



2024-2025 ANNUAL REPORT

A Decade of Mentorship

A LIFETIME OF MUSIC





MISSION AND VISION

Our Mission

ArtSmart transforms the lives of youth in under-resourced communities across the US through tuition-free music lessons and mentorship by paid, professional artists.

Our Vision

We provide students with a pathway to **academic, economic, and emotional stability** through music mentorship.

Our Commitment

ArtSmart was founded on principles that ensure high-quality music mentorship reaches students in historically under-resourced communities who need it most. Guided by ongoing feedback from the Maria Manetti Shrem Mentors, students, and partners, we continuously evaluate and adapt our programs, curriculum, and organizational practices to meet community needs. Inclusion, diversity, equity and access are not just a value system for us—they represent an active, evolving process that shapes every aspect of our work.

A Message

FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

When a young person is truly seen and supported, they discover possibilities they never knew existed.

ArtSmart enters its tenth year of music mentorship thanks to this bold idea—and the many people who believe in it. What began with our founders, John Viscardi and Michael Fabiano, has grown into a national network that is dedicated to helping young people realize their own potential. More than 60,000 lessons and nearly 3,000 students later, the heart of our work remains the same: consistent, caring mentorship that helps youth imagine and achieve the fullest version of themselves.

I am honored to step into the role of Executive Director at a time when we can proudly reflect on our roots and seize our rising momentum. Across nine regions, hundreds of students meet each week with dedicated Maria Manetti Shrem Mentors who help them build confidence, find their voice, and discover new pathways for their futures. Behind every lesson is a story of connection—students feeling seen, supported, and proud of who they are.

As we look ahead, ArtSmart is committed to building on this foundation. We aim to deepen our roots and relationships within each region we serve; bring our students even closer to opportunity by elevating their talents and achievements; and—with the help of generous supporters like you—expand the meaningful resources available to youth who stand to benefit most from mentorship and musical expression.

This annual report lifts up the people who make that possible: our students, donors, staff, and partners, whose faith in ArtSmart strengthens us every day. Thank you for your trust and partnership as we approach our next decade with clarity, purpose, and renewed commitment.

Warmly,

Ahmad Mayes
Executive Director



The Impact of **MUSIC MENTORSHIP**

How ArtSmart Transforms Confidence, Connection, and Future Pathways

ArtSmart enters our 10th year as one of the nation's most consistent and measurable models of arts mentorship. What began as a small pilot in 2016 has grown into a national engine for youth agency, belonging, and long-term opportunity. Our longitudinal research—conducted alongside the WCG Institutional Review Board—confirms what thousands of students have already shown us:

Sustained music mentorship fundamentally strengthens young people's confidence, connection to caring adults, and belief in their future.

ARTSMART'S LIFETIME IMPACT

2016–2025

ArtSmart has become one of the largest music-mentorship providers in the U.S.:

60,000+ lessons delivered

Nearly **3,000** students served

120 professional Maria Manetti Shrem Mentors employed

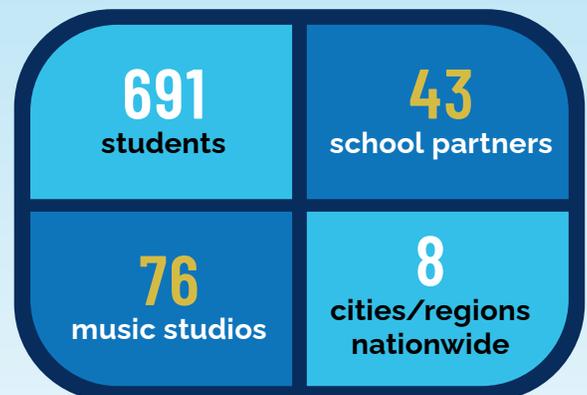
54 communities reached nationwide

This scale has strengthened our impact without dilution. Each year, as ArtSmart grows, student outcomes grow with it.

A YEAR OF MEANINGFUL GROWTH

2024–2025

Across 8 regions, ArtSmart delivered high-touch mentorship at a scale we've never achieved before:



These investments produced one of our strongest impact years on record.

WHAT STUDENTS EXPERIENCED THIS YEAR

Confidence & Capability

Students consistently report that mentorship changes how they see themselves and what they believe they can achieve.

94% said their mentor helped them set and achieve goals

88% reported increased confidence

82% believe they are talented

Our longitudinal study shows:

- Students' belief in their own talent doubles through sustained participation
- Each additional year in ArtSmart increases self-belief even further
- ArtSmart students develop the confidence to set meaningful goals—and the belief that they can achieve them

Connection & Belonging

ArtSmart students describe their lessons as uniquely safe, valued spaces—often more so than their broader school environments.

95% feel safe in lessons
(compared to 62% who feel safe at school)

93% say their mentor values their opinions

Students are **nearly twice** as excited for school on ArtSmart days

These findings point to one of ArtSmart's most powerful assets - a consistent, caring adult presence that students trust.

Pathway Development: Academic & Future Goals

ArtSmart's model builds not just musicians—but young adults who see themselves on a real path forward.

100% of ArtSmart seniors are on track to graduate high school

95% plan to attend college

Longitudinal research confirms:

ArtSmart participation directly increases students' plans to pursue higher education. This is arts education functioning at its highest level - opening doors, building pathways, and raising expectations for the future.



Demographic Reach

WHO WE SERVE

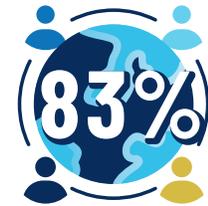
ArtSmart reaches students in communities with the greatest barriers to consistent arts access—and delivers a model that strengthens outcomes across cultural, language, and socioeconomic backgrounds.



of partner public schools are Title I schools designated to receive supplemental resources to expand student opportunities.



of students are economically disadvantaged



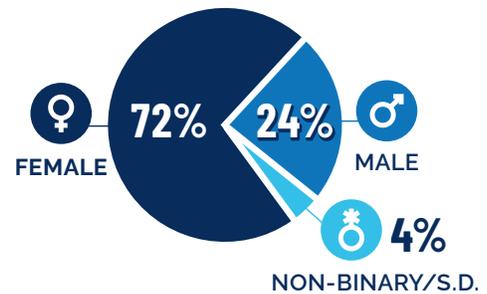
identify with a racial/ethnic minority background



speak a language other than English at home



identify as LGBTQIA+



ArtSmart students bring enormous diversity of experience, creativity, and identity. The strength of our results across such a broad demographic spectrum speaks to the universal power of mentorship.

THE MARIA MANETTI SHREM MENTORS

A National Network of Artist-Educators

ArtSmart's Maria Manetti Shrem Mentors are highly trained, deeply committed, and representative of the artistic communities in which they work. They are internationally active artists whose credits include performances with leading companies such as the Metropolitan Opera and San Francisco Opera, and at renowned venues including Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center. They are distinguished educators with degrees from leading conservatories including Juilliard, Manhattan School of Music, and New England Conservatory, bringing decades of combined experience across the world's foremost stages and musical institutions.



Master's Degree or higher



multilingual



identify with a racial/ethnic minority group



belong to at least one underrepresented population

This team is not only diverse in lived experience but also among the most academically credentialed mentor workforces in U.S. music education.

THREE-YEAR GROWTH TRENDS

A Momentum Story

ArtSmart has expanded rapidly while maintaining exceptional student outcomes. Our growth over three years reflects high demand for the program and a disciplined ability to scale.

Student Enrollment



Lessons Delivered



School & Community Partners



Lesson Studios



The data reveals that ArtSmart transforms lives through consistent, caring mentorship coupled with rigorous artistic instruction.

STUDENTS GAIN:



AGENCY

Confidence, goal orientation, self-efficacy



BELONGING

Trusted relationships, safe spaces, value and voice



FUTURE PATHWAYS

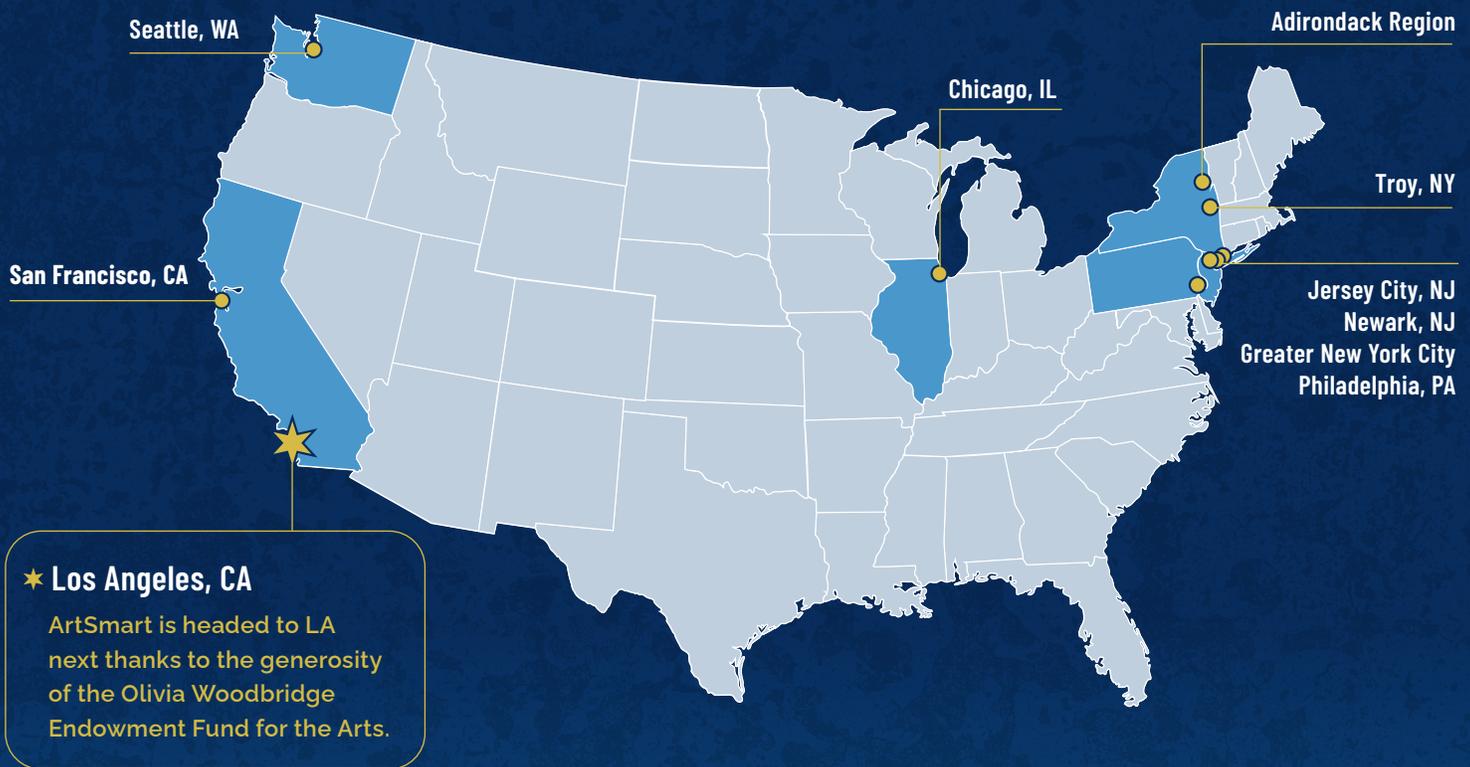
Graduation, higher education plans, a sense of direction

And these gains strengthen year over year.

OUR NATIONAL FOOTPRINT

Expanding Access, One Community at a Time

From major metropolitan areas to underserved regions, ArtSmart continues to expand access to high-quality music mentorship across the country.



PROGRAM OFFERINGS

One-to-One Music Mentorship Program

One to one instruction from a master artist-mentor for private voice, piano, and instrumental music lessons.

Vocal Theater Mentorship Program

Small groups of students are guided by a skilled artist-mentor in creating an original musical theater piece informed by their own lives, challenges, and experiences.

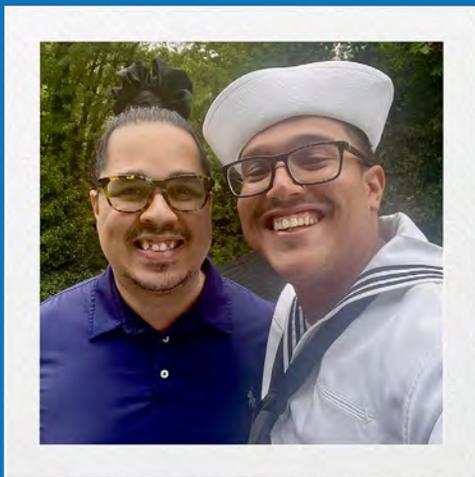
Remote Outreach Program

ArtSmart partners long-distance with other youth development programs to provide music lessons and mentorship to communities who lack access due to geographical barriers.

EXCELLENCE ON DISPLAY

Highlights from the Year

Alumni Board President Emeritus Cameron Santiago, an ArtSmart graduate from Franklin Learning Center in Philadelphia, completed Navy School this year and is now deployed to Washington State to become a jet engineer. Cameron's journey reflects the deep, long-term bonds formed through ArtSmart: he was mentored by Lucas DeJesus, who continued to support him even after graduation, offering guidance and **a place to call home** when he needed it most.



Lucas has been so much more to me than just a mentor. He's been my best friend and brother, always providing a shoulder for me to lean on, cry on—you name it. In the moment, if you need him, he's there. I confided in him with questions about life, work, music—anything really—and he'd always answer without judgment and with an open heart.

I'm happy life threw all sorts of monkey wrenches my way so that I could end up where Lucas and I ended up. Lucas is the best mentor, life coach, best friend, and brother anyone could ever ask for.



Autumn ChocieJ was accepted into a dozen music conservatories, and currently attends Lawrence Conservatory. While in ArtSmart studying with Katie Stevenson, Autumn made her Seattle Opera MainStage debut in Mozart's *The Magic Flute*. Autumn was a NATS National Semi-Finalist in both Classical and Commercial, placing her in the top 15 participants in the country.



Autumn ChocieJ placed first and **Kaitlyn Naumowicz** placed second in the University Kiwanis Pitzer-Weeks Voice Scholarship Competition, earning funding to go towards music lessons and college.

Luz Velázquez, student of Christine Moore Vassallo at Celia Cruz Bronx High School of Music, won the 2025 YoungArts top prize in jazz voice with distinction and was awarded \$10,000. She also placed third in the Schmidt Vocal Competition.



Charlie Morales placed first and **Khymani Ordoñez** placed third in the upper high school division of the National Association of Teachers of Singing competition. Both study with Christine Moore Vassallo at the Celia Cruz Bronx High School of Music.



Kadidiatou Barry, mentee of Cynthia Wuco, was accepted to Boston College, majoring in Psychology with a minor in Theater.



Rachelle Santana mentee of Paul Giess, graduated from Frankford High School in Philadelphia. She was accepted to Temple University and is majoring in biology on the pre-medicine route.

IN CONCERT WITH OUR COMMUNITY

The ArtSmart community came together at several regional events, many featuring our students, Maria Manetti Shrem Mentors, artists, board members, and local community partners.



APRIL 22, 2025

An Evening of Jazz with the Paul Giess Group in Philadelphia

Maria Manetti Shrem Piano Mentor Paul Giess led the evening alongside Co-Founder John Viscardi, Alumnus Haley Joyner, and Frankford High School Senior Rachelle Santana.

Alumnus Haley Joyner, mentee of Erin Alcorn, performed with Co-Founder John Viscardi and Maria Manetti Shrem Mentor Paul Giess in concert.

JUNE 9, 2025

A Summer Speakeasy Soirée with Nicole Car in San Francisco

The event featured world-renowned soprano Nicole Car and ArtSmart student Emely Barrios of Burton High School at The Palace Theater.



JUNE 21, 2025

A Jazzy Brunch in NYC

The event featured Maria Manetti Shrem Mentor Danette Sheppard-Vaughn and student performers Juzteen Combay, Gabrielle Gainous, and Sariah Fanning-Orange. Director of Engagement and Advocacy Latonia Moore hosted and performed.



STORIES OF IMPACT

Behind every lesson is a relationship that can change a life. These stories highlight the power of mentorship in action.



EMELY BARRIOS, GRADE 12

Burton High School, San Francisco
Mentee of Mixti Colindres



ArtSmart and my mentor have greatly increased my overall confidence and strengthened my ability to help others through music and meaningful connection. Working with my mentors really gave me an environment that I could be comfortable in whenever I'm feeling stressed. These four years of ArtSmart made my entire high school experience very special.



JANAYA SADDLER, GRADE 12

East New York Family Academy, NYC
Mentee of Andrew Wannigman



Andrew is very patient, kind, and very understanding, which makes lessons very smooth and comfortable. When I'm struggling with technique or having a bad day, Andrew would help me work through my emotions and regulate how I'm feeling through music and artistic expression.



“

I'm beyond grateful to have been able to be a part of a program that provides lessons, experience, guidance, and valuable relationships. I appreciate every single person that has played a part in the growth and expansion of ArtSmart. You are all truly incredible and I can't put into words how blessed I feel to be a part of this legacy.

”

GABRIELLE GAINOUS, GRADE 12

Lincoln High School, Jersey City
Mentee of Danette Sheppard-Vaughn



ADRIAN ADAN, GRADE 11

Senn High School, Chicago
Mentee of Russell Pinzino and Aaron Short

“

My mentors were amazing and respectful, and I couldn't have gotten where I am without them.

”



YOU POWER OUR WORK

Our Supporters

The following donors make ArtSmart possible, ensuring students receive life-changing music mentorship year after year.

CHAMPIONS | \$500,000+

Maria Manetti Shrem
Spring Point Partners, LLC
Graham Berwind, III,
Director of Spring Point Partners
Maryanne Tagney

LUMINARIES | \$250,000+

Betsy Z. and Edward Cohen
William Penn Foundation

VISIONARIES | \$100,000+

Festival Napa Valley
Linda Mirels
The Joseph and Robert Cornell
Memorial Foundation
Barbara A. Wolfe
David and Judith Fleischer

GUARDIANS | \$50,000+

National Endowment for the Arts
Kevin Woodbridge
Olivia Woodbridge Endowment Fund
for the Arts
Keith and Priscilla Geeslin
Leslie Larson and Don Katz
Anthony Fabiano
The Presser Foundation

AMBASSADORS | \$25,000+

John Stassi and Chris Israel
Dan Gueron
Michael Fabiano
Comcast NBC Universal Foundation
Theo Osborne and Justine Fisher
Mary Madden

PATRONS | \$10K+

Justamere Foundation
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Kay Krochman Marks and Anthony Marks
Rosemary Ryan
New York Life Foundation
Joan and John Viscardi
The Harry T. Burleigh Legacy Foundation
Dede Wilsey

SUPPORTERS | \$5K+

John and Molly Viscardi
Charles F. Hanes
Louise Toppin
Barbara Kreider
David K. Weaver

CONTRIBUTORS | \$1,000+

Nadia Sa'd Mulaire and Edmund Mulaire
The Christopher Ludwick Foundation
Viscardi Corp.
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Alfredo Silva
Amy Jarman
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Lilian Tsai

Alexandra Sessler
Alan Savada
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Frankel
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Joel Goodrich
Christopher Lane
Charles Myers
Douglas Amarelo

Dominic Lusinchi
Kristin Sorensen
Angel and Adam Blue Mielke
Melanie McLennan
E. Cristin O'Keeffe
Katherine Sakoda
Hafsa Burt
Elena Cherkashnya
Joyce Alcorn
Walmart Spark Good Local Grant
Dolfiger-McMahon Foundation
Mack Dube
Kenzie Ferguson
The Wawa Foundation Local
Connections Grant
Melissa Young

PROGRAM PARTNERS

The following partners work tirelessly with the ArtSmart team to bring music mentorship resources and powerful exposure opportunities to students in our communities.

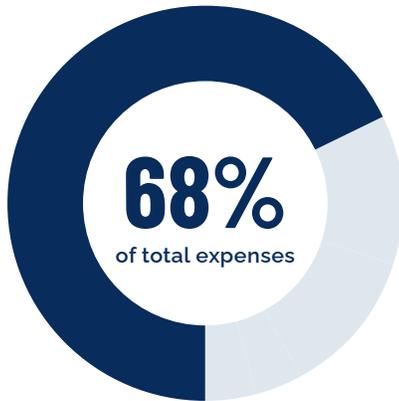


WHERE YOUR SUPPORT GOES

At ArtSmart, every dollar you give helps young people access life-changing music mentorship.
Over two-thirds of every dollar directly serves our students.

Here's how your support was invested this year:

MUSIC MENTORSHIP PROGRAMS



\$677,464

Directly funds one-on-one mentorship, artist-educator salaries, curriculum development, student performance opportunities, and program operations.

ADMINISTRATION



\$118,307

Ensures strong fiscal management, operational stability, compliance, and organizational leadership to keep our mission running.

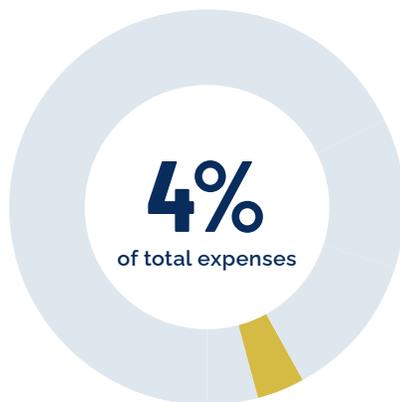
FUNDRAISING



\$119,780

Covers efforts to secure the resources necessary to sustain and grow our programs, including donor stewardship and fundraising events.

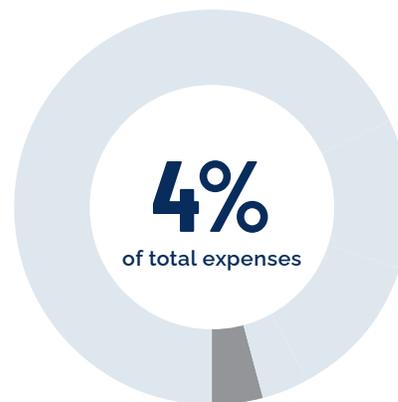
MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS



\$41,458

Sustains outreach, communications, and storytelling that raise awareness of ArtSmart's mission and impact.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT & AWARENESS EVENTS



\$43,054

Supports concerts, workshops, and community events that showcase student talent and foster community connections.

OUR TEAM



Board of Directors

Michael Fabiano
Co-Founder, Chairman

John Viscardi
Co-Founder, Treasurer

Liz Letak, Esq.
Secretary

George Shirley
Chairman Emeritus

Kelly Clarke

Marvin Vernell Curtis

Anthony Fabiano

Louise Toppin

Lilian Tsai, Esq.

Board Members Emeritus

Nadine Sierra

Susan Stauter

Rosemary Vega

Alumni Advisory Board

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Board President, Newark

October Gomes
Secretary, Newark

Isaias Aragon
Board Member, New York

Steven Garcia Lopez
Board Member, San Francisco

Dee Jones
Board Member, Chicago

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Chad Armstrong
NYC, Newark and Jersey City, NJ

Lucas DeJesus
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San Francisco, CA

Matthew Brennan
Chicago, IL

Katie Stevenson
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Evan Mack
Adirondacks Region

Jessica Bowen
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Staff

Ahmad Mayes
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John Viscardi
Co-Founder, Managing Director

Lucas DeJesus
Director of National Program Operations

Latonia Moore
Director of Engagement and Advocacy

Erin Alcorn
Manager of Individual Giving and Communications

Danielle Bavli
Manager of Institutional Giving and Program Operations

Christina Frankel
Manager of Finance and HR

Sofia Durante
Communications Associate

Liz Letak
General Counsel Consultant

Cortni Loveridge
Development Representative

Jenna Toler
Program Operations Assistant and Alumni Board Liaison

THANK YOU

Thank you to the donors, Maria Manetti Shrem Mentors, partners, and staff who make ArtSmart's mission possible. Your belief in the power of music mentorship helps young people in under-resourced communities discover their voices, build confidence, and gain the skills they need to thrive.

As we look ahead, our work continues. **Your advocacy, participation, and generosity fuel ArtSmart's growth and deepen our impact.** Whether you share our story, attend an event, or make a gift, you help open doors and create opportunities for the next generation.

Thank you for standing with us. Together, we'll keep the music going.

artsmart.org/donate