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Worcester Public Library Awarded Grant for Teen “Art-ivism” Program that Combines Art and Activism

Worcester, MA – The Worcester Public Library Foundation was awarded a grant of $3,500 from the Library Initiative for Teens and Tweens (LITT) to support a teen program on art and activism at the Worcester Public Library (WPL). The “Out of the Box Art-ivism” program is designed to encourage Worcester teens to engage civically while also expressing themselves artistically.

The new grant will extend the successful program through June of 2021. The program previously operated with a grant from LITT of $2,510, and had a total of 23 teen participants. The kits are assembled and the program is run by Erin O’Neall, Teen Services Librarian at WPL.

“I’m very excited to be able to continue offering Art-ivism to our teens,” said O’Neall. “The pandemic has really left a lot of people struggling to find community, and this allows teens the chance to make a new group of friends who are interested in creating change. My hope is to keep this program going once we are all able to be together again and use the forward movement to build a coalition of teens wanting to take what they learn and work together to apply it to their communities.”

The program provides boxes with a relevant book, art supplies, and a creative “changemaker” challenge to engage teens in different ways to express themselves. An accompanying series, “Out of the Box Art-ivism” In Conversation, features monthly speakers who discuss their work as artist-activists and invite the teens to ask specific questions. Previous guests include artist Jennessa Burkes and musician Chris Kazarian who were involved in the art and programs surrounding the Black Lives Matter Mural in Worcester, as well as Joshua Croke.
who is a designer, podcaster and artist involved with the “Love Your Labels” organization.

The boxes will also include art supplies to create a “living mural” to be displayed in WPL’s new Teen Space, set to open later this year. The living mural is a collection of 6” square canvases that the teens can paint in response to a theme or idea connected to that month’s box. These will be put up on a wall in the teen room and will continue to grow as long as the program exists. WPL will be building a gallery of art to give teens space to show their work both physically and digitally.

“We really wanted to give voice to Worcester’s teens around issues that are important to them,” said Cynthia Bermudez, Youth Services Coordinator. “We hope that giving them the tools, a platform to share their ideas and a chance to hear from other artist-activists will inspire them to speak up and get engaged in the conversations that are going on around the world.”

“Out of the Box Art-ivism” is generously sponsored by the Library Initiative for Teens and Tweens. LITT supports innovative library programs and spaces for teens and tweens in underserved and diverse Massachusetts’ communities.

For more information on the Worcester Public Library and a complete list of resources and services visit, https://www.mywpl.org/. For more information on the “Out of the Box Art-ivism” contact Linnea Sheldon, Community Relations and Communications Manager, at 508-799-1654 or lsheldon@mywpl.org.

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