

# The Arts Center

By Courtland L. Smith

The Arts Center had its beginnings in the late 1950s, when a friend handed Marion Gathercoal *A Survey of Arts Councils*. Gathercoal was president of the Corvallis Women's Club, and she would lead the effort to create an arts council for her city. On September 12, 1961, the Corvallis Arts Council became a reality—the first arts council in Oregon and the twenty-first in the United States. Over thirty organizations were charter members.

Searching for a building to house the new organization, organizers found the vacant Corvallis Episcopal church, built in 1889. Designed in the Carpenter Gothic style, the building has a scissor truss system in which cross beams and arches are the reverse of a railroad bridge. It was originally constructed by Corvallis to Yaquina Bay railroad workers.

The official ribbon-cutting ceremony for the center was held on January 26, 1963. In 1972, the building was moved to 7th and Madison streets, adjacent to Central Park, and placed on the National Register of Historic Places. The City of Corvallis owns the building and does long-term maintenance. In 2008, the Corvallis Arts Center was renamed The Arts Center to emphasize its outreach to the wider community and its showcase of Oregon artists.

The Arts Center, a nonprofit organization, operates programs across Benton and Linn counties. With a focus on fostering engagement with the arts, the Arts Center hosts rotating art exhibits in the Main Gallery and the Corrine Woodman Gallery, and promotes cultural literacy arts education and enrichment activities for youth and adults. Programs include ArtsCare, an innovative music and visual arts programs for cancer and dialysis patients in partnership with Samaritan Health Services and Lumina Hospice and Palliative Care; arts and culture camps for youth, and ArtShop, which helps market local and regional artists.

## Sources

Marion Gathercoal. *The Unfolding of an Idea: A Brief History of The Corvallis Arts Center*. Corvallis: The Corvallis Arts Center and Linn-Benton Council for the Arts, 2002.

The Arts Center. <https://theartscenter.net>

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