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National Arts Leaders Convene in Cincinnati as Americans for the Arts Convention Begins This Week

CINCINNATI (June 10, 2025) — Hundreds of arts leaders from across the nation will gather in Cincinnati this week as the Americans for the Arts Annual Convention (AFTACON) takes place June 11-14, hosted locally by ArtsWave, the engine for the Cincinnati region's arts. The convention will bring together cultural leaders, advocates and organizations at a crucial moment when the arts face unprecedented challenges nationwide.

The convention highlights Cincinnati's growing reputation as a national creative hub, ranked among the top 20 most arts-vibrant large communities in the U.S. for the fourth consecutive year by SMU DataArts. It also follows a major milestone for the local arts community: the completion of ArtsWave's 2025 Campaign, which raised \$12.3 million to support the region's arts ecosystem.

"Cincinnati's distinctive approach to arts funding and community engagement makes it the perfect backdrop for national arts leaders to explore innovative solutions to the challenges facing our sector," said Alecia Kintner, President and CEO of ArtsWave. "Our region's commitment to making arts accessible while driving economic vitality showcases why the arts are a 'need to have' not a 'nice to have.'"

The convention comes at a critical time for the arts sector nationally, as threats to arts funding intensify despite data showing the arts drive \$1.2 trillion in national economic activity and account for 4.2% of U.S. GDP—surpassing transportation, construction and agriculture. In the Cincinnati region specifically, the arts generate [nearly \\$500 million in annual economic impact](#). [Recent survey research](#) also demonstrates this impact, with 79% of respondents believing arts and culture are important to their community's businesses, economy and local jobs.

To welcome convention attendees and celebrate with the broader community, ArtsWave will host "Party at the Banks" presented by P&G, at Smale Riverfront Park this Thursday from 6-10 p.m. with mainstage events beginning at 7:15 p.m. This free public celebration is hosted by 98 Degrees star Drew Lachey and features multi-platinum recording artist Ben Folds, interactive BLINK installations, a fashion show by Project Runway's ASHA AMA, an acoustic set by Appalachian R&B fusion artist Scott

T. Smith, street musicians and more, all finishing with a drone show finale over the Ohio River presented by Cintas. More info about the event can be found at artswave.org/party.

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About ArtsWave

ArtsWave fuels the Cincinnati region's arts, supporting 150+ organizations, projects and artists each year. Since 1927, it has been the primary way the region funds the arts, raising millions annually from tens of thousands of individuals, businesses and foundations to drive a more vibrant economy and connected community. Through the Blueprint for Collective Action, ArtsWave strategically makes investments that maximize the arts' impact across the region. To learn more and give, visit artswave.org.

About Americans for the Arts

Americans for the Arts (AFTA) is the nation's leading nonprofit organization empowering Local Arts Agencies to become powerful community catalysts—driving both economic growth and social connection. Through its national network, trusted research, and advocacy resources, AFTA transforms local arts and culture victories into industry-wide advancement. Its commitment to professional development and connection opportunities ignites innovation across the arts sector. Learn more at www.AmericansForTheArts.org.