



# WINDHAM REGIONAL ARTS COUNCIL ARTSPECTRUM

Volume #71 Issue #1 Winter 2026

*Promoting the arts in Windham and surrounding regions.*

## Message from the President

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### WRAC Board Members

*Carol Twardowski-Heap*  
President

*Cathy Shires*  
Treasurer

*Nancy Bunnell*

*Sheila Clark*

*Trish Fabish*

*Janet Gaylor*

*Greg Grzywacz*

*Tom Hurlbut*

*Lorraine McDevitt*

*Melanie Noble*

*Scott Rhoades*

*Sara Rogers*

*Linda Tracy*

*Lorraine Williams*

### WRAC...Past, Present, and Future

A warm greeting to our membership. As this winter has kept us somewhat snowbound, I would like to imagine that we have all been able to spend extra time wearing our artist hat.

As the WRAC celebrates 43 years, we can proudly boast a long history of hosting, sponsoring, and supporting amazing art and music events, education opportunities, fundraising initiatives, and partnerships with sister organizations.

A hearty "Thank You" to the board and membership that have actively been a part of our continued success.

Over the past year, the board of directors realized it was time to evaluate our future. The catalyst to our discussions was our inability to fill officer positions. While we continue to host dynamic events in art and music, and our organization remains fiscally sound, it has become challenging to continue to maintain the WRAC under the current model: A traditional board of directors with officers.

We researched other models that nonprofit organizations are moving towards. After discussion at our board meeting on February 5th, the board unanimously voted to begin to transition to a new model: a governing board with a chair person to preside over meetings.

As with any transition, the path to completion will take some time. During this time, our first priority will continue to be: to promote and support the arts in Windham region.

Moving forward, one of our goals is to streamline the administrative tasks associated with operating as a 501(c)(3). A benefit of the new model is that it does enable us to more evenly distribute responsibilities among the entire governing body. And, beyond this, as we implement technology to update the WRAC, certain duties and tasks can be streamlined, combined or eliminated.

We seek to evolve into a 21st century organization that we can confidently pass on to future generations.

We invite you to peruse through the newsletter to read about all the artistic happenings that the WRAC has been a part of the past few months. We are excited to include details for upcoming events.

Please reach out to us with your ideas, announcements, or projects that you are working on.

*'See you at the easel, the music stand, behind the camera lens, on the dance floor, or at the theater.'*

Carol Twardowski-Heap WRAC President

# Art Communities Prepare for

## AMERICA 250 CONNECTICUT

In 2026, the United States of America will commemorate the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

The National Endowment for the Arts and Humanities was established by congress in 1965. "Democracy demands wisdom and vision in its citizens" is the foundational phrase of the NEH. (Public Law 89-209)

Connecticut is fortunate in many ways to be in a good position in making this historic observance a positive experience for its citizens. We in eastern Connecticut are especially lucky to have places and landmarks in our midst that tell the American story.

So, where do those of us who are committed to community arts fit into this national event, which will culminate on July 4<sup>th</sup> and beyond? Of course, every good party must have some great music. Dance, poetry, drama, and engaging narration of historic events are essential.

That's why local communities across the country are relying on Arts and Humanities organizations to ignite the activities that will engage citizens in events that are interesting, inclusive and positive.

On December 11, 2025 approximately 25 community members gathered at the River Room with Chris Beaudry, the newly elected chairman of Windham's America 250 commission. Former Secretary of State Denise Merrill of Mansfield was guest speaker. Ms. Merrill serves as the chairman of the Connecticut America 250 Commission. She shared with the group the progress of statewide efforts to help communities form their own commissions and relevant themes for events and activities. Windham's commission is committed to bringing engaging events for the community to enjoy and celebrate not only our past, but our future. WRAC has representation on the committee, and will play an essential role in planning. Please stay tuned for further updates as we plan a great observance of America's birthday.

For more information, visit [ct250.org](http://ct250.org)

March - April at The Top Shelf Gallery

New England & Beyond



Scott Rhoades

Acrylics

Artist's Reception  
& Demonstration  
Saturday, March 7,  
1 P.M.



Fletcher Memorial Library, 257 Main St. Hampton 860/455/1086  
[www.fletchermemoriallibrary.org](http://www.fletchermemoriallibrary.org)

**ART. MUSIC. CONNECTIONS.**

JOIN US THURSDAY, MARCH 5, 2026 FROM 5-7PM

**Networking After Hours**  
hosted by Arts Center East & The Vernon Chorale.

Chamber Members, Vernon Chorale Members & Arts Center East Members - No Charge  
Non Members - \$15  
Questions? Email Melissa \* [melissa@tollandcountychamber.org](mailto:melissa@tollandcountychamber.org)

Mingle with local professionals while enjoying complimentary refreshments, browsing open art galleries, and experiencing a live choral performance.

Come see the art, hear the music, meet new people, and leave with new connections.

Door Prizes: Gift certificate to the ACE gift shop & 2 sets of tickets to The Vernon Chorale March 28<sup>th</sup> concert "The Moment"



# WILLINGTON PUBLIC LIBRARY AND THE WINDHAM REGIONAL ARTS COUNCIL PRESENTS

# Hang It!

A NEW ART PROJECT

*Bringing Art to the public in libraries*

**Art Now-Art Show**  
**Willington Public Library Gallery**  
**7 Ruby Road, Rte. 320**  
**Willington, CT**

**EXHIBIT RUNS MARCH 5<sup>TH</sup> - 27<sup>TH</sup>, 2026**

*Open during regular library hours*

*Opening Reception is March 7<sup>th</sup> from 1:00 - 3:00pm*

The Art Now-Art Show is a sneak preview into the Art and Garden Tour. Participating artists will include Nancy Bunnell, Mary Noonan, Julie Beckman, Leanne Peters, Aline Hoffman, Scott Rhoades and Barbara Timberman.

The Art and Garden Tour will be held on the second weekend in June (13<sup>th</sup> & 14<sup>th</sup>) Visit [ArtGardenCT.com](http://ArtGardenCT.com) for more information.

Contact Information - [ncbunnell@gmail.com](mailto:ncbunnell@gmail.com) / your contact information



**Willington**  
**Public Library**  
7 RUBY ROAD, WILLINGTON, CT

860-429-3854  
[WILLINGTONPUBLICLIBRARY.ORG](http://WILLINGTONPUBLICLIBRARY.ORG)  
E-BLAST  
YOUTUBE | INSTAGRAM  
FACEBOOK

**Windham Regional**  
**ARTS**  
**Council**



Contact us @  
[windhamrac.org](http://windhamrac.org)

# The Windham Regional Arts Council

## Salutes 19 Talented Young Musicians

The 39<sup>th</sup> Annual Young Artist music competition took place on Saturday, January 24, 2026 at the von der Mehden Recital Hall on the campus of the University of Connecticut. It was an inspiring afternoon of music as student instrumentalists and vocalists in Windham county competed in their respective divisions.

The concerto competition was an exciting line up of 9 competitors playing selections on 7 different instruments. We are so proud of each performer. It was evident by their performances that each competitor worked for many years to achieve excellence on wind, string, and brass instruments, vocal and piano.

***The competition committee and the WRAC board of directors extend our congratulations to each performer.***



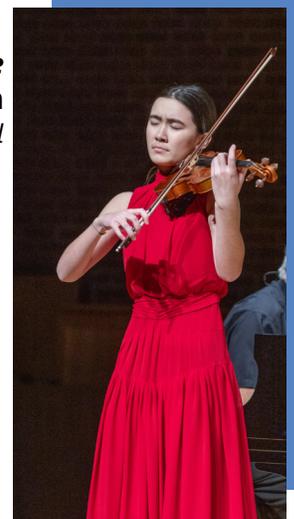
***This year's concerto competition winner is:***

***Pianist Avin Perera***

In addition to a cash award, Avin has been invited to perform as a soloist with the Willimantic Orchestra at their May 31<sup>st</sup> performance at The Fine Arts Center at Eastern Connecticut State University. Avin is a 10<sup>th</sup> grade student at EO Smith High School.

***Our second and third place winners of the concerto competition are***

***2<sup>nd</sup> place***  
***Violinist Ejon Chen***  
*10<sup>th</sup> grade EO Smith High School*



***3<sup>rd</sup> place***  
***Cellist Remy Chaurette***  
*11<sup>th</sup> grade EO Smith High School*





Participates in the 2026 Young Artists Music Competition (back row L-R) Melia Kaufold, Yagnesene Das, Aehan Amith, Mordecai Abraham, Chloe Song, Julia Schreiber, Lucy Ouiment, Ejon Chen, Avin Perera, Gilad Stein, Frankie Pfaffle, Remy Chaurrette, Jon Akberzai (front row L-R) Ruthie Marquez, Aubrey Grimes, Jayden Song Raha Esmaili Zaghi, Nikki Hang.

## Divisional 1<sup>st</sup> Place Award Winners:



### Ensemble:

Pianists **Chloe Song**

*10<sup>th</sup> grade Loomis Chaffee School*

and **Jayden Song**

*7<sup>th</sup> grade Mansfield Middle School*



### Grade 7-9 Piano:

**First place:**

**Jayden Song**

*7<sup>th</sup> grade Mansfield Middle School*

### Grade 7-9 Vocalist:

**Ruthie Marquez**

*9<sup>th</sup> grade Coventry High School*



### Grade 10-12 Piano:

**Chloe Song**

*10<sup>th</sup> grade Loomis Chaffee School*

### Grade 10-12 Vocalist:

**Yagnesene Das**

*12<sup>th</sup> grade Ellington High School*



January 2027 will be our 40<sup>th</sup> competition. It will be held at von der Mehden Recital Hall at UConn. We will be announcing the date in the Spring. We have already begun to plan. The committee looks forward to celebrating this landmark with great excitement and some special touches.

If you have any questions or feedback, please contact Carol Twardowski-Heap at [1880house@sbcglobal.net](mailto:1880house@sbcglobal.net) or 860-933-8015. I would love to talk with you.

# Our special awards were presented to the following performers:

**Edward D. Gerry and Catherine Wade Wind Award:**

Piccoloist **Raha Esmaili Zaghi**

10<sup>th</sup> grade EO Smith High School



**Edward D. Gerry and Catherine Wade String Award:**

Violinist **Ejon Chen**

10<sup>th</sup> grade EO Smith High School



**Bellingham Piano Award:**

**Chloe Song**

10<sup>th</sup> grade Loomis Chaffee School



**McDevitt Voice Award:**

**Aubrey Grimes**

9<sup>th</sup> grade Arts at the Capitol Theater



**Mr D. Scholarship Award:**

Pianist **Aehan Amith**

9<sup>th</sup> grade East Hampton High School



**The 2026 Feather Spearman Honor presented for service through music:**

Violinist **Ejon Chen**

10<sup>th</sup> grade EO Smith High School



## Upcoming Windham Hospital Exhibits

Artists featured at the Windham Hospital Gallery 2026:

**February &**

**March:** Quiet Corner Camera Club - *photography*

**April:** WRAC Group Show "Pretty in Pink"

**May:** Janet Dassau - *photography*

**June:** Lorraine DuBois - *photography*

**July:** Bev York - *painting & framed sculpture*



**August:** WRAC Group Show -

"America the Beautiful"

**September:** Robert Denton - *acrylics*

**October:** Scott Rhoades - *acrylics*

**November:** Micky Wells - *acrylics*

**December:** WRAC Group Show -

"Small (9x12 or smaller) & Affordable"



Any artist, artists or group who would like to exhibit their work (solo or shared) should contact Trish Fabish at (860) 617-5326 or text.

**NOTE:** A new procedure has been implemented whereby the artist will be notified when a piece of art has been sold, giving the artist the option to replace the sold art with another for the duration of their exhibit.

**WRAC invites you to join or renew your membership and receive the ArtSpectrum**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Town \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (H/C) \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Membership Categories (circle one): New / Renewal**

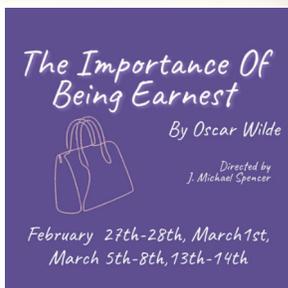
(check one) \$15 (individual) \_\_\_ \$20 (Family) \_\_\_ \$100 (Group) \_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Your area of artistic skill (circle one): Visual Art / Music / Writing / Drama / Dance**

**Your Donation helps WRAC continue to promote the ARTS in the Windham and surrounding regions. If you wish to help promote the ARTS further, please consider enhancing your membership to one of the following levels:**

(check one) Benefactor \$100 \_\_\_ Patron \$50 \_\_\_ Donor \$30 \_\_\_

**Please make checks payable to the Windham Regional Arts Council (WRAC) and mail to  
P.O.Box 847, Willimantic, CT 06226**



**The Importance of Being Earnest**

By Oscar Wilde  
Directed by J. Michael Spencer

**February 27 & 28**  
**March 5 – 7, 13 & 14, 2026**  
at 7:00 pm  
**March 1 & 8, 2026**  
at 2:00 pm

**Auditions for Men On Boats**

**Will be held March 9 & 10 2026**

**For more information and tickets  
please visit our website:  
Windhamtheatreguild.org**

The Burton Leavitt Theatre - 779 Main St., Willimantic, CT

**CONCERT**

to support the  
First Congregational Church  
of South Windsor  
Fellowship Hall Floor Project

**Sunday, March 22, 2026**  
**3:00 p.m.**

First Congregational Church of South Windsor  
993 Main Street, South Windsor, CT

featuring

**Take Note!**  
a cappella ensemble

[www.firstchurchsw.org](http://www.firstchurchsw.org)

[www.take-note.org](http://www.take-note.org)

Donations to the Fellowship Hall Floor Project  
will be gratefully accepted at the door

# Windham Regional ARTS Council

P.O. Box 847  
Willimantic, CT 06226



*Has your membership expired?*



*Any member who would like to receive the ArtSpectrum (in color) via email please send your request to [Contactus@windhamrac.org](mailto:Contactus@windhamrac.org)*

## CALL for ENTRIES!!

### Equinox and the Arts XXVI at the Jonathan Trumbull Library



The Friends of the Jonathan Trumbull Library in Lebanon, in conjunction with the Windham Regional Arts Council (WRAC), will sponsor the 26<sup>th</sup> annual Equinox and the Arts exhibition!

Artwork in all media (oil, acrylic, watercolor, pastel, pen and ink, pencil, sculpture, and photography) will be accepted. The library has wall space for work to be hung. Work must be framed or gallery wrapped and wired, ready to hang. The library also has easels available for unwired work to be displayed on top of bookshelves. There is a limit of one entry per artist.

Artwork will be accepted at the library only at the following drop-off times:

**Thursday, March 12 from 6-7:30 pm**  
**Friday, March 13 from 4-5:30 pm**  
**Saturday, March 14 from 12-1:30 pm**  
**No work will be accepted at any other time.**

The art show will open on **Friday, March 20** with a reception hosted by the Friends of JTL in the community room for artists and their guests from **7-8:30 pm**.

**The show will run until Friday, April 24.**

**All artwork must be retrieved on Saturday, April 25 between 9 am and 1 pm.**

Registration forms are available at [www.windhamrac.org](http://www.windhamrac.org) and [www.lebanonctlibrary.org](http://www.lebanonctlibrary.org) and at the JTL information desk.



The Windham Regional Arts Council (WRAC) was founded in 1983 to help organize community arts activities for the 150<sup>th</sup> birthday of the city of Willimantic. The Council is a non-profit volunteer organization. The ArtSpectrum is published three times a year and highlights events and people actively involved in the arts community.

The organization financially supports the Willimantic Orchestra and the Burton Leavitt Theatre. It sponsors an annual art show for member artists. April, August and December feature a group show at the Windham Hospital Corridor Gallery. Members have the opportunity to exhibit their work at the Windham Hospital Corridor Gallery. Each year WRAC holds a juried music competition for students aged twelve to eighteen, and the overall winner performs a solo at the Willimantic Orchestra's spring concert.

We welcome new members and creative ideas to promote the arts in Windham and surrounding regions.