



# Arts Foundation of Cape Cod

**“Art gives me space to  
find my center. It’s both  
my passion and my  
work.”**

Joe Diggs, Artist of the Year 2025

## **NEWS | SPRING 2025**

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS



Front cover and above: Joe Diggs

**03 FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Julie Wake

**04 2025 ARTIST OF THE YEAR**

Joe Diggs

**06 GETTING LOST IN ART**

Nauset students visit the MFA

**07 BRINGING JAZZ TO SCHOOLS**

Bart Weisman, founder of the Provincetown Jazz Festival

**08 BUILDING THE NEXT GEN OF THEATRE PROFESSIONALS**

Cape Cod Theatre Company

**10 CREATIVE EXCHANGE COHORT**

15 Artists selected for building capacity program

**11 ARTISTS & TAXES**

Hannah Cole empowers artists to thrive

**13 UPCOMING EVENTS, WAYS TO SUPPORT & GALA!**



Julie Wake and Senator Julian Cyr, Creative Exchange Podcast

## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Ten years. That's how long I've had the privilege of leading the Arts Foundation of Cape Cod, and yet, in so many ways, it still feels new. Every day, I continue to learn from and be inspired by the artists, creative entrepreneurs, and cultural organizations that make our region thrive.

As I reflect on my time here, I see this 38-year-old nonprofit not just as a funder or advocate for the arts but as something much bigger — a social entrepreneurial adventure. **The creative sector is a driving force for economic and community growth, and our role is to amplify and support its impact.**

You'll see that impact reflected in this issue. Thanks to Arts Access funding, Nauset students had the chance to immerse themselves in world-class art at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, sparking new perspectives and deeper connections to creativity. Our investment in Jazz in the Schools is ensuring that young audiences experience live music — many for the first time — through the magic of America's original art form. Our support helped Cape Cod Theatre Company launch an apprenticeship program that's building the next generation of theatre professionals. And through the Creative Exchange, we're empowering artists with the business tools they need to sustain their careers—like the financial insights shared by artist and tax expert Hannah Cole.

These programs reflect our vision for the future. We're committed to expanding Arts Access, reaching more kids and families across the region. We're scaling the Creative Exchange to serve artists on Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard, strengthening our creative ecosystem. We will continue to advocate for funding, meeting with legislators and pushing for more resources that recognize the vital role of the arts in our communities.

Most importantly, we're doing this together. We are one big creative family, learning from one another, supporting one another, and proving—every day—that the arts don't just enrich our lives; they shape the future of Cape Cod and beyond.

Thank you for being part of this journey.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julie Wake". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Julie" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Wake".



## JOE DIGGS NAMED ARTS FOUNDATION'S 2025 ARTIST OF THE YEAR

At a time when Osterville painter Joe Diggs has never been busier, it is fitting that he has been named the Arts Foundation of Cape Cod's 2025 Artist of the Year.

"I'm still floating a little bit," said Diggs. "I'm excited for the doors this might open and the new people I'll meet."

The recognition comes as Diggs's work is being showcased in exhibitions across New England. This year, he has shows at New Hampshire's Holderness School's Edwards Art Gallery, Provincetown Art Association and Museum (PAAM), and Berta Walker Gallery. In June, he will unveil a mural at MacMillan Pier in Provincetown, followed by a November show at Open University in Wellfleet.

"I'm as busy as I've ever been, which is fabulous," Diggs said. "Art gives me space to find my center. It's both my passion and my work."



**“JOE’S WORK PROVOKES THOUGHT, STIMULATES CONVERSATION, AND ENACTS CHANGE, EXPLORING THEMES OF IDENTITY, RACE, HISTORY, PLACE, AND FAMILY. HE IS THE PERFECT CHOICE FOR THIS AWARD.”**



Arts Foundation Executive Director Julie Wake praised Diggs for his dedication to his craft and community. “Joe’s work provokes thought, stimulates conversation, and enacts change, exploring themes of identity, race, history, place, and family. He is the perfect choice for this award.”

Diggs joins past honorees, painter Jo Hay (2022), visual artist Mark Adams (2023), and photographer Julia Cumes (2024).

Cumes called Diggs a “brilliant and well-deserved choice. His work is raw, emotional, and deeply personal while also resonating universally. This award highlights Cape Cod’s rich arts community and the Arts Foundation’s commitment to celebrating diverse voices.”

The Arts Foundation will celebrate Diggs at a reception on April 17th at Cotuit Center for the Arts and at its annual Arts Gala on June 4th at Wychmere Beach Club.

A lifelong Cape Codder, Diggs earned his BFA from Southeastern Massachusetts University in 1983, and an MFA from MassArt in 2015.

Over four decades, his work has evolved from bold protest paintings to nuanced explorations of social issues. “Now, I build up to that space rather than hitting people over the head with it,” he said.

Beyond his own practice, Diggs has mentored young artists, taught at Fine Arts Work Center, Truro Center for the Arts at Castle Hill, Cotuit Center for the Arts, and the Cultural Center of Cape Cod, and has worked with at-risk youth.

**As for the power of art, Diggs said, “It lets me share what’s important to me on a personal level. Through this award, the Arts Foundation is elevating that, ensuring artists like me can be seen.”**



## GETTING LOST IN ART NAUSET STUDENTS EXPLORE THE MFA WITH FRESH EYES

With over 500,000 works of art, it's easy to get lost in the Museum of Fine Arts (MFA) in Boston — and that's exactly what 56 Nauset Regional High School students did in March, thanks to a field trip partially funded by the Arts Foundation's Arts Access program.

"Field trips are super important," said Elizabeth Stewart, 17, a senior in Andrew Clark's AP Art History class. "They take what we've learned in the classroom and apply it outside of Nauset."

The trip gave students the chance to see works they've studied up close. "Every piece has something deeper we can untangle and talk about," Stewart said.

For sophomore Romy Hunt, 16, whose parents are artists, the experience reinforced his passion for filmmaking. **"Art is my way of expressing myself and showing how I see the world," he said. "When we went to the museum, I gained a new appreciation for art that I didn't get in the classroom."**

Mr. Clark, who has taught history for 29 years and art history for 16, emphasized the power of seeing art in person. "They get to experience art up close, which is really the only way to experience it."

He expressed gratitude to the Arts Foundation for making the trip possible, noting that many students had never been to the MFA before. "Without the Arts Foundation's support, we couldn't have done this trip," Mr. Clark said. "Art allows us to experience the world through another person's eyes, making our understanding richer, fuller, and more balanced."



Arts Access was launched in 2019 on the simple premise that arts should be accessible to everyone. Through Arts Access, we eliminate financial barriers, ensuring people of all ages, especially children, can explore, participate in, and benefit from creative opportunities that inspire and uplift. **Since 2019, Arts Access has served over 20,000 children on Cape Cod.**



## BRINGING JAZZ TO CAPE COD SCHOOLS

In 2014, musician Bart Weisman, founder of the Provincetown Jazz Festival, was asked if there was something he had always wanted to do.

His answer? Bring live jazz into schools — at no cost. Thanks to a generous donor, he launched the Jazz in the Schools Program which is now celebrating its 11<sup>th</sup> year of inspiring young minds.

Since then, the program has introduced jazz to thousands of Cape students. “When we ask how many are experiencing jazz for the first time, 70, 80, 90 percent of them raise their hands,” Weisman said. “We’re reaching a new audience.”

The 45-minute interactive program features Weisman on drums, Rich Hill on bass, and Fred Boyle on piano, blending education with entertainment.

Students sing, clap, and even dance, engaging with the music in a way that makes jazz come alive.

Partially funded by the Arts Foundation in 2023 and 2024, the program has expanded across Cape Cod, making jazz accessible to students who might not otherwise experience it. During the pandemic, Weisman adapted, creating a virtual version to keep jazz education going.

**“Jazz is America’s music, performed all over the world,” he said. “The arts define us as a great country.”**

His goal is to inspire students to embrace jazz as part of their musical journey.

“Institutions like the Arts Foundation make these programs possible,” Weisman said. “When you get this funding, it turns a vision into reality.”

## BUILDING THE NEXT GENERATION OF THEATRE PROFESSIONALS

The best way to learn is by doing, and that's exactly what Cape Cod Theatre Company's new apprenticeship program offered young artists last summer. Thanks to a grant from the Arts Foundation, the program gave teenagers and young adults the opportunity to oversee the production of *Romeo and Juliet* on the company's outdoor stage.

"This program is really the sweet spot of our mission," said Producing Artistic Director Jenn Pina. **"It's multigenerational, educational, and builds community while strengthening young artists' skills through the magic of theatre."**

The program addresses a key need in Cape Cod's theatre community — creating a pipeline of skilled young professionals ready to take on production roles. With mentorship from local theatre professionals, 10 apprentices (ages 16-26) gained hands-on experience in directing, marketing, costuming, and more.

Among them was Laik O'Reilly, 18, who worked as a wardrobe apprentice under costume designer Robin McLaughlin. "This program built my confidence," said Laik. "If I had gone into a show on my own, I'd be lost. Having Robin's guidance helped me know what I was doing."

Now a nursing student at Northeastern, she plans to continue working in costume design as a way to merge her love of theatre and fashion.





Laik worked alongside Calliope Pina Parker, 26, and Maeve Paquette, 16, to outfit the show's entire cast. Maeve, a junior at Auburn High School, has been attending Cape Cod Theatre Company since childhood and values its role in the community. "It's a great place for kids to learn to appreciate theatre," she said.

Director TJ O'Leary, 22, led the production with guidance from Pina, gaining firsthand experience in directing and marketing.

For Calliope, the program's impact was clear: "If you're learning a trade, the only way to learn is by doing. This program not only gives you the space to do that but the structure to support you."

Thanks to the Arts Foundation's support, these young theatre professionals gained invaluable experience — ensuring a bright future for the performing arts on Cape Cod.





## ARTS FOUNDATION SELECTS 15 ARTISTS FOR CAPACITY-BUILDING PROGRAM

The Arts Foundation of Cape Cod selected 15 artists for its Capacity-Building Program, designed to help creatives develop strategies to strengthen their practice and take the next steps in their careers.

Now in its third year, the four-month program is providing professional development workshops, individualized coaching, and a \$1,000 grant upon completion. Since launching in 2023, 27 artists have participated, with 12 in the first year and 15 last year.

A key component of the program is one-on-one coaching with experienced professionals, including renowned artist and designer Oren Sherman and psychotherapist, author, and speaker Rick Miller. Their mentorship offers valuable insights on business development, creative growth, and overcoming challenges unique to artists.

“Rick and Oren provide a rare opportunity for artists to step back, assess their work from a strategic perspective, and gain the confidence to move forward with clarity and purpose,” said Arts Foundation Executive Director Julie Wake.

The cohort is currently participating in workshops on business planning, taxes, press and marketing, and art licensing, taught by professionals that include Hannah Cole of Sunlight Tax, poet John Bonanni, and illustrator Allison Cole.

Among this year’s participants is eco-artist and naturalist Grace Emmet of Brewster, curator of community education at the Provincetown Art Association and Museum (PAAM). “I want to deepen my knowledge of financial management and develop a sustainable business model for my art. As unglamorous as it is, an important part of being an artist is knowing how to survive,” she said.

Also joining the cohort is multimedia artist and musician Mike Sullivan of Provincetown, who recently completed a residency at Confetti Westerns in Pioneertown, California. “I’m always learning as much as I can,” he said. “It would be amazing to be a full-time artist and have my work sustain itself.”

The program includes painters, illustrators, photographers, fashion designers, and storytellers, reflecting the diverse creativity of Cape Cod.

### 2025 Cohort Artists:

- Mara Araujo (East Falmouth) – Multimedia artist
- Kai Barrows (Cotuit) – Illustrator, comic artist
- Joe Diggs (Osterville) – Painter
- William Evaul (Provincetown) – Painter, printmaker
- Ocean Eversley (Falmouth) – Photographer, painter
- Craig Florence (South Yarmouth) – Illustrator, comic artist
- Susan Moffat (Falmouth) – Photographer
- Filipe Miguel (Onset) – Multidisciplinary artist
- Jessie Nickerson (Cotuit) – Visual artist, illustrator
- Gabriel Ribeiro (West Yarmouth) – Author, illustrator
- Alyssa Ruggieri (Cotuit) – Watercolor artist
- Kenard Smith Jr. (Hyannis) – Fashion designer, tailor
- Vanessa Vartabedian (Truro) – Storyteller, story coach

This expanding program is part of the Arts Foundation’s mission to support, elevate, and sustain Cape Cod’s creative economy — empowering artists not just to create, but to thrive as professionals.

**ARTISTS & TAXES:  
HANNAH COLE  
EMPOWERS CREATIVES TO THRIVE**



After earning her MFA from Boston University in 2005, artist Hannah Cole had a frustrating experience with her tax advisor, who dismissed her profession as a hobby. That moment inspired her to become a tax expert to support artists like herself, ensuring they get the financial guidance they deserve.

Cole shared her journey during a virtual tax workshop for local freelancers, artists, and creative businesses in February, marking her third year teaching as part of the Arts Foundation's Creative Exchange program. She covered essential topics like self-employment taxes, deductions, Schedule C filing, and the distinction between a hobbyist and a professional artist.

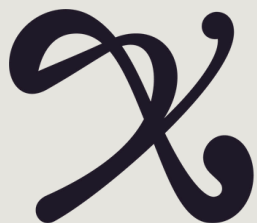
This year's workshop carried added weight — Cole lost 20 years of artwork when her home was destroyed by Hurricane Helene in North Carolina last fall. Despite the hardship, she remains committed to helping artists navigate financial challenges.

She offered attendees practical advice, including the importance of keeping a detailed calendar to track bookkeeping, marketing, grant applications, and client outreach.

**“You are allowed to make money,” she emphasized. “You deserve to eat. You deserve to rest. You deserve to live in a safe place.”**

Cole closed the session with a powerful message about the value of artists in today's world. “As creatives, you are the empathy muscle of our culture. You build bridges, create transformative experiences, and bring people together through storytelling and art.”

Thanks to the Arts Foundation's support, workshops like this provide artists with the tools they need to sustain their careers — ensuring that creativity continues to thrive on Cape Cod.



# UPCOMING EVENTS



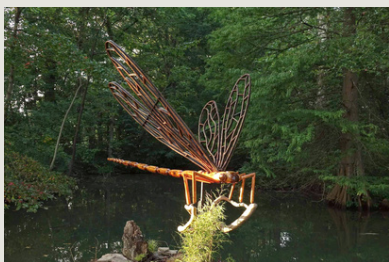
**Wednesday, April 2nd**  
**Artist of the Year Roundtable**  
 A Conversation with Jo Hay, Mark Adams, Julia Cumes, and Joe Diggs at the Cape Cinema, Dennis  
[RSVP Here](#)



**Thursday, April 17th**  
**Artist of the Year Celebration & Unveiling**  
 Cotuit Center for the Arts  
[RSVP Here](#)



**Wednesday, May 7th**  
**Sandwich Glass Museum After Dark**  
 Part of our Patron event series. Open to all.  
[RSVP Here](#)



**Thursday, June 26th**  
**Heritage Museums & Gardens Patron After Hours**  
[RSVP Here](#)



**Wednesday, October 8th**  
**Creative Exchange Conference**  
 Cotuit Center for the Arts



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 Impact across the region





**Join Us for an Unforgettable Evening of Art & Celebration!**

Step into a night of creativity and community!  
2025 Creative Visionary Awards **Oren Sherman** and **Rick Miller**  
2025 Artist of the Year **Joe Diggs**

This inspiring evening is not only a celebration, but also a meaningful fundraiser to support the arts and strengthen our creative community.

**Wednesday, June 4th, 5:30 - 9 PM**  
Wychmere Beach Resort in Harwich Port  
Silent and Live Auctions - Online, too!

Expect unforgettable performances, a stunning seaside setting, and a room filled with passionate supporters of the arts! Your support fuels local creativity, strengthens our cultural sector, and enriches our community.

Help us make it a night to remember!  
[Click here to reserve your spot.](#)



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