Indy Arts Council opens round two of Mental Health & Wellness Grants
for central Indiana artists and arts administrators

Grants are part of #IndyKeepsCreating initiative supporting the city’s arts community

Indianapolis - March 17, 2022 - Central Indiana-based artists and arts administrators are invited to apply now for a new round of Wug Laku Mental Health & Wellness Grants supported by the Herbert Simon Family Foundation, the Indy Arts Council announced today.

The grants, which range from $250-$750, can be used for one-on-one therapy, support groups, art therapy, and wellness and mindfulness practices. Guidelines and easy-to-fill-out applications, which opened March 16, are available here. To be eligible, artists must reside in Boone, Hamilton, Hancock, Hendricks, Marion, Morgan, Johnson, or Shelby Counties; have made at least 40% of their income prior to the pandemic in the arts (in non-commercial work); and have been working in the arts for at least two years.

The grants honor the legacy of Wug Laku, a beloved Indianapolis visual artist and grassroots advocate for the arts. His untreated mental illness led to his death in 2017 at age 63. The program is part of the ongoing #IndyKeepsCreating initiative, funded through philanthropic, civic, and corporate partners, that began in March 2020 to support independent artists and nonprofit arts and culture organizations during the pandemic.

This is the second round for the grants. The first round was launched in 2021 after an Indy Arts Council survey showed nearly 50% of local independent artists were suffering from mental health issues due to the social isolation and financial challenges caused by the pandemic. Last summer, 69 grants were awarded, providing $43,750 to artists and arts administrators. Nearly 100% of artist applications were approved. This year, the Arts Council expects to award up to 100 grants. Applications are expected to be open through June 13, unless funds are depleted before then due to the volume of applications.

“Supporting artists and expanding access to mental health services are two of our primary focus areas at the Herbert Simon Family Foundation,” said President Rachel Simon. “When the Arts Council approached the foundation about continuing the Wug Laku Mental Health & Wellness grant program, our board was thrilled to help. Art is a way for all of us to heal, and it is critical that artists in our community have access to mental health and wellness services.”
Artist Mental Health Stories
As part of the campaign to promote the Wug Laku Mental Health & Wellness Grants, the Indy Arts Council worked with local videographer Kurtis Bowersock to feature five well-known artists talking about the creative ways they take care of their mental health, and encouraging others who are struggling to ask for help. The artists include metalsmith and jeweler Nancy Lee, dancer Carol Nunez Verdin, teaching artist and poet Devon Ginn, actor and playwright Ben Asaykwee, and teaching artist and poet Mariah Ivey. View the videos here.

Black health and wellness will be focus of upcoming Art & Soul celebration
Starting Saturday June 4, the Indy Arts Council will kick-off Art & Soul at the Indianapolis Artsgarden and celebrate the theme of Black Health & Wellness with entertainment throughout the month. Art & Soul, which annually attracts more than 2,000 visitors and is supported by Lilly Endowment Inc., has helped to expand the city’s awareness and appreciation of African-American art and music for more than 25 years. Program partners include Asante Art Institute of Indianapolis, Indy Jazz Fest, Ilbada Dance Company, and FLAVA FRESH! Details on this year’s Featured Artists are available at www.indyarts.org.

###

About Indy Arts Council
The Indy Arts Council fosters meaningful engagement in the arts by nurturing a culture where artists and arts organizations can thrive. Read the Arts Council’s Equity Statement here.