members but also for youth, senior, and veteran groups. These experiences can showcase the talents of painters, sculptors, glassblowers, potters, leather crafters, and woodworkers, giving behind-the-scenes looks at their unique creative expressions. Local dance studios, community theater groups, musical ensembles, and museums will often embrace the opportunity to share their passion through tours, demonstrations, or short performances. Explore the cultural events your community has to offer through resourcing your local Community Events Calendar, Arts Council, or Chamber of Commerce. Then participate!!
- Another way to celebrate creativity and expression in Arts and Culture is sponsoring or hosting events such as art shows, photography contests, dance competitions, or student music showcases. This can encourage local talent and foster pride in community culture. Events can be designed to include participants of any age group or even provide opportunities for club members to share their own artistic skills.
- Honor cultural heritage by learning/teaching the traditional arts (such as Asian paper folding, Ukrainian Pysanky, African Batiks, European Embroidery, etc.), songs, or dances of another country. Participating in community events hosted by other organizations that celebrate diverse cultures is a wonderful way to broaden your understanding and build meaningful connections. These shared experiences not only deepen cultural appreciation but also raise your club's visibility, strengthen community partnerships, and highlight your commitment to learning, inclusion, and service.
- Establish scholarships for arts students, including literature, drama, and music. This could be to attend an arts school or summer camp.
- Establish awards that acknowledge the artistic achievements of club and community members.
- Include a category in Art Contests that is specific to children with special needs. Many times, these students need to receive recognition for their creativity.



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ART

- Use member or children's art for club cookbook covers, greeting cards, program covers, etc.
- "Love the Police, Bus Drivers, Firefighters, or Veterans" – Assist local elementary students make Valentine cards for town police, bus drivers, firefighters, and veterans.
- Host a craft time at the library to make simple crafts with children. Coordinate with the library story time and match the book theme or make a seasonal or holiday-themed craft.
- Hold a "Chalk the Walk" contest for elementary school children on sidewalks in front of a municipal building, library, elementary school, or other public venue. Choose a theme and have your club supply the chalk and ribbons for the winners.
- Identify members of your club with a talent for art and encourage them to share their knowledge with other members or perhaps with students from local art classes.
- Participate in or sponsor local arts and crafts contests.
- Sponsor a craft time at a local elementary school or daycare…something hands-on, messy, and fun.
- Use an artistic event to raise funds to sponsor local community art and cultural programs.
- Sponsor an Artist in Residence program for local seniors to attend. Donate the supplies needed and provide transportation to and from the classes.
- Set up a member craft table to sell art at a hometown Farmer's Market or craft fair. At your booth, make sure to include plenty of information on how to join a local GFWC club.
- Paint rocks with inspirational words and place them all over the city in places where they can be found. A kind word goes a long way.
- Make jewelry and cards for distribution to the homes of teen mothers or wives of soldiers serving overseas. Give them out on Mother's Day.
- Make homemade holiday cards for nursing home residents or Meals on Wheels recipients.
- Donate art books, sketchbooks, coloring books, crayons, and other art supplies to hospitals, doctor/clinic waiting rooms, schools, and shelters.
- Hold a recycled art contest for art projects using recycled materials for area artists or the Art Association.
- Host an art supply drive within your club. Contact local schools, daycare centers, and/or community centers to see what is needed.
- Design and decorate the garden in front of your clubhouse or meeting space, maintain it with local flora, and post signage indicating when your club meets.
- Help build, paint, register, maintain, and decorate a Little Free Library.
- Provide artwork and help decorate a reading nook at the library, a local laundromat, or other location in your community.
- Hold a holiday centerpiece/wreath-making workshop at a local florist as a club program.
- Participate in your club, District, and State arts and crafts contests by entering your crafting, needlework, painting, and photography items. Enter photographs in the GFWC photography contests.

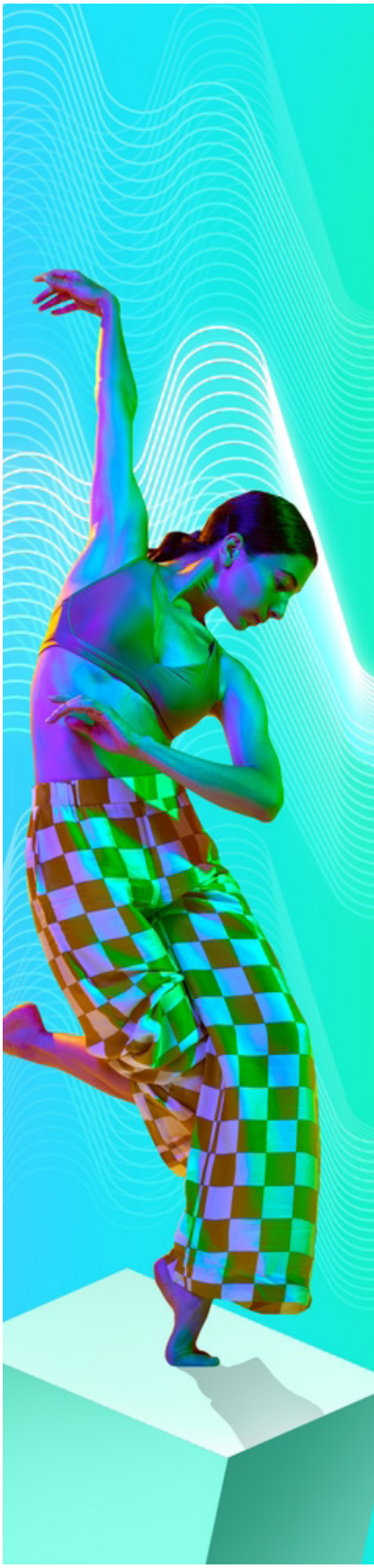
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MUSIC

- Have a neighborhood or city music event, such as a Battle of the Bands for teens or an outdoor Concert Series featuring area bands.
- Utilize local student jazz combos, string quartets, or even the whole band to perform at club events and fundraisers.
- Arrange for youth groups or senior groups to attend a rehearsal of your local symphony, chorale, or chamber organization.
- Decorate ceramic piggy banks or have local artists, art classes, or town officials decorate them. Put them in area businesses to collect money for high school scholarships or to support the local high school theater programs, band programs, and glee clubs.
- Hold a fundraiser to purchase sheet music or a large piece of equipment for your local schools' art, music, or drama departments, such as instruments, microphones, speakers, or technology.
- Partner with programs providing adaptive music lessons for individuals with disabilities.
- Collect oral histories from local musicians or host a "Music Through the Decades" event.
- Hold a benefit concert or themed karaoke night with proceeds supporting a GFWC partner or local charity.
- Encourage/support Music Therapy Programs for Youth and Seniors in your community.

DANCE/THEATER

- Sponsor a trip to a museum or the theater for students and engage members as chaperones.
- Work with your city to sponsor and promote an outdoor classic film festival showing movies with themes such as musicals, foreign language, and Academy Award Winners.
- Support your local community theatre by ushering, assisting at intermission, or holding a fundraiser at a performance and donating the proceeds back to the theatre.
- Sponsor or volunteer with community theater groups, school drama clubs, or local dance studios. Provide refreshments, usher, or help with costumes and set design for performances.
- Arrange for theater or dance groups to perform at senior centers, children's hospitals, or care facilities. A short play, skit, or dance performance can brighten lives and provide meaningful community connection.
- Collaborate on Readers' Theater programs for children, where students dramatize stories to build literacy and confidence. Club members can help direct, provide simple costumes, or read aloud.
- Work with local theaters to sponsor free or discounted tickets for underserved audiences, especially students, veterans, or seniors who might not otherwise attend live performances.
- Host a "Dancing for a Cause" event, where club members and community leaders pair up for a friendly dance competition to raise funds for a local charity or GFWC partner organization.



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CULTURE

- Be the hostess in a home tour where participants stop by for coffee and cookies and view the historical culture of your club through your scrapbooks and other historical items.
- Volunteer at a school to teach students a lesson from your cultural heritage. Include information about the food of the culture and provide samples for the students to taste.
- Hold cooking demonstrations during meetings to introduce foods and customs from other cultures.
- Donate books with an art and/or cultural theme to the public library, a school library, or a Little Free Library.
- Visit or hold a club meeting at an art gallery, museum, local cultural center, or tourist center.
- Explore museums online with Google Arts and Culture or visit art galleries and art museums through their websites for virtual gallery tours.
- Decorate a city park or municipal plaza for holidays and/or the seasons.
- Celebrate international holidays, such as the Chinese New Year, Oktoberfest, Cinco de Mayo, and Bastille Day, and learn more about the historical customs, food, and entertainment of those cultures.
- Host welcome events for international students at local universities and local boarding schools.
- Invite foreign exchange students to speak about their lives and culture at meetings.
- Learn about Native American culture and its various forms from one part of the country to another. When traveling, visit museums on Native American culture.
- Work with local Girl Scouts or Juniorette clubs to foster a safe Halloween by offering free face painting to children before they trick or treat. Invite the Girl Scouts to have a cookie sale in your club to support their efforts and then donate the cookies to schools or the area USO.
- Develop an art scavenger hunt for members or students at a local or online museum. Select items for participants to find and snap photos (if allowed) or document the location in a notebook. Discuss the art pieces after the hunt.
- Host a "World Dance & Theater Night" showcasing traditional performances from different cultures. Invite local cultural groups or international students to share heritage dances or dramatic storytelling tradition.
- Celebrate the cultures of the countries that have GFWC clubs. Showcase their food, dance, and art as well as information about the clubs themselves and projects they have done.
- Organize an International Night featuring music, dance, and cuisine from around the world. Invite community members, schools, or exchange students to share their heritage through performances and storytelling.
- Coordinate a "Tales from Around the World" storytelling event at libraries or schools. Include folktales, myths, or personal cultural stories read or performed by volunteers in traditional attire.
- Host a Community Heritage Festival highlighting local traditions, foods, music, and crafts. Partner with historical societies or cultural organizations to showcase exhibits on your town's history and cultural roots.
- Work with local museums, archives, or cultural landmarks to document oral histories, digitize old photos, or create displays highlighting community heritage and international influences.



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CONNECT WITH GFWC AFFILIATE ORGANIZATIONS

CANINE COMPANIONS

- Purchase bolts of fabric for Canine Companions to sew vests for stuffed puppies.
- Make donations for dorm rooms or decorate the dorm rooms at Regional Training Centers.
- Participate in the Canine Companions Signature Event – Dog Fest Walk 'n Roll. For more information, visit www.cci.org/dogfest.
- Invite local artists, students, or club members to create paintings, sculptures, or digital art celebrating the bond between people and service animals. Display the work in libraries, galleries, or community centers.
- Sponsor or produce a short play, skit, or readers' theater depicting how a Canine Companions service dog transforms a person's life. Then partner with a school drama club or community theater group to perform the piece at civic events, schools, or senior centers.
- Host a "Dogs with a Purpose" photo contest, inviting community members to submit portraits of their dogs, with entry fees benefiting Canine Companions.

HEIFER INTERNATIONAL

- Construct and decorate a parade float designed to promote Heifer International and join in the next parade in your community. Hand out bookmarks and "Cow Tail Candy" along the parade route.
- Organize a craft fair where local artisans or club members produce items inspired by agricultural or rural life (e.g., handcrafted textiles, pottery, woven baskets, or embroidered pieces) and tie it to Heifer's mission of empowering farmers and rural communities.
- Solicit local bands, musicians, choirs, or community groups to hold a concert themed around agriculture, community, food, and global connection evoking cultural traditions of farming communities. Proceeds support Heifer.

MARCH OF DIMES

- Create blankets for babies. Create a pattern just for your club. The blankets will be distributed to military moms at baby showers sponsored by March of Dimes.
- Create baby hats with your club's special colors. March of Dimes has a toolkit that provides instructions and guidance for pattern and size. volunteer.marchofdimes.org/the-general-federation-of-womens-clubs/
- Use your creative skills to make handmade costumes for babies in the NICU. These costumes are simple to make but make a huge impact and help families connect with their babies. volunteer.marchofdimes.org/the-general-federation-of-womens-clubs/
- Create a fundraiser within your club or State Federation to raise money for March of Dimes. Use a theme that is engaging and fun – encourage participants to be creative in their presentations of their donations. For example, if you are collecting dimes, make a display with them in the theme of "The Ants (Dimes) go Marching."
- Participate in local March of Dimes Walk-a-thons, even sponsor a group. Create t-shirts or signs with inspirational sayings on them.
- Organize a fun, social art-fundraiser: e.g., a painting class ("Paint & Sip" or "Paint & Share"), a pottery-making session, or a craft workshop where participants pay a fee, all or part of which goes to March of Dimes. The artwork created may be themed around moms, babies, early life, hope, and growth.

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OPERATION SMILE

- See how your club can help prepare a child for life-saving surgery with coloring pages, stuffed animals, and games to relieve the stress of surgery. www.operationsmile.org/service-projects
- Host a neighborhood ice cream social to share the mission of Operation Smile and the resulting improvement in the quality of life for children. Accept donations to support an operation.
- Invite local artists, students, or club members to submit paintings, photography, or crafts inspired by "Smiles Around the World." Sell or auction the artwork, with funds donated to Operation Smile.
- Host a "Craft for a Cause" day, either for members or a community project with youth or seniors. Sew soft blankets, decorate tote bags, or create cheerful art for Smile Kits.
- Celebrate the diverse cultures served by Operation Smile through art, music, dance, and food through an event or presentation featuring performances, crafts and foods representing these countries.

ST. JUDE CHILDREN'S RESEARCH HOSPITAL

- Curate an art show featuring pieces inspired by love, courage, and children's strength, with proceeds benefitting St. Jude. Invite members, students, and local artists to contribute artwork. Display art at a library, community center, or online gallery. Auction the pieces or ask for donations during the event.
- Create handmade blankets, hats, or stuffed animals for children receiving treatment.
- Assemble and decorate individual Art Therapy Kits for hospitalized children to use during their recovery. Include coloring books, sketchpads, crayons, markers, watercolor sets, stickers, or origami paper. Decorate the outside of each Kit with cheerful designs and messages of encouragement.
- Host a concert, choir recital, or open mic night to raise funds for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. Feature uplifting or children's-themed music. Include local youth choirs, community bands, or member performances. Sell tickets or accept donations, with all proceeds going to St. Jude.
- Host a community dance or themed dance-a-thon (retro, swing, line dancing, or international dance night) to raise funds and awareness for St. Jude.

UNICEF USA

- Host a community art exhibit featuring works that celebrate children, culture, and global unity, with proceeds benefiting UNICEF USA.
- Celebrate world cultures through music and dance performances, while raising funds and awareness for UNICEF's work in global child health and education.
- Create and sell handmade crafts – ornaments, jewelry, greeting cards, or textiles – themed around children, hope, and world friendship, with proceeds to UNICEF USA.
- Host an art contest for children themed around kindness, cultural friendship, and global citizenship, with entry fees donated to UNICEF. "Color the World with Kindness."

ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION

- Engage seniors in storytelling sessions where they share life memories, recorded or written down with club assistance. Preserving personal stories is a powerful form of literary art and cultural heritage. Share copies with families and caregivers.
- Partner with a local memory care facility or senior center to host guided painting or art-making

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sessions for residents. Visual arts can stimulate memory and emotion even when verbal communication is limited.

- Collaborate with a local drama group or high school to create short plays inspired by memories shared by Alzheimer's patients.
- Create or sponsor music programs that bring familiar tunes to those with Alzheimer's. Music often sparks memories and emotions even after cognitive decline.
- Create a photo display connecting past and present, using personal or historical images that spark recognition and conversation.
- Host recurring craft sessions with Alzheimer's patients or caregivers, focusing on simple, sensory-rich activities. Weaving, collage, or clay modeling engage touch, sight, and memory – all vital elements of creative culture.
- Host a dance or movement program featuring music from different eras to promote joy, exercise, and memory recall.
- Create a sensory art garden featuring painted rocks, ceramic flowers, or mosaic stepping stones honoring those with Alzheimer's. Invite members, caregivers, and families to paint rocks with names, flowers, or hearts.

GFWC RESOURCES

Americans for the Arts www.americansforthearts.org
Americans for the Arts builds awareness and support for the value of the arts and works to ensure that every American has access to their transformative powers.

A.R.T. (Artistic Realization Technologies, Inc.) www.artrealization.org | 908-359-3098
A.R.T. has created technologies, studio programming, and training that empower those who lack the articulate use of their hands to gain perfect individual control of the artmaking process from start to finish.

Google Arts and Culture artsandculture.google.com/
Google Arts and Culture provides virtual tools to explore works of art and tour famous sites and landmarks, offers information about nearby museums and other centers of arts and culture, and includes space to create a virtual gallery of your favorites.

National Endowment for the Arts www.arts.gov
The National Endowment for the Arts is an independent federal agency that funds, promotes, and strengthens the creative capacity of our communities by providing all Americans with diverse opportunities for arts participation. This site also lists Arts Councils in each state: www.arts.gov/partners/state-regional. In partnership with state and jurisdictional arts agencies and regional arts organizations, the NEA provides federal support for projects that benefit local communities.

National Organization for Music Education www.nafme.org
The National Organization for Music Education advocates and provides resources for music education, hosts professional development events, and offers opportunities for both students and teachers.

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AWARDS

GFWC recognizes State/District of Columbia Federations for outstanding projects and clubs for creative projects in implementing effective Arts and Culture Community Service Program projects and Affiliate Organization projects as follows:

- **Certificate to one State/District of Columbia Federations in each membership category**
- **$50 award to one club in the nation for project creativity**

Award winners will be determined by entries into the Award Program. Each State/District of Columbia Federations may submit one State/District of Columbia Federation Award Entry and one Club Creativity Award Entry for the Arts and Culture Community Service Program projects. **Entries should be submitted to the State/District of Columbia Federation Arts and Culture Community Service Program Chairman.** Forms are accessible to the State/District of Columbia Federation Presidents in the Member Portal.

Note: Clubs do not submit entries directly to GFWC or GFWC Chairmen.

Refer to the Deadlines for GFWC Awards and Contests sections of the Club Manual for more information.

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RESOLUTIONS

Resolutions adopted by GFWC are the foundation of our organization. They guide our call to action and are the basis of all programming and advocacy. Current Resolutions for the **Arts and Culture Community Service Program** are listed here by number and title. Refer to the complete text in the GFWC Resolutions document, filed under "Governance" in the Digital Library on the Member Portal. Resolutions are an important and integral part of GFWC Programs.

130-010 Historic Preservation

130-020 Museums

130-030 Rosie the Riveter Memorial Project

130-040 Support of the Arts

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