



Vermillion Cultural Association

2022 Annual Report



The Vermillion Cultural Association is a 501(c)(3) organization

Letter from the President

Dear supporters:

The Vermillion Cultural Association believes in the unique power of arts & culture to transform how we experience the world around us—whether it’s in a gallery, on the street, or on the big screen. We also believe that creatives can be powerful drivers of civic progress, shining a light on critical issues and encouraging others to reimagine them. Reflecting on 2022, I am in absolute amazement of what our organization has accomplished with the support of our community and beyond. We have grown and expanded, made major shifts, and ultimately, strengthened our financial sustainability.

In recent years, diminished government support and private funding sources for cultural institutions has made it increasingly challenging for arts organizations to focus on producing and presenting creative work. Despite such a climate, some fortuitous opportunities and astute strategizing by our creative staff and dedicated board members have resulted in 2022 being one of the best years yet for the VCA. Collectively, we have streamlined board processes and procedures by embarking on a working committee structure and improving procedures for funding requests, exhibition proposals, and auditorium rentals. We’ve also increased our organization’s capacity and financial position by entering into key collaborations to enhance programming goals and, perhaps most importantly, by pivoting away from work better left to others. Specifically, we set aside our own dreams for the old Vermillion Theater at 4 W. Main in favor of selling it to a local party who could more efficiently enact their personal goals for the space. This resulted in the creation of a new and fabulous music venue for our community—the AV Lounge. We’re so excited for Joe & Amanda Raiche and for the future of live music in Vermillion!



Joe Raiche stands out front of 4 W. Main, which opened in February 2023 as the AV Lounge

Friends, your engagement and generosity as a community has not only kept the VCA and Coyote Twin alive during challenging times, you’ve helped us thrive. As you review further details in this report, let me reiterate how lucky we are to be supported by so many amazing people, creatives, contractors, students, educators, funders, and community collaborators. We look forward to bringing even more arts & culture to Vermillion, and continuing to do it in a way that is intentional.

Yours in the Arts,

Susan Heggstad

Board President
Vermillion Cultural Association

The Barn Quilt Project: South Dakota Strong

In early 2022, the Vermillion Cultural Association and Creative Care, LLC, launched the Barn Quilt Project: South Dakota Strong (BQP). Supported by a \$75,000 grant from the CDC Foundation, the BQP was designed to harness the power of the arts to build confidence in COVID-19 vaccination. The VCA/Creative Care team was one of thirty awardees nationwide and the only grantee in South Dakota.



Project artists traveled to nine communities around the state throughout February and March. They arranged crafting events at well-known locations in each town, particularly at places folks were already



Smiling, masked faces from BQP workshops around the state

likely to gather—care homes and medical centers, schools, coffee shops, and even the 48th Annual USD Wacipi. Participants were invited to craft 9"x9" quilt squares out of fine art papers, glue sticks, and markers, and could follow one of five provided traditional quilt block patterns. Wooden, painted barn quilts are a recognizable feature dotting the South Dakota landscape; they are signs of well-loved family farms or community pride. Quilt making itself is a cross-cultural tradition among both the indigenous peoples and European settlers of the Dakota territories.

Drawing on this history, the Barn Quilt Project connected familiar quilt traditions with stories of comfort and resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic. Once participants constructed their quilt squares, they utilized writing prompts to share their pandemic experiences on the back side of their quilts. We received stories about the joy of new puppies and grandbabies, the hardships of watching loved ones fall ill, the doldrums of staying home during periods of quarantine, and hope for a healthier future when it was safe to share space again. Also available at the art-making events were quilt-motif handouts and posters encouraging wellness and vaccine awareness in three languages, English, Spanish, and Lakota.

Many folks were excited by the idea that their stories would be shared at an exhibition of the quilt squares at the project's end. All told, the Barn Quilt Project collected quilts from over 500 South Dakotans, and 250 were displayed in the First Dakota Coyote Gallery in downtown Vermillion, South Dakota, as the Common Threads exhibition in April 2022. The team also hosted a capstone talk April 30, 2022, discussing the project's successes and lessons, which can be viewed on [YouTube](#).

VCA and Creative Care were again honored by the CDC Foundation with our selection to have the Barn Quilt Project on display in the David J. Sencer CDC Museum in Atlanta, GA, January–March of 2023, as part of their [Trusted Messengers: Building Confidence in the COVID-19 Vaccines through Art](#) exhibit. Just five projects of the initial thirty grant recipients were selected for the exhibition, and we were extremely proud to represent South Dakota and the crucial role arts and culture can play in community health and wellness messaging.



The Barn Quilt Project display features paper quilt squares and vaccine messaging materials

Arts & Culture Lighting the Way



USD students at the Native American Cultural Center paint lanterns

During summer 2022 VCA administered another community art project, this one designed to get Vermillionaires thinking about how central arts and culture are to our experience of Vermillion, and often characterize what we love about it. We enlisted artist Amy Fill to help us engage on this theme, and together we spent the summer popping up at events all over town, having folks decorate paper lanterns with watercolor paints and Sharpie markers in designs that represent what “lights them up” about Vermillion.

The culmination of our summer of pop-up engagements was an art installation of nearly 300 paper lanterns in the Pocket Park downtown over Dakota Days weekend in October 2022. The full display created a celebration of Vermillion voices, what we love, how we live, and who we hope we can become together.

This work was supported by the South Dakota Arts Council's Residencies for Recovery Grant, which aimed to involve artists as creative problem solvers, who are able to build community bonds. Our objective was to demonstrate that one the best things about living in Vermillion is how many arts organizations we have that enrich, entertain, and educate us. From dance classes to mending circles and movie nights to community theater, there's always something to be part of or a production to attend.



The lantern display illuminates the Pocket Park

The lantern project proposed that arts and cultural events like these can “light the way” to Vermillion’s future by capitalizing on arts are known drivers of tourism and revenue. According to [Americans for the Arts](#), whether people engage with the arts or not, 90% believe cultural facilities (theaters, galleries, public sculpture, arts activity centers) improve quality of life, and 86% believe cultural facilities are important to local business and the economy.

As an outgrowth of the project, VCA proposed a conversation about creating a dedicated public body—our idea was a city arts commission—populated by arts stakeholders drawn from organizations and private citizens. Our hope was this group would be able to coordinate the community cultural calendar, recommend arts improvements or solutions to city projects or problems, and create a plan for acquisition and stewardship of public art. We hoped a commission could also help preserve and foster talent here in Vermillion by engaging students, new residents, and perhaps offering an artist residency.

The first “Lighting the Way” Vermillion visioning session in November 2022. It was led by Jamie Horter, a rural advocate, artist, and facilitator based out of Lyons, NE. She invited us to celebrate what we do and what we love about Verm and provided some thought-provoking questions for breakout sessions. You can read more about this important first discussion and the follow-on conversations about the emerging Arts Hub [here](#).

The Summer That Saved the Movies

Despite the radical success of *Spider-Man: No Way Home* in December 2021, the movie business opened 2022 in a state of uncertainty. Very few films were on the market in Quarter 1, the COVID omicron variant had folks staying home, and at the Coyote Twin Theater we were still limiting



attendance to $\frac{2}{3}$ seating capacity. We lifted the seating cap at the beginning of Quarter 2 and the film slate began to fill in with long-awaited titles like *Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness*.

And yet, it wasn't a Marvel (or, more broadly, Disney) property that would go on to be the summer's standout blockbuster. *Top Gun: Maverick* soared to the top spot with 2,245 total admits at the Twin and five near sold-out showtimes. That's just a drop bucket of \$1.4 billion worldwide, but a big stat for our small cinema!

Maverick continues to be the titled credited with inspiring audiences to return to the movies post-pandemic, but it wasn't the only surprise of the summer. For the first time in VCA's ownership, adults and seniors were our dominant summer audience rather than kids and families. Hollywood seemed to hold back on kid movie releases, possibly because COVID vaccination rates in children lagged compared to those for adults, so the release slate was heavy on titles that skewed older—*Downton Abbey*, *Elvis*, and *Where the Crawdads Sing* were most popular at the Twin. And because the AMC Classic Yankton 5 cinema closed permanently in 2020, the Coyote Twin began running weekly showtimes ads in the *Yankton County Observer* to let our neighbors upriver know they still have big-screen entertainment options. That's added a great boost to our attendance.

Looking back, summer 2021 was characterized by simultaneous releases to streaming platforms and cinemas—a move by major distributors that was wise for pandemic safety but deeply hurt those of us in exhibition. By contrast, summer 2022 crucially proved that exclusive theatrical releases are not just viable but preferable, as later releases to streaming give distributors a second bite at the profit apple. The outlook for exhibition is now stronger than it was pre-pandemic.

In keeping with our mission, we had more happening at the Coyote Twin than just Hollywood releases. We partnered with USD's Cultural Wellness Coalition on a film series that highlighted stories by and about under-represented peoples. We were particularly honored to screen the documentary [Bring Her Home](#), directed by USD alumna Leya Hale, as part of the university's spotlight week of programming on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women in April. Additionally, we played host for 22 other USD events, and our [private rentals](#) totaled 29. And the Vermillion Public Library again included a weekly movie as part of its Summer Reading Program for seven weeks in the summer.

Our own programming for the year included the return of the Fool's 48 Short Film Project showcase on the big screen at the Coyote Twin. It was our biggest-ever Fool's 48—nine production teams participated and we had a fully sold-out auditorium for the showcase. Halloween brought the return of *Rocky Horror Picture Show*, complete with shadow cast performance, in partnership with the Vermillion Area Arts Council. We're proud that these annual events are well loved and attended, and that we're doing our part to help "keep Vermillion weird."

Gallery Highlights

The First Dakota Coyote Gallery was full of life and color throughout the year. In addition to a standard lineup of exhibitions, the space was also host to hundreds of paper lanterns, a four-part watercolor series, and our annual pop-up shop.

The first exhibition was Susan Heggstad's installation *On Her Temple's Ruins*. She transformed the space into a celebration, lament, and call to action for all women, historical, mythical, and contemporary with her mixed media art. The Barn Quilt Project's Common Threads exhibition displayed over 250 quilt squares crafted by South Dakotans from around the state, and paper lanterns from our Lighting the Way project spent some time dangling from the ceiling, too. Everyone who encountered Zhenyi Dai's classical, sensitive, and detailed portraiture, landscapes, and still lifes in her *Faces of Vermillion* exhibition was wowed. And we welcomed a small show by USD student artist Joe Vito and another show of big cast iron sculptures by USD professor Christopher Meyer.



*The gallery was painted with doily patterns and handwritten script during *On Her Temple's Ruins**

Beginning in late 2021 but continuing into summer 2022, the [Missouri River Watercolor Society](#) (VCA's first spinoff program!) organized a series of skill-building workshops for local watercolorists of all ages. Each session focused on a theme and featured a guest artist instructor: Color! with Janet Beeman, Imagining Landscapes with Jeanne Emmons, Let Go and Paint Dangerously with Amy Fill, and Florals Up Close with Michele Mechling. Every workshop was attended by an array of community participants as well as Watercolor Society members. The series was generously sponsored by Craig K. Thompson Law Office.



Community participant let go and paint dangerously with watercolors directed by gravity

We rounded out the year with a tradition that began during the pandemic: the Holiday Pop-Up Shop. Participating artists, volunteers, and all merchandising was coordinated by Michele Mechling through [Davida Art Company](#)—it's a lot of work, and

we're dearly grateful for her partnership. The pop-up has become a go-to gifting spot, and we love being open on Small Business Saturday and during the Holiday Stroll to sell artists' wares. In 2022, the shop had 18 participating artists. A percentage of pop-up sales is donated to the VCA to benefit gallery operations, and this year David Art Company provided us a check for just over \$1,000. What a huge success!

Finally, the gallery was christened this year with a truly cool community-made mosaic. This piece of public art defines the space as you enter from the Coyote Twin lobby. Mosaic-making workshops were (again!) coordinated by Michele Mechling and supported by some of our remaining [Imagining Community project](#) Change Network grant funds.



The new mosaic hangs in the gallery entryway

Financial Overview

The Vermillion Cultural Association completed its strongest financial performance since incorporation in 2015. Net operating income came in at \$123,016, thanks in large part to the continuation of the Shuttered Venue Operators Grant and a solid operating performance. Additionally, the VCA sold the Vermillion Theater building, eliminating the building's annual property tax and maintenance costs. These three events—the net operating income, Shuttered Venue income, and the property sale—have increased the organization's cash position and thereby made possible the financing of several strategic initiatives in 2023.

2022 Revenues and Expenses

Revenues

Ticket sales	155,043
Concessions	104,665
Theater Rentals	12,030
Other	118,530

Expenses

Cost of Goods Sold	114,446
Operating	152,806

Net Operating Revenue 123,016

Other Revenues

Contributions	7,829
Grants	59,911
Programming	2,310
Other	64,064

Other Expenses (w/o depreciation)

Programming	3,285
Other	91,939

Net Other Revenue 38,890

Net All Funds 161,906

Financial statement not audited at time of publication.

Staff

Executive Director – Shannon Cole

Co-Managers – Dan Bellis & Shandra Wonnenberg

Accountant – Lori Rofles

2022 Board of Directors

President – Susan Heggstad

Vice President – Susan Tuve

Treasurer – Greg Redlin

Members

Kevin Bliss

Melissa Eberts, VCDC Representative

Mary Giffin (joined Nov 2022)

Kim Grieve, USD Representative

Ruth Hamel

Bruce Kelley

John Little

Kathy Prasek

Joe Raiche

Betty Smith

Susan Tuve

Ariel Wai

Jim Wilson

2022 Partners

Arts South Dakota

Biomat USA

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CDC Foundation

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Davida Art Company

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Saint Agnes School

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SESDAC

The Spa at Wynie Mae's

South Dakota Arts Council

South Dakota Public Broadcasting

South Dakota Shakespeare Festival

Stockmen's Motorsports

Thread & Ink

Vermillion Area Arts Council

Vermillion Area Chamber & Development
Company

Vermillion Area Community Foundation

Vermillion Area Dance Organization

Vermillion Federal Credit Union

Vermillion Medical Clinic

Vermillion Pride

Vermillion Public Library

Vermillion Right to Life

Vermillion School District

University of South Dakota

- Cultural Wellness Coalition
- Dakota Dreams Career Exploration Camp
- Department of English
- Department of Political Science
- Department of Theater
- Lawrence Brothers Science Camp
- Native Student Services
- South Dakota Governor's Camp
- Spectrum Gender & Sexuality Alliance
- Student Government Assoc.
- Student Programming
- Summer Accounting Institute
- Tiospaye Student Council
- University Art Galleries
- Wawokiya Peer Mentoring Program
- Women, Gender & Sexuality Studies
- Wiyuskinyan Unpi Tipi Living Learning
Community

Yankton County Observer



Yankton Thrive



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