

# Community Engagement COVID-19 Response

REPORT | MARCH–AUGUST 2020



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**Crystal Bridges**  
Museum of American Art

 **THE  
MOMENTARY**



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# Letter from the Chief Education Officer



**“We are in a moment of reckoning, a moment of transformation. This is the time to be bold and ambitious and to challenge the ways things have been done in the past.”**

**–FORD FOUNDATION PRESIDENT DARREN WALKER**

These were remarks made during the State of the Art Summit organized by Crystal Bridges Museum and The Momentary on September 23, 2020. For the museum, our moment of transformation, in fact, began six months earlier, on March 17, when we closed our doors as COVID-19 arrived in Northwest Arkansas. This was a destabilizing moment, and one that could just as easily have caused the museum to retreat and lie dormant even as the virus wreaked havoc on our region’s economic, health, and cultural infrastructures.

Instead, we chose to mobilize. We knew of the numerous vulnerable communities in our region and that the inequity gaps experienced by these groups were being exacerbated by the pandemic. We were committed to supporting Northwest Arkansans during this crisis and had resources such as museum space, staff members, and culinary expertise that could be leveraged to help. We turned to our community partners an assortment of regionally based organizations from a variety of industries to give us insight into what our communities needed. In collaboration with them, we identified five key areas of support: food, housing, artist relief, internet and information access, and a campaign for social connecting to foster connections with vulnerable, isolated groups. Mobilizing the museum, we carried out several efforts as part of our organization-wide Community Outreach COVID-19 Initiative which are described on the pages that follow.

The museum’s pandemic response has opened a new world of community engagement possibilities for us. By focusing on equity and critical needs, it has allowed us to expand and evolve what COVID-19 forced into action. We remain committed to building upon these new strategies, and to actively changing the ways we partner with communities and artists in general.

This report is a snapshot of one moment amidst many in the museum’s continuing journey toward transformation. We learned a lot during this time period and we are carrying these lessons forward even as the pandemic continues to take its toll. This truly is a time to be **“bold and ambitious and to challenge the ways things have been done in the past”**. The communities we serve expect nothing less.

*Sincerely,*

**Marissa Reyes**

CHIEF EDUCATION OFFICER, CRYSTAL BRIDGES

# Project Overview

Discussions with community partners identified five focus areas for this phase of work and task teams launched and began meeting on April 9th. Each task team included the following types of individuals: Strategy team member, Community Engagement team member(s), Operations team member, internal content specialist(s), and external community partners. The internal content specialist aligned with the focus of the task team (e.g. Director of Culinary Operations served on the Food Distribution team). Community partners served as expert advisors and collaborators, and how often they connected with Crystal Bridges and the Momentary varied across the teams.

## Social Connecting

This team organized the Social Connecting Campaign to help those especially vulnerable to the negative effects of isolation, including patients in hospitals and residents in assisted living facilities. The campaign involved hiring nine local artists to design postcards inspired by the word “together.” The postcards were distributed to community members who were encouraged to color in the drawings, write supportive notes, and return the postcards to Crystal Bridges or the Momentary for distribution to those at risk of feeling isolated during social distancing efforts. Each artist also created a large mural of their design. The murals travelled around Northwest Arkansas medical facilities, assisted living facilities, social service organizations, and apartment complexes as an outdoor, socially distanced, exhibition. Finally, the murals were displayed at Crystal Bridges and the Momentary.

## Artist Support

This team investigated the possibility of issuing grants directly to artists, connected with the Northwest Arkansas Regional Arts Council around a potential project for long-term investment in local artists, and connected local artists with the Social Connecting task team to participate in the campaign to combat social isolation.

## Food Distribution

This team partnered with the Northwest Arkansas Food Bank to distribute boxes of food to area food pantries and provided meals to nearby schools for distribution to their students. Every food box also included a Creativity kit containing high quality art supplies for children and families.

## Internet & Information Sharing

This team investigated the possibility of providing Wi-Fi for students and offering internet maintenance service. However, they realized that internet access at the museum parking lot would not reach communities with the greatest need who were 30-45 minutes away. In addition, they learned that internet companies were at capacity in terms of discounts or adding access elsewhere. Working with community partners, the focus on digital internet access shifted to the need to share information in a way that did not rely on technology. As a result, bulletin boards were installed at area apartment complexes in collaboration with the Fayetteville Housing Authority and local artist Jeffry Cantu to enable the sharing of accurate information about COVID-19 and contact information for social service organizations.

## Household & Personal Care Supply Distribution

This team investigated the possibility of providing housing for first responders and medical personnel in need of a place to quarantine, but learned the museum-owned housing was not available for a long period and the museum would not be able to adhere to the COVID-19 cleaning standards needed for this type of support. Ultimately, this task team collaborated with the Northwest Arkansas Continuum of Care to connect with social service organizations throughout Northwest Arkansas and provided personal hygiene and house cleaning supply kits to individuals experiencing housing insecurity. Included in every box was a Creativity Kit.



**Social Connections**



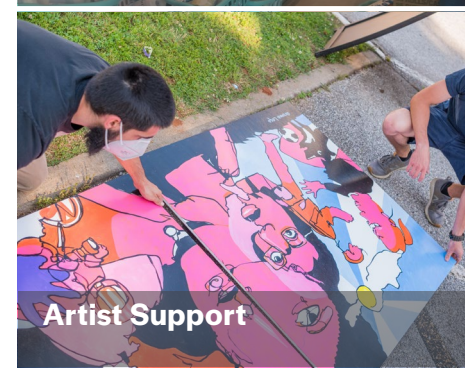
**Internet & Information Sharing**



**Food Distribution**

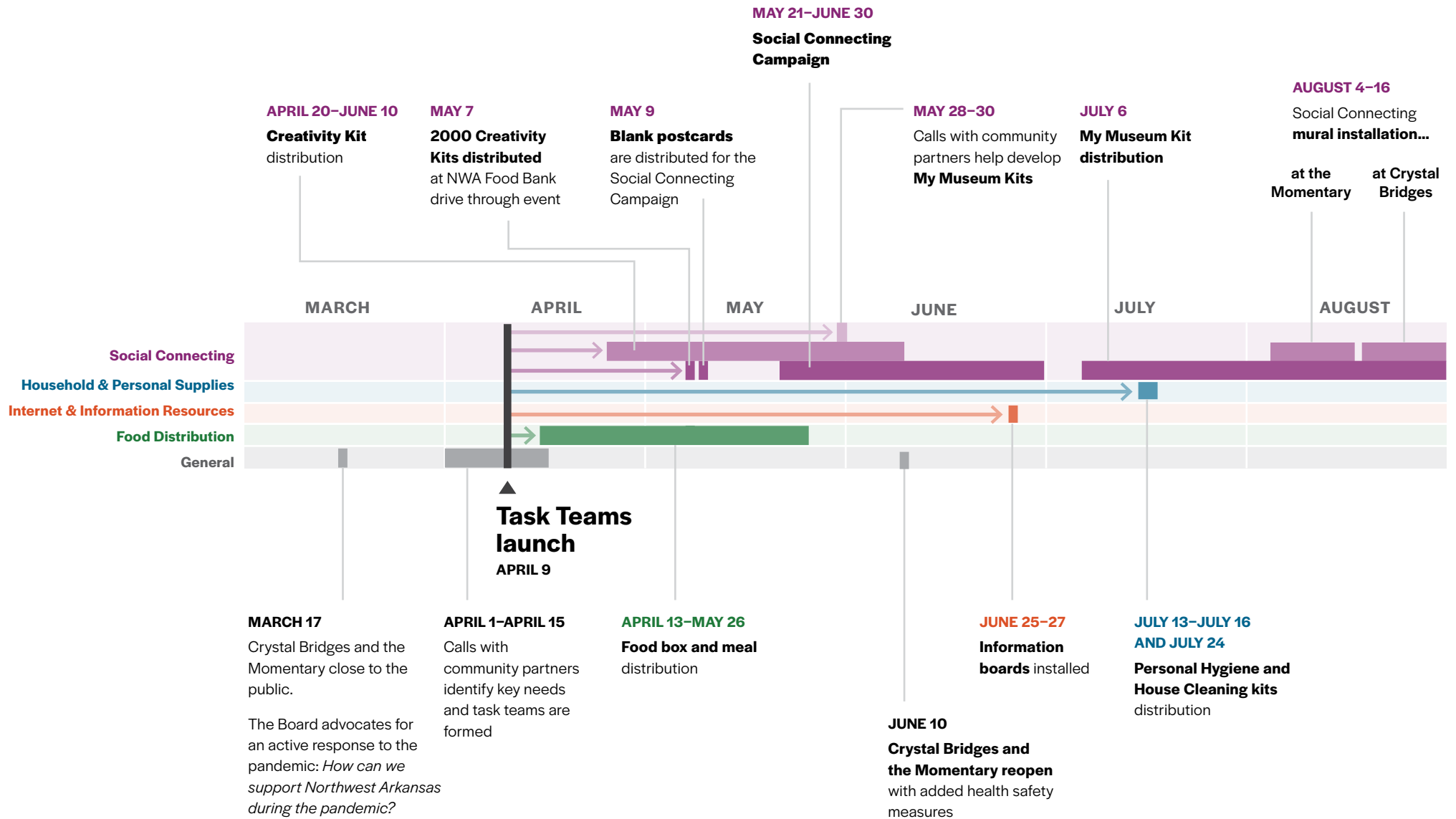


**Household & Personal Care Supply Distribution**



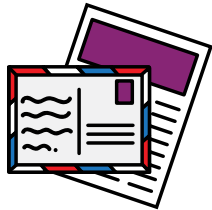
**Artist Support**

# Timeline of Events



# Kits & Boxes

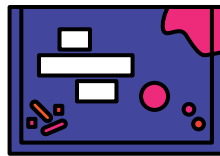
73,514 distributed



## Social connecting kit

5,739 distributed

- COVID-19 Resource Sheet with tips for combatting isolation and contact information for local service organizations
- Postcard completed by a community member
- Additional blank postcards
- Creativity kit\*
- Watercolor paints to decorate postcards

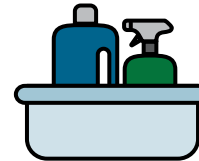


## My Museum kit

12,000 distributed

Each kit focused on a theme and included physical materials for art activities, written instructions in English and Spanish, and links to digital resources including videos about the work of art in the Crystal Bridges collection and instructions for art-making.

- Color kit
- Sculpture kit
- You + Me kit
- Art of Kindness kit
- Show & Tell kit



## House Cleaning Supply kit

1,022 distributed

- Toilet paper
- Sponges
- Floor cleaner
- Degreaser
- Toilet brush
- Paper towels
- Creativity kit\*

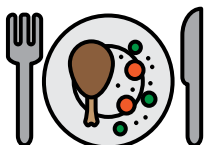


## Personal Care kit

500 distributed

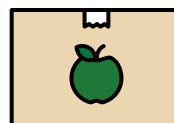
- Hand sanitizer
- Body wash
- Tampons and Pads
- Toilet paper
- Hairbrush
- Toothbrush
- Creativity kit\*
- Postcard completed by a community member

## Food & Meal boxes



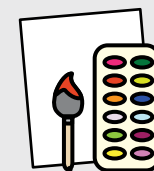
### Meals

28,050 distributed



### Food boxes

6,615 distributed



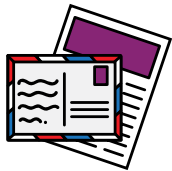
### \*Creativity kit

19,588 distributed

Art activity including materials and instructions

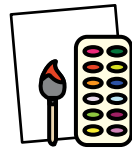
# Geographic Reach of Kits & Boxes

**73,514** kits and boxes distributed



## Social Connecting Kit

- Bella Vista—**590**
- Bentonville—**446**
- Fayetteville—**1,635**
- Fort Smith—**130**
- Johnson—**75**
- Rogers—**1,515**
- Siloam Springs—**40**
- Springdale—**1,303**
- Various NWA—**5**



## Creativity Kit

- Bentonville—**265**
- Elkins—**75**
- Farmington—**60**
- Fayetteville—**1249**
- Gravette—**75**
- Rogers—**780**
- Siloam Springs—**180**
- Springdale—**16,904**



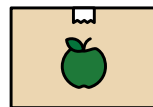
## Personal Care Kit

- Fayetteville—**260**
- Fort Smith—**50**
- Rogers—**75**
- Siloam Springs—**20**
- Springdale—**95**



## My Museum Kit

- Bentonville—**650**
- Fayetteville—**689**
- Fort Smith—**65**
- Rogers—**910**
- Siloam Springs—**1,205**
- Springdale—**3,656**
- Various NWA—**4,825**



## Food Boxes

- Various NWA—**4,615**
- Springdale—**2,000**

## Meals

- Springdale—**28,050**



## House Cleaning Supply Kit

- Fayetteville—**160**
- Fort Smith—**50**
- Rogers—**105**
- Siloam Springs—**20**
- Springdale—**687**



# Participating Staff Members

**Crystal Bridges and Momentary staff members listed below participated in this project by packing kits, overseeing the project and its operational logistics, and developing new engagement offerings distributed across the region. We do not know the names of all staff members who contributed by coloring postcards for the Social Connecting Campaign, but their efforts supported the project immensely.**

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Mary Adams	Lisa Bumgarner	Charles Estes	Marie Hofer	Hannah Luse	Paul Provost	Jim Todd
Pia Agrawal	Mike Burton	Emilio Fabico	Andrew Holmes	Kimberly Ly	Diego Quiñones	Sherry Treat
Ana Aguayo	Melissa Busch	Regina Fernando	Makenna Holmquist	Anita Maharjan	Rolando Quintana	Henry Trejo
Luis Aguilar	Jose “Lupe” Cardiel	Jordan Flikke	Catherine Hryniewicz	Megan Martin	Larissa Randall	Gabby Treviño
William Aguilar	Lliana Carrillo	Alejandra Flores	Ben Huss	James Masner	Janelle Redlaczky	Tom Tripodi
Gabriela Aguirre	Diane Carroll	Sarah Foster	Donna Hutchison	Laura McArthur	Todd Rennie	Cruz Trochez
Rosa Aguirre	Jose Cartagena	Brandon Frisbie	Glenda Island	William McCormick	Marissa Reyes	Alexis Turner
Marlie Allgood	Kristal Cascio	Zessna Garcia Rios	Adrienne Jackson	Marina McCoy	Carol Roberts	Tiffany Tyra
Anna Allred	George Cash	Miquel Geller	Tonya Jackson	Stephanie McKenna	Katie Robertson	Megan Valentine
Leesha Alston	Perla Chavez	Celia Gonzalez	Aaron Johnson	Aine McMahon	Emily Rodriguez	Katelyn Van Horn
Juan Alvarez	Patrick Cleveland	Jessica Gorman	Gail Johnston	Kate Meador	Kyle Rogers	Mary-Jean Vawter
Moirra Anderson	Sally Clifton	Lee Ann Gorman	Cayla Jones	Joshua Mendoza	Johnny Ruano	Nancy Verlage
Spencer Anderson	Kaye Collier	Juli Goss	Luis Juarez-Diaz	Christa Mickelson	Monica Ruiz	Brittany Vernon
Erin Anson-Ellis	Margi Conrads	Patrick Grant	Robyn Kaba	Allie Mitchell	Nupur Sachdeva	Jill Wagar
Lizbeth Ascencio	Raven Cook	Criss Graves	Courtney King	Patti Moore	Michael Sanchez-Vazquez	Diana Walpole
Elizabeth Bailey	Sierra Craig	Robin Groesbeck	Rebekah Kingsley	Russell Moore	Ana Saucedo	Allie Walters
Clay Bakker	Kim Crowell	Iliana Gutierrez	Julie Kleeb	Shawn Morgan	Sara Segerlin	Emily Warren
Sally Ball	Tracy Cude	Reina Guzman	Will Knauer	Jo-Ann Murcho	Elizabeth Selders	Miranda Watkins
Dominic Baril	Zonali Cuevas	Kelsey Harrington	Kayla Knox	Austin Naeger	Sharon Sheppherd	Richard Watson
Jena Barker	Dan Dancer	Jim Harvill	David Krus	Makele Ndessokia	Conor Shrum	Kurt Watson
Austen Barron Bailly	Drew Divilbiss	Danielle Hatch	Joe LaCavera	Marlene Olafson	Tony Sihapanya	Hannah Weaver
Jay Benham	Bethany Douglas	Jennifer Hatfield	Pamela Lashley	Miguel Osorio	Fernando Silva	Alex Westney
Nadia Bentley	Joe Dulaney	Lauren Haynes	Brooke Lawrence	Jayson Overby	Meg Skaggs	Jared Wierman
Lieven Bertels	Jackie Dungan	Joseph Heins	Teng Lee	Heath Owens	Kaycee Spears	Karesse Wilkey
Mindy Besaw	Eric Dziwanowski	Manuera Heller	Nicole Leonard	Grace Pamperien	Michael Speights	Ron Williams
Rod Bigelow	Scott Eccleston	Shana Henry	David Liles	Dylan Pangle	Nate Stahl	Drew Winters
Ron Bolinger	Sandy Edwards	Rosalio Hernandez	Rachel Lindsey	Landon Perkins	Libby Storie	Christopher Wise
Aaron Bowen	Justin Elwood	Wilfredo Hernandez	Kash Logan	Cory Perry	Dillon Sutton	Christy Witt
Emily Brandolini	Bruce Endsley	Karina Herrera	Christina Lowe	Vicki Perry	Bobby Lee Taggart	Lisa Young
Andrew Brott	Ana Engels	Ron Hickson	Michael Lucero	Daniel Porras	Mallory Taylor	
Kariah Brust	Josh Erickson	Jeffrey Hilliard	Debbie Ludington	Cynthia Post Hunt	Shelena Taylor	



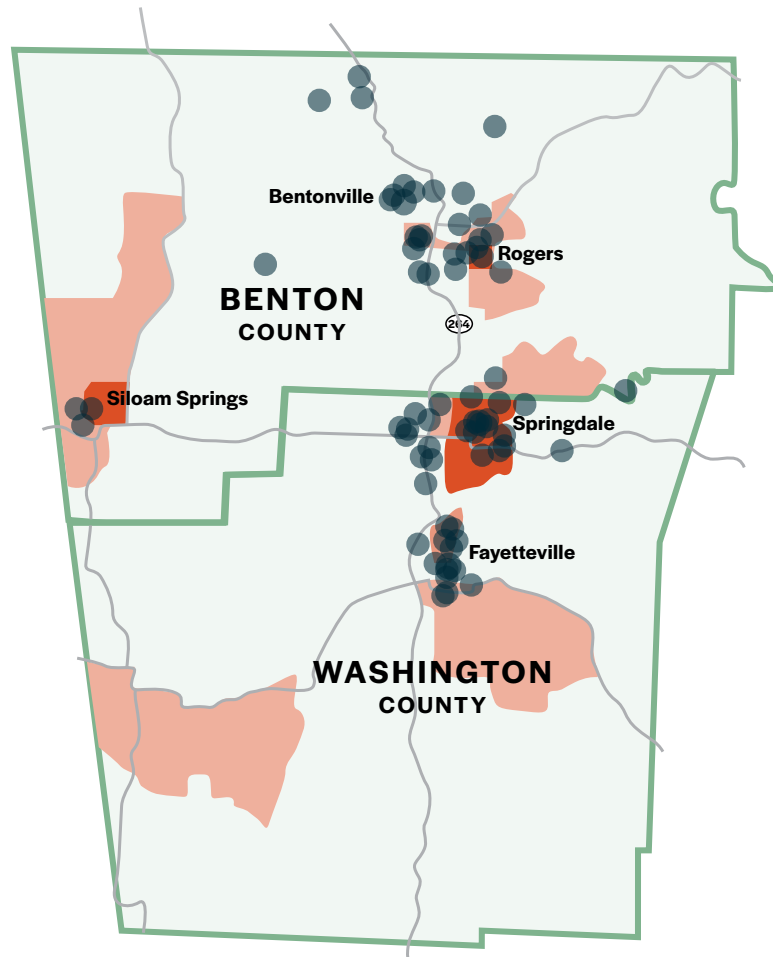
# Participating Partner Organizations

**These organizations supported Northwest Arkansas during the COVID-19 pandemic through this project and beyond. For this project between March–August 2020, some partners developed materials for the kits while others connected resources to community members.**

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7hills Homeless Center	Fayetteville Housing Authority	Northwest Medical Center—Springdale	Springdale School District
Allen Elementary School	Fayetteville Public Library	NWA Children's Shelter	T.G. Smith Elementary School
Arkansas Children's Northwest Hospital	Genesis House, Inc	NWA Continuum of Care (CoC)	Teen Action & Support Center (TASC) & The Station
Arkansas Coalition of Marshallese (ACOM)	George Elementary School	NWA Food Bank	The Gardens at Osage Terrace
Arkansas Department of Health	Girl Scouts	Oasis	The Meadows Bentonville Independent and Assisted Living
Arkansas Immigrant Defense	Girls on the Run	One Community	Trike Theatre
Arkansas State Veterans Home at Fayetteville	Green Acres Easy Living	Our Healthy Communities, Inc	University of Arkansas - Fort Smith (UAFS)
Arkansas Support Network	Hark	Ozark Guidance Center	University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) Northwest
Arvest	Havenwood	Parson Hills Elementary School	Veterans Health Care System of the Ozarks
Autism Involves me	Helen Tyson Middle School After School Program	Primrose Retirement Community of Rogers	Walton Arts Center
Autumn Place Assisted Living	Highlands Health and Rehabilitation	Providence Living Center	Washington Regional Medical Center
Bayyari Elementary School	Hillcrest Towers Senior Center	Restoration Village	Willow Creek Women's Hospital
Blair Center of Southern Politics and Society	Hispanic Women's Organization of Arkansas (HWOA)	Rogers Public Library	Northwest Arkansas Women's Shelter
Boys and Girls Club	J.O. Kelly Middle School	RootED Northwest Arkansas	
Camp War Eagle	Joe Mathias Elementary School	Salvation Army	
Canopy NWA	Life Styles, Inc	Samaritan Community Center	
Community Clinic	Marshalllese Educational Initiative	Schmieding Center for Senior Health and Education	
Community Creative Center	Meals on Wheels	Scott Family Amazeum	
Compassion House	Mercy Clinic—Springdale	Second Helping NWA	
Concordia Retirement Center	Mercy Hospital	Simone Cottrell	
Curbside Theatre	Monitor Elementary School	Sonora Elementary School	
DIVA & DUDE	Morningside of Springdale	SOURCES Community Independent Living Services	
Eastside Elementary School	Northwest Medical Center - Bentonville	Springdale Public Library	

# Partner Organization Geography



Overlaying partner organization locations with the CDC's Social Vulnerability Index highlights ways this project aimed to support vulnerable communities.

- Location of Partner organization
- Highest Vulnerability level\* (top quartile)
- Second Highest Vulnerability level\* (2nd quartile)

#### \*CDC Social Vulnerability Index

Social vulnerability refers to a community's capacity to prepare for and respond to the stress of hazardous events ranging from natural disasters, such as tornadoes or disease outbreaks, to human caused threats, such as toxic chemical spills. The Social Vulnerability Index County Map depicts the social vulnerability of communities, at census tract level, within a specified county. See [svi.cdc.gov](https://svi.cdc.gov) for more details.



ARKANSAS

# Social Connecting Campaign Artists

Nine local artists created original artwork for the Social Connecting Campaign, including line drawings for the postcards and large-scale paintings for the outdoor exhibiton hosted by 22 sites across the region. Find out more about each artist [here](#).

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Kenny Arredondo



Stacy Bates



Kinya Christian



Tram Colwin



Hannah Newsome Doyle



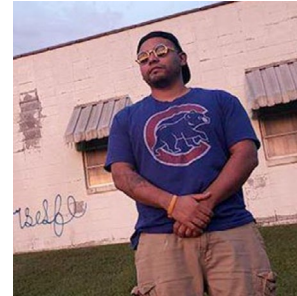
Leana Fischer



Octavio Logo



Matt Miller



Alan Rodriguez



# Spotlight on Postcards

Nine local artists were hired to design postcards inspired by the word “together”. The postcards were distributed to community members who were encouraged to color in the drawings, write a supportive note, and then return the postcard to Crystal Bridges or the Momentary to be distributed to Northwest Arkansas community members at risk of feeling isolated during social distancing efforts.

The postcards the museum received back from the community featured cheerful and heartfelt messages, as well as drawings colored in with care. Notes were written by adults and children, and various media was used to color the images, including markers, crayons, colored pencils, and watercolor paints. Some members of the community chose to include popular song lyrics, while others opted to include a bible verse. Many cards featured messages intended to remind recipients that they are not alone and that someone is thinking of them.

## Common themes

### Encouragement

*Here is my interpretation of the artist's drawing of what together looks like. This note connects us, so we are also together. I admire your strength and I hope this note fortifies you and brings you joy.*

*As we travel separate paths, may our thoughts join in a message of hope and healing.*

### Inspirational Quotes

*Come on people now smile on your brother, everybody get together, try to love one another right now*

*If we wonder often, the gift of knowledge will come. If we never wonder, knowledge will never find us.' – Arapaho proverb Sending all good thoughts of connections and health and hugs.*

### Religious Inspiration

*God bless us all with healing and hope.*

*Mightier than the waves of the sea is His love for you. Psalm 93:4 You are such a blessing!*

### Jokes and Fun Facts

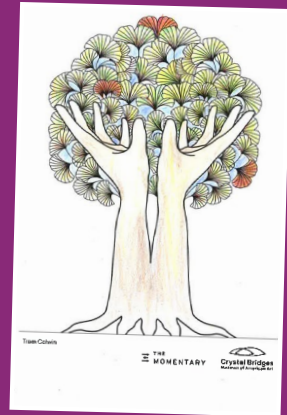
*What did the burglar say when he was caught stealing from the art museum? 'I did it for the Monet!' [smiley face]*

*Did you know the oldest tree on Earth is the Great Basin Bristlecone Pine? It is over 4,700 years old!*

### Notes from Young Children

*You rock stay strong*

*Try to think happy thoughts*



# Evaluation Introduction

## Evaluation Questions

How did this project **impact the organizations and staff members** of Crystal Bridges and the Momentary?

How did this project **impact Northwest Arkansas communities**?

What have we learned that could **impact future community engagement** efforts?

## Data Collection Methods

- 13 Interviews
- 7 Group Debriefs
- 3 Surveys
- Program documentation
- Artifact review

## Evaluation Participants

- 147 Staff members
- 25 Community partners
- 7 Artists
- 10 Public Individuals

## Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic caused many unknowns for all involved in this project, and the evaluation was not exempt from this. We crafted an evaluation plan as the project began that would focus on the collective impact across the region and within Crystal Bridges and the Momentary. Over the six-month period, the evaluation team worked closely with the community engagement team to learn when project phases were ramping up or ending in order to schedule data collection activities in tandem. Just like the project, this evaluation looked differently than it would have if there had not been a pandemic: all data were collected virtually or socially distanced, some methods were not even possible, and the emotional tolls of the public health crisis and fight for racial and social justice occurring in the region and across the country were ever present in the minds of all involved.

While there were many unknowns, the evaluation team applied the guiding principles of integrity and respect for people as articulated in the American Evaluation Association's (AEA) *Guiding Principles for Evaluators* (2018). For example, one of our main goals was not to overburden stakeholders (internal staff members, community organizations, or community members), and we joined existing debriefs when possible to honor everyone's time. It also meant that when we learned an individual was potentially overwhelmed with other work or personal matters, we delayed data collection or considered alternative ways to learn about that particular issue. Also, recognizing the power dynamics at play between provider and recipient or between evaluator and evaluation participant, we decided not to collect data directly from public individuals receiving critical resources (i.e. food, personal care items, cleaning supplies, or access to information). Rather, we focused on understanding the collective impact from the scale of resources distributed, as well as on gathering feedback from community partner organizations. While these decisions produced limitations for the kinds of impact we can articulate, the evaluation team felt it was more important to forge or strengthen community partner relationships during this period.

# Evaluation Methods

## Interviews and Group Debriefs

**Thirteen interviews and seven group debriefs were conducted across the project time period.** Interviews used semi-structured protocols, included between 1–8 participants, lasted 15-30 minutes, and were facilitated by the evaluation team. Before each interview, informed consent was obtained from the participant, and the evaluator provided assurance that data would remain confidential.

Group debriefs were led by the project team, included 3–8 participants, and lasted between 30 minutes to an hour. Group debriefs were sometimes the final meeting for a particular task team or group, during which the evaluator took notes, but confidentiality could not be promised in the same manner as in an individual interview. In some instances, such as the debrief with organizations that hosted the murals, the evaluation team prepared questions for the education team member to use as a guide and that debrief was included in the dataset.

**Staff members** of Crystal Bridges and the Momentary participated in six debriefs and seven interviews which collected information about how the project unfolded, its impact on staff members, perceptions of what worked well and challenges, and ideas for the future of community engagement. This data collection included task team members, community engagement team members, individuals responsible for operations and logistics, and those responsible for packing kit materials.

**Community partners** participated in five interviews and two debriefs which focused on understanding the impact on the community organization and its constituents, areas where Crystal Bridges and the Momentary could improve, and potential ideas for future collaboration. This included representatives from organizations across sectors (health, housing insecurity, food insecurity, disability services, and community organizing).

**Artists** contracted to develop the postcards and murals for the Social Connecting Campaign participated in one group debrief where data was collected about how they experienced the project.

**Public** respondents to the My Museum Kit survey were invited to participate in a 15-minute phone conversation in exchange for a \$20 Walmart giftcard. Two of the 10 survey respondents participated in these interviews, which asked about how the family used the kits, if they used the online resources, what their child(ren) found most enjoyable, and how the kit and art-making fit in with their family time. Two staff interviews and one public interview were collected in Spanish by a member of the Community Engagement team.



## Surveys

Three surveys were conducted over the course of this project.

**An all-staff survey** collected 118 responses from Crystal Bridges and Momentary staff members in June 2020. Questions about staff member perception of and involvement with community engagement were added to one of the existing all-staff surveys distributed after all-staff meetings. The decision was made to add these questions in June because the museum was reopening, and it was assumed that many staff members would shift their responsibilities to being onsite. Moreover, packing food boxes came to an end at this time, as the Food Bank no longer had the same needs for external volunteers. Details about all-staff survey respondents can be found in the table to the right.

**The mural site survey** collected 11 completed responses from employees of organizations hosting the Social Connecting Campaign between June 19 and July 6. This survey included open and close-ended questions aimed at understanding community partners' perspectives of the Social Connecting Campaign's impact as well as areas for improvement.

**The My Museum Kit** survey received 10 responses from community members who received a kit through their child's free meal pick up at school. My Museum Kits were provided weekly over the summer, and this data collection method was included in the fifth kit delivery week.

A small card was inserted into 1000 of the kits distributed the first week of August asking individuals to text a keyword to a number to share feedback. The survey link appeared in the text message response and led the individual to an online survey. The invitation, text, and survey were all available in English and Spanish. The survey included 3 questions about ease of use, whether the individual had watched the online videos, and an open-ended question asking for general feedback. Respondents were invited to participate in a follow-up interview as described under "Interviews and Group Debriefs."

### All-staff Survey Respondent Characteristics (n=118)

Department	Frequency	% of Respondents
Choose Not To Disclose	19	16%
Protection Services	17	14%
Other	11	9%
Education and Public Programs	11	9%
Guest Services	9	8%
Advancement, Development, or Member Services	9	8%
Culinary or Special Events	8	7%
Communications	8	7%
People Services or Volunteer Services	4	3%
Exhibitions & Interpretation	4	3%
Executive or Strategy, Administration	4	3%
The Momentary—Programming	3	3%
The Momentary—Operations	3	3%
Collections Management, Preparator, or Registrar	3	3%
Curatorial	3	3%
Facilities or Trails & Grounds	2	2%

Full or Part-time status	Frequency	% of Respondents
Full-Time	100	85%
Part-Time	14	12%
Choose Not To Disclose	4	3%

## Program Documentation

Between March and August 2020, community engagement efforts included numerous strategies for supplying community members with resources, such as meals and food boxes, house cleaning supplies, personal care items, creativity kits, the social connecting kit, and My Museum Kits. These efforts were tracked closely by the Community Engagement team using a shared spreadsheet, which was visualized in real time by the Database Operations department in a Tableau dashboard. Details on the number and kinds of kits, as well as where they were distributed can be found in the earlier section of this report.

## Artifact Review

As a part of the Social Connecting Campaign, members of the public were invited to color a postcard for a person who may be experiencing stress or loneliness and write an encouraging note. A sample of postcards were analyzed in order to provide a general description of the themes found among the messages. See “Spotlight on Postcards” for details.

## Data Analysis

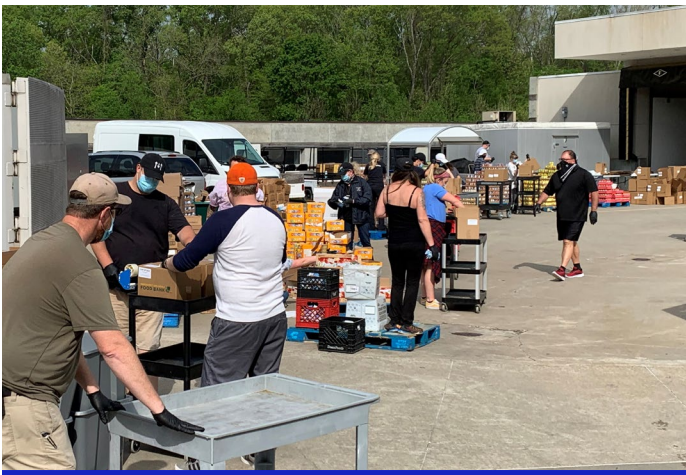
This study included both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data, such as Likert scale survey questions, were analyzed using descriptive statistics including counts and percentages. Qualitative data, such as interviews, group debriefs, open-ended survey questions, and postcard messages, were analyzed using inductive coding which involves “immersion in the details and specifics of data to discover important patterns, themes, and interrelationships.”<sup>1</sup> In other words, evaluators looked across responses for common themes, which became the codes for the data. The majority of qualitative data were analyzed using NVivo, a software designed for qualitative analysis. Spanish interview and survey responses were kept in their original language throughout the analysis process and responses were translated for meaning and verified with native Spanish speakers.

1. Patton, M.Q. (2002) Qualitative research and evaluation methods. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

# How did this project impact the organizations and staff members of Crystal Bridges and the Momentary?

## FINDINGS

### 1 Staff members felt positively about helping the community and reported learning about the region's needs.



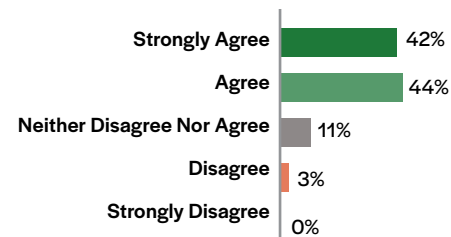
Staff members pack boxes of food at the Crystal Bridges Loading dock.

Staff members responding to the all-staff survey and individual interviews reported an overall positive perception of the COVID-19 relief community engagement efforts. In the June all-staff survey, 86% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, “I feel proud of my organization’s community engagement initiatives during COVID-19.” This included staff members who participated in the efforts and those who had not. Individuals who had participated mentioned specific activities such as the Social Connecting

Campaign and packing boxes of food, and found the work and its effect on the community to be particularly meaningful. One staff survey respondent said, “Packing meals on the loading dock was really rewarding and I actually felt like my help made a difference.” During project debriefs and interviews, task team members also mentioned their positive perception of this work. For example, one task team member noted, “It’s been really beautiful to see that we’re reaching outside of our neighborhoods and our comfort zone.” Reflecting on years of experience at the museum, another staff member said, “This has been one of the most meaningful projects I’ve worked on.”

Staff members also felt like their efforts throughout the summer were making a difference in the lives of community members. After Crystal Bridges and the Momentary reopened in mid-June, the packing of kits moved to a small storage space on the Bentonville square, and then to a large ballroom rented in a nearby hotel. Staff members from across the museum, including many whose hours were reduced due to low museum capacities and limited culinary offerings, packed My Museum Kits, personal hygiene, and house cleaning kits as a part of their scheduled work hours. In regards to this work, one staff member said, “I’m thankful the museum is giving me the opportunity to earn wages” and another added, “Also, it feels like it’s not just made up work. That we’re actually contributing. That feels good.” Staff members reported that the community engagement efforts were “above and beyond” what they expected from the museum.

### I feel proud of my organization’s community engagement initiatives during COVID-19 (n=118)



“Es una gran ayuda para la gente y claro que sí. También es una gran ayuda para nosotros los que trabajamos en la cocina, gracias a esto hemos tenido trabajo.”

“It’s a great help for the people, of course it is. It’s also a great help for those of us who work in the kitchen. Thanks to this, we have had work.”



## How did this project impact Crystal Bridges and the Momentary? cont.

Besides these sentiments, staff members also spoke of more personal impacts, such as connecting with family members through the Social Connecting Campaign postcards. One all-staff survey respondent said, “Coloring the postcards with my children was fun and meaningful. Talking about who they might go to, what the pictures were all about, taking time to do an art project together.” Another commented, “My husband and I coloring the postcards was a very nice moment.”

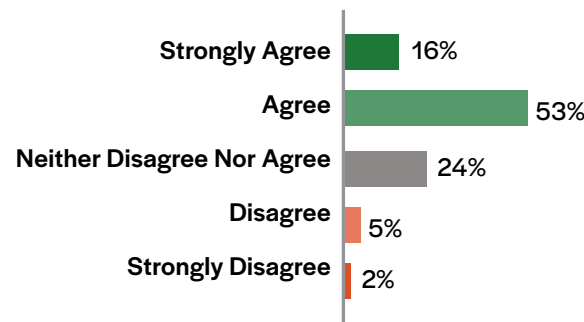
This project also helped staff members develop and share their job-specific skills, and learn about the needs and concerns of Northwest Arkansas residents. In fact, of those who participated in the community engagement strategies, **77% felt more connected to Northwest Arkansas because of doing so.** For those communicating with community partner organizations, staff members developed a better understanding of how partners operated. They learned more about internal structures of partner organizations, and the best strategies for communication and collaboration. In their debriefs, the Community Engagement team agreed that this relationship-building process is a crucial stepping stone for future collaboration. One person said, “The best community partnerships take time to build relationships and learn the personalities and workings of staff/organization.” Another chimed in about how the context of an arts organization relates to this saying, “Through all of this has been relationship building...Creativity helps with that relationship building.” In addition, working with organizations that are already embedded in supporting critical needs, such as housing and food insecurity, served as a learning opportunity for several task team members. One staff member said they felt “ignorant of the disparities” across Northwest Arkansas prior to COVID and this project. Another agreed, saying that, “Learning from folks that deal with it every day helped me expand my view of what’s going on.” Several staff members mentioned that being a part of this project changed their own volunteering habits, influencing them to focus more on food insecurity in the Northwest Arkansas region.

### 2 Staff members expressed that new or changed colleague relationships would have long-lasting impact on their work.

Across the all-staff survey, individual interviews, and group debriefs, staff members often spoke of the professional connections made and strengthened as a result of the COVID-19 relief community engagement efforts. This happened at multiple levels: between and among peers, supervisors, and senior leadership. The types of work mentioned most frequently was the collective action of packing kits and the small group or one-to-one problem solving required in order to develop new systems for operating.

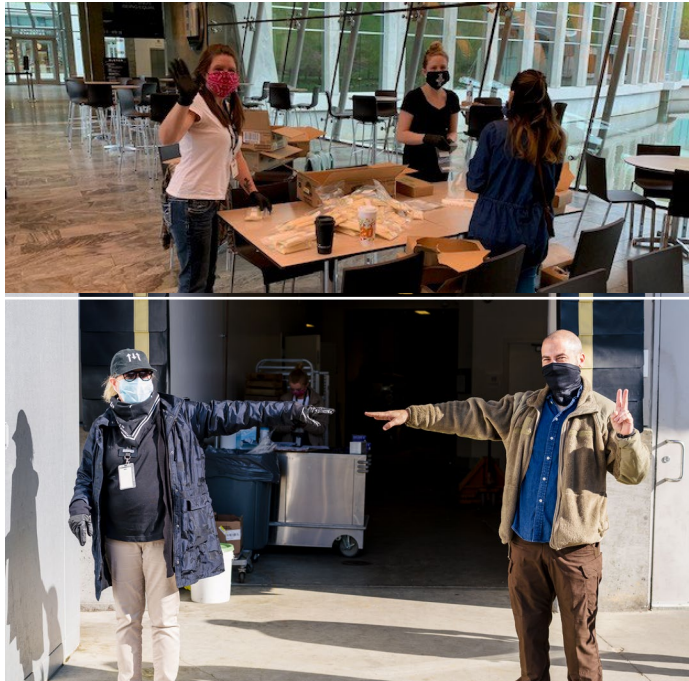
From the Crystal Bridges loading dock, to a small storage space, to a rented hotel ballroom, staff members gathered at a distance to pack boxes of varying kinds throughout the project. In the all-staff survey, **almost three-fourths (69%) of those who participated in the community engagement efforts said it made them feel more connected to their coworkers.** Individuals elaborated on this when asked to share their most memorable moment, with comments such as, “Getting to know my colleagues outside of my department who I didn’t know had the same interests as I do” and “Packing BBQ with [my colleague] in Culinary. We had such a fun conversation doing it. I made a new friend.” One staff member also said that “the connection with the people I don’t usually see every time I’m at work, knowing we’re all in this together to help everyone and anyone” was the most memorable part of the experience.

#### Participating in the community engagement efforts made me feel more connected to my coworkers (n=62)



“This has been an outlet to involve people and been a great team building exercise. It’s taught me about staff and will benefit us going forward. It gave me as a leader the opportunity to interact with a team in a way that I’m usually not able to.”

## How did this project impact Crystal Bridges and the Momentary? cont.

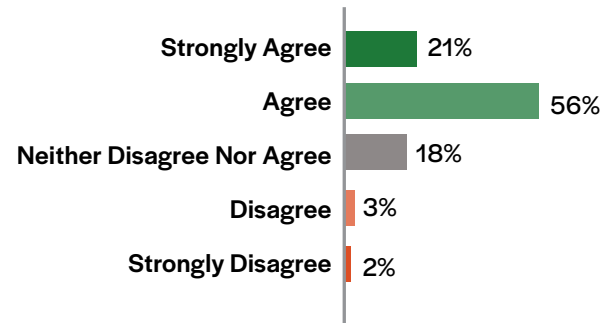


**Crystal Bridges and Momentary staff members pack creativity kits and keep a 6-foot distance.**

In a group debrief, staff mentioned that this work allowed for crossover of expertise and “sharing of knowledge in how to produce these things very quickly.” One manager spoke of the team-building effect in this work and how that would likely have long-lasting impact. He said, “This has been an outlet to involve people and been a great team building exercise. It’s taught me about staff and will benefit us going forward. It gave me as a leader the opportunity to interact with a team in a way that I’m usually not able to.”

In addition to improving employee connections, staff members spoke about the value of the work transcending job titles and rank. For example, one staff member said, “I’m thankful for leadership who I saw on our packing days. It’s inspiring. It’s not just, ‘you guys do this,’ you were there saying, ‘what do you need me to do?’ Those are the type of people you

**Participating in the community engagement efforts made me feel more connected to Northwest Arkansas (n=62).**



wanna work for.” One person packing kits also spoke of the impact of seeing senior leadership saying, “The fact that [Strategy members] came in. That was nice and it meant a lot. It helped us feel more connected to the museum. Like they haven’t forgotten about us.” Comparing this work to a past experience, another staff member noted, “E trabajado en polleras y trabaje con otros americanos y no sabían trabajar. Aquí, todos trabajan, la gente estudiada, las que trabajan en oficinas, todos. Eso me gusta.” “I have worked in poultry factories and worked with other Americans and they did not know how to work. Here, everyone works, the educated, those who work in offices, everyone. I like that.”

Members of the task teams and those charged with overseeing the project implementation also spoke about the connections forged while problem solving around new and challenging logistics. Peers mentioned their appreciation of one another for developing new ways of working together, and often reflected on learning more about one another’s working style and skills. This was especially the case since two Strategy members critical to this project had been working with Crystal Bridges and the Momentary for four months or less. As one staff member put it, “We’re still learning new leaders and those new leaders are learning us.” Several commented on feeling supported with comments such as, “I’ve never felt that kind of support at Crystal Bridges. No one has worked that way and it’s changed

“The most memorable moment would be when the team leader thanked everyone for their heart to serve the community after we had finished packing food boxes. Standing there with everyone knowing that the reason we were there is because we care about the community and are part of an organization that invests time and resources to help that community was truly encouraging and boosted my reasons for doing what I do.”

## How did this project impact Crystal Bridges and the Momentary? cont.



**Packing food boxes at the Crystal Bridges loading dock**

us operationally. We were able to get decisions made and no roadblocks.” Another person described it as feeling like the workplace mantra went from “do with what you got” to “tell me what you can handle.”

While these new ways of working forged new connections across departments, it should also be noted that instances where relationships were strained prior to this project often remained so. Staff members spoke of moments they found working with a colleague or leader difficult based on personality, attitude, and/or hierarchy.

### **3 Roles and responsibilities emerged through new ways of working which can inform future projects.**

After reaching out to community partners in early April to better understand community needs, five task teams were formed. These cross-departmental teams worked with external partners to plan the strategies to support community members. Staff members from departments across the museum were then mobilized to execute these plans, such as ordering food and supplies, packing thousands of kits, coloring and distributing postcards, and countless other duties. This evaluation includes an analysis of these new ways of working in order to understand both their strengths and challenges. Creating new systems can often illuminate lessons learned,

and the data informing this evaluation – project documents, individual interviews, and group debriefs – were also analyzed from the perspective of informing future projects.

The unique and rapidly evolving circumstances surrounding this project gave rise to certain challenges, such as gaps in communication. For example, strategy members worked together but also served as task team leads, convening their team for weekly meetings. Due to the urgency with which the project aimed to operate, decisions made by Strategy were sometimes not communicated to all task team members. One team member noted that “every once in a while, you just weren’t quite sure if the loose ends were tied up in certain areas. There were just a lot of conversations happening and also the circle back wasn’t always to everyone.” The ways in which decisions were made and the flow of communication made it difficult for some task team members to understand the current status of each initiative, which in turn caused uncertainty. This challenge was also highlighted in the June all-staff survey. When asked how the organizations could improve community engagement efforts, one-third of the open-ended responses referred to communication and collaboration between internal teams. For example, one person said “I think continuing to work on communication between different teams. We are better when we work together! I think sometimes circumstances call for swift action, but we should work toward broader support of initiatives so that things run smoother and we support each other as we support the community.”

**“I think continuing to work on communication between different teams. We are better when we work together!”**

**“Packing meals on the loading dock was really rewarding and I actually felt like my help made a difference.”**



## How did this project impact Crystal Bridges and the Momentary? cont.

We thought about...	Next time, we will think about
How can we supply critical resources to those in need?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If we're supplying materials, who decides which resources are supplied?</li> <li>• How will we store materials?</li> <li>• How long do they take to purchase and ship?</li> <li>• Where will they be assembled and who is responsible for assembling?</li> <li>• How long will assembly take?</li> <li>• What does the dropoff site look like and who is the lead contact there?</li> </ul>
Internally, who has content expertise related to this topic?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is that person being asked to provide expertise in meetings or tasked with other duties?</li> </ul>
Externally, who should we work with to engage audiences or support specific needs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who will be the lead communicator with external partners?</li> </ul>
Who could serve as project manager?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who will serve as onsite coordinator when things have to be physically produced?</li> <li>• How will this person get the information he/she needs to understand what is being produced?</li> </ul>
Who will own the knowledge of what is happening across the initiative(s)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How will that information be shared and distributed to all involved?</li> <li>• What is the communication flow?</li> </ul>
What is the process for approving expenses?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who has the authority to say yes or no to a project direction, or decide project boundaries?</li> </ul>
If equipment is needed, who will operate it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How many operators do we need?</li> <li>• Who do they get information and direction from?</li> </ul>

Across task teams, the Community Engagement team members were identified as key players in that they provided information about the context of Northwest Arkansas communities, and connected task teams with community partners. As mentioned in another finding, community partners felt like Crystal Bridges and the Momentary staff were successful communicators. Data suggest that the efficiency of this communication improved over time as Community Engagement team members took charge of communication with most community partners. This role of a liaison allowed the Community Engagement team to rely on their understanding of the aggregate work across task teams, and cover multiple topics of conversation at once.

Methods for mobilizing staff and packing kits as a group also established new systems over time. When asked on the all-staff survey how community engagement efforts could improve, the most frequent suggestion (41% of responses) was to establish a strategy for staff community engagement opportunities. Since then, some changes had been made across the project. For example, task team members spoke of developing standards for communicating with those on a different shift, and developing specific guidelines pertaining to the work, such as labeling and storing of materials. These improvements were mentioned by one survey respondent, who stated, "The first day we got together to make food boxes for kids in need was a little unorganized and more work than I had anticipated...The next time I volunteered and it had moved to the loading dock, it was obvious the organization that had originally been lacking had made major improvements and it made everyone's job easier." Additional lessons were learned throughout the spring and summer, which informed ways in which staff members are working in the fall. This includes new systems for signing up staff members for work outside their own department, improved communication among managers of each department, guidelines for ensuring hours worked are coded internally and paid correctly, as well as ways to support staff who are multilingual and staff who have limited digital access.

Across data sources, staff members brought up the following issues they had to figure out along the way. Discussing these areas at the beginning of a project may be beneficial in the future.

# How did this project impact Northwest Arkansas communities?

## FINDINGS

### 4 Community partners expressed that the Social Connecting Campaign achieved its goals of combatting isolation and fostering social connection.



#### The public experiences the Social Connecting Campaign's outdoor exhibition.

The Social Connecting Campaign sought to bring art, creativity, and encouragement to those especially vulnerable to the negative effects of isolation, including hospital patients and individuals in assisted living facilities. Walton and Cohen (2011) define social belonging as “a sense of having positive relationships with others,” which they assert “is a fundamental human need.” A lack of social belonging can lead to “social isolation, loneliness, and low social status” which “harm not only subjective well-being but also intellectual achievement and immune function and health.”<sup>2</sup> Nine local artists were commissioned to develop postcard images,

which Crystal Bridges distributed. These were colored by community members who were also asked to include encouraging messages to their recipients. These postcards, along with art kits, were delivered to area hospitals and assisted living facilities, where large-scale versions of the postcards were also installed. In collaboration with the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences’ Community Health and Research team and the Schmieding Center for Senior Health and Education, 13,765 postcards were delivered to individuals across 22 sites. During a project debrief, the artists discussed the impact of this project as both therapeutic for themselves, and a grounding reminder that the whole community is experiencing the effects of this pandemic together.

Community partners shared their perspectives of the Social Connecting Campaign and the positive impact it had on their employees and constituents in a survey, group debrief, or individual interviews. In a survey of mural site staff members, 91% (10 of 11 respondents) somewhat or strongly agreed that this campaign helped combat social isolation. Multiple partners shared that constituents who viewed this outdoor exhibition continued to discuss the murals with each other after the end of the campaign. While not an immediate priority for community members experiencing homelessness, exposure to art was nonetheless described as a positive contribution by a partner serving clients experiencing housing insecurity. This partner noted that “bringing elements of normalcy and art... is actually really critical.” By placing the murals “on the walkway up to a bus stop” the exhibition was also shared with some community members “that might not otherwise have been engaged.”

For those who viewed the murals in the travelling exhibition, the experience was said to be a welcome aberration from their standard routine. Whether it was staff members at hospitals or residents at apartment complexes, taking a few minutes to appreciate the murals was said to provide “a break from the monotony of the day to day.” One partner

“After viewing the murals, one member of the community said that while they “have heard of Crystal Bridges,” they “didn’t know it was this amazing.”



2. Walton, G., & Cohen, G. (2011). A Brief Social-Belonging Intervention Improves Academic and Health Outcomes of Minority Students. *Science*, 331 (6023), 1447-1451.

## How did this project impact Northwest Arkansas? cont.

whose team works at a COVID-19 testing facility described the “negativity that comes with that” responsibility, and noted that they “enjoyed the change of pace and positivity” the murals provided. The murals “really changed the atmosphere at the clinic” and “provided something very pleasant” to view for those awaiting testing. One hospital staff member shared that her response to the murals was very emotional, saying that she is not “sure how to adequately express how I felt walking out of the hospital and seeing the display of pictures. Even now as I reflect back and look at the pictures I took with my phone, my eyes are welling with tears. Mostly, gratitude and a sense of awe at the talent of the artists, at the time each spent creating each piece and of those whole innovation and labor brought to our campus.”

While the murals were at apartment complexes, some residents “were able to view them from their balcony and not have to leave their home to come down.” One partner that provides housing assistance shared that the residents of the complex “make comments all the time” and “still bring up the traveling murals.” After viewing the murals, one member of the community said that while they “have heard of Crystal Bridges,” they “didn’t know it was this amazing.”

The Social Connecting Campaign had an extended impact in that it inspired another community project with the goal of fighting isolation and connecting people to one another. One partner shared that their assisted living facility began a “continuation” of the postcard project that encourages residents to write a letter to someone they may or may not know who may be experiencing loneliness during the COVID-19 pandemic. The facility then mails the letters out on residents’ behalf. They shared that one of their residents took this opportunity to reach out to an estranged family member, saying that this form of communication may appeal to some residents who “might not have access to email or interest in it.”



My Museum Kit and materials

### **5 My Museum Kits extended the goals of the Social Connecting Campaign throughout the summer, further combatting isolation through high quality, easy-to-follow activities that engaged community members.**

As school came to a close and COVID-19 cases escalated across the country, Crystal Bridges and the Momentary continued to consider how to support students and community members. The Community Engagement team reached out to local school districts that offered free meals and community youth programs to discuss opportunities for collaboration. This resulted in the development of the My Museum Kit, an art kit that offers physical and digital lessons, prompts, and art supplies inspired by art in the Crystal Bridges collection. Since July 6, 12,000 My Museum Kits were distributed to 20 partner organizations across Northwest Arkansas, including schools, libraries, and social service providers.

**“Nos divertimos como familia y nos hizo olvidar que estábamos en cuarentena”**

“We had fun as a family and it made us forget that we were in quarantine.”

## How did this project impact Northwest Arkansas? cont.

Interviews with community partner organizations, and survey and interview data collected from the public speak to the impact of these kits. For many who received the My Museum Kits each week, following the art activity was a family event. One recipient shared that they waited until everyone was home in the evening “para leer las instrucciones en familia” “to read the instructions as a family.” She added that “nos divertimos como familia y nos hizo olvidar que estábamos en cuarentena” “we had fun as a family and it made us forget that we were in quarantine.” Another recipient said that receiving the My Museum Kit gave them the opportunity “to spend more family time doing creative things.” For individuals isolated alone, the My Museum Kit offered a unique pastime. One community partner shared that, at their site, “quite a few of the residents who are self-isolated... put their projects up in the window” to show to other residents what they created each week. Others had family members visit on occasion and were able to offer the My Museum Kit supplies as a way to spend time together. For one community member, “every Monday felt like Christmas” because he looked forward to receiving the My Museum Kit and working on that week’s art project.

One family was “appreciative” because they tried to purchase craft supplies at a store, but as these were sold out, the family was “kind of winging it” until they received the My Museum Kits. The need for art supplies within the community was also referenced by a survey respondent who said “Gracias por pensar en las personas que no podemos pagar por un curso de arte... mis hijos cuidan mucho del material y lo utilizan con cuidado para que lo puedan rehusar durante el año escolar y eso no podría ser posible sin su generosidad.” “Thank you for thinking of the people who are not able to pay for an art course... my children take great care of the material and use it carefully so that they can reuse it during the school year and that could not be possible without your generosity.”

In a survey of My Museum Kit recipients, 100% (10 of 10 respondents) rated the kit as easy or kind of easy to use. The majority of survey respondents (9 of 10) did not watch any of the videos included in the kit, and interview responses suggest this could be due to easy-to-follow instructions, and that families used the activities as a break from digital media. One recipient shared that the “instructions were pretty easy” but

they appreciated “that if you couldn’t understand them, you had the video.” Other recipients shared that their children were “super willing to set down the TV for the crafts,” and that even their 4-year old was able to complete even the more advanced crafts “with a little guidance.”

In addition to offering easy-to-follow activities, the kits were also lauded for their high quality and varied materials. One survey respondent shared that their three children “absolutely loved each kit”, while another noted that the kits had “gotten better and better each week!” One person commented that the museum had “put some money into these boxes,” specifically noting that the contents were not “just cheap pencils and paints. They were really good and could be used more than once.” An interviewee also shared their satisfaction with the assorted materials that provided a new art experience, saying, “Exploramos diferentes tipos de materiales... Pastel fue un material nuevo, tempera paint sticks también. Los niños estaban fascinados con los papeles y estaban muy emocionados con los patterns. Les gusto mucho el material.” “We explored different types of materials... Pastel was a new material, tempera paint sticks too. The children were excited with the papers and were very excited with the patterns. They liked the material a lot.” The only complaint received regarding the materials was that “some of the glue was really hard to get out” and “it didn’t stay on the pegs.”

The postcards and the traveling exhibition of murals that made up the Social Connecting Campaign, as well as the My Museum Kits that were distributed, helped foster social connection amongst community members. For those remaining in isolation, focusing on art offered respite, a chance for distraction, as well as an unconventional opportunity to connect to family, neighbors, and strangers in their area. This work also allowed Crystal Bridges to forge connections with community partners and contribute to ongoing COVID-19 relief.

**“A care facility staff member observed that some patients who “had not been out of the house in some time” felt that receiving the kits “made their day.”**

**“Gracias por pensar en las personas que no podemos pagar por un curso de arte... mis hijos cuidan mucho del material y lo utilizan con cuidado para que lo puedan rehusar durante el año escolar y eso no podría ser posible sin su generosidad.”**

“Thank you for thinking of the people who are not able to pay for an art course... my children take great care of the material and use it carefully so that they can reuse it during the school year and that could not be possible without your generosity.”



## How did this project impact Northwest Arkansas? cont.

### 6 Community partners noted that critical needs were supported and that more was achieved through partnering than otherwise would have been possible.

The week following closure for Crystal Bridges and the Momentary, organizational leadership advocated for an active response to the multiple crises present and predicted across Northwest Arkansas. Initial discussions were held with more than 20 organizations spanning health, education, municipal, and housing sectors to understand community needs. The critical needs mentioned by the majority of organizations were food insecurity, housing insecurity and homelessness, and access to internet and digital communications. Specifically, partners mentioned needs such as “money to pay their staff and buy more food for their grocery store” or that “students are facing homelessness and there is a sense of urgency to find a place to stay.” One organization assessed the need as “tremendous” and it became clear that existing needs in the community were already amplified as of early April and were expected to become greater. When asked to consider how Crystal Bridges and the Momentary might help, community organizations were initially unsure of the possibilities when it came to identifying an intersection between their service provision and expertise, and that of an arts organization. A common suggestion from partners was to focus on “art education,” “art displays,” or to distribute art supplies to children in the community.

Crystal Bridges and the Momentary developed task teams dedicated to supporting critical needs, with the understanding that it would only be possible through strong partnership with community organizations with expertise in their area. As the collaborations moved forward, museum staff and partner organizations developed plans to address the critical needs of the community. Rather than beginning with clearly outlined goals, the projects evolved according to the changing situation and corresponding community needs. Amidst confronting the reality of the pandemic, partners maintained a general enthusiasm about collaborating to serve their constituents in whatever capacity possible.



TOP

House Cleaning Supply Kit

BOTTOM

Northwest Arkansas residents experience a drive-thru food distribution event at Arvest Ballpark

For some community members who received the kits containing food, house cleaning supplies, and personal care products, obtaining these items during quarantine would have been a challenge without external assistance. This was expressed by community partners, who shared their perspectives of this collaboration through individual interviews and group debriefs. One organization detailed the significant scale of the response they received after delivering boxes of food to their constituents, remarking that they “have received notes, letters, and Facebook posts about how grateful our families were.” Furthermore, residents disclosed that they “weren’t sure how they would make it otherwise.” Others recounted similar experiences, affirming that their constituents “were so thankful” and expressed that they “really needed this.”

Many partners shared that their constituents gained a peace of mind after receiving kits with cleaning supplies. A care facility staff member observed that some patients who “had not been out of the house in some time”

## How did this project impact Northwest Arkansas? cont.

felt that receiving the kits “made their day.” One partner who provides housing assistance recalled that the majority of the comments they heard from residents at their site were about “being able to have the peace of mind with backups” for essential products. Another partner observed that “everyone is low on cleaning supplies and really worried about sanitation, so having those items, even if they didn’t have an immediate need for them, just having the peace of mind that they’ve got a backup that they’re going to be able to use because no one knows how long it’s going to be or what’s going on...” One organization that supports Marshallese community members in Northwest Arkansas found a significant need among their constituents, and they requested additional kits to meet that high demand. For other community members, making a trip to the store is not possible due to lack of transportation or lack of housing to store purchases. One partner that coordinates with organizations across Northwest Arkansas to combat housing insecurity articulated that members of the community without transportation or housing “probably just wouldn’t have had [those items] had Crystal Bridges not provided them.” All of the community partners that participated in the project agreed that some of the essential items Crystal Bridges and the Momentary distributed to the community “were things that folks probably just wouldn’t have had, had Crystal Bridges not provided them.”

While partner organizations undoubtedly would have supported the community to the best of their abilities during COVID-19, many partners felt that they could not have offered support at the scale they did without the assistance of Crystal Bridges and the Momentary. One staff member at a partner organization focused on housing insecurity noted that they “probably would’ve made efforts to at least provide some of the personal care stuff and cleaning stuff” but that they “definitely wouldn’t have been able to offer anything art related.” Similarly, another partner said that “...for hygiene kits and cleaning kits we probably would have done that anyway, but potentially at a cost to our organization which is obviously not what we want to see. We much prefer donated goods. And then for the art exhibition, that’s definitely not something we would have done on our own.” One partner said, “We’ve in the past had to limit how much and how often we can give things out, just due to a scarcity of supplies, and so I think right now it’s been really great to have support of agencies like Crystal Bridges

to help us just be able to do that without worrying about running out.” The power of art to comfort and heal people was evident to one partner who works to end housing insecurity. They shared that, “I know that the service providers were immensely thankful for that pairing together. All of them articulated the desire for, with a little more funding or a little more support, we could have art therapy or arts integration somehow as part of the trauma informed care. But, with limited resources, like in all things, arts are the first to go. So they were just really enthusiastic to see that pairing.” For one partner who received food boxes, “a huge void” was filled because they “would have already been through their supply” without Crystal Bridges and the Momentary helping to increase their capacity.

### 7 Community partners valued the collaboration and praised the effective communication and tenacity among their Crystal Bridges and Momentary contacts.

According to participant feedback, staff members at community partner organizations were enthusiastic about the partnership with Crystal Bridges. Almost every partner specifically mentioned the efficiency of communication between themselves and Crystal Bridges’ Community Engagement team. One partner whose site hosted the mural exhibition shared that the “clarity of communication and frequency... helped make this a good experience.” Another person said “my communication with [Community Engagement team member], with all of those staff that I was involved with, it was awesome. I felt like I was able to text them, they were able to respond to me, you know, it was that ongoing conversation.” Others mentioned that someone from Crystal Bridges “always followed up with calls” and that “working with the museum staff made it easy to just enjoy the art.”



Packing critical resources

**“Your team has the mindset to do whatever it takes.”**

## How did this project impact Northwest Arkansas? cont.

While communication was praised, future consideration should be given to streamlining the contact between museum staff and partner organizations. One partner whose organization provides housing assistance shared that they had “a 100% amazing experience” with the “six different contacts” they had at Crystal Bridges because “everyone is so helpful even if I can’t remember or I don’t have my spreadsheet with me that says... which contact is going with which project...” While this partner did not criticize Crystal Bridges’ communication, other organizations might not have the time or capacity to navigate museum staff’s overlapping roles.

In addition to multiple lines of communication, community partners highlighted the museum’s promptness, presence, and tenacity. When the kits were delivered to partner organizations “the truck was there early every Monday.” One partner organization coordinating across social service agencies held calls to plan the work they wanted to do during COVID-19 and appreciated that “a Crystal Bridges staff member had attended some of our COVID planning calls... sharing her concern” about the impact the pandemic would have on community members and offering the assistance of Crystal Bridges and the Momentary. Another partner organization praised the entire Crystal Bridges staff, stating that “your team has the mindset to do whatever it takes” and “I never could imagine packing boxes at that large of a scale.”



**A hospital employee experiences the Social Connecting Campaign mural exhibition.**

### **8 While their experience was largely positive, partners reported several areas of improvement for the COVID-19 community engagement strategies, including changing some kit contents to match community context and extending the mural site installations to more fully reach those who are socially isolated.**

Since much of this work was and remains new to Crystal Bridges and the Momentary, each survey or interview included questions about how to improve these processes going forward.

Minor issues with the content of the kits, as well as the kits themselves, were mentioned by some community partners. The most significant issue was that a couple of the items in the kits were inappropriate for some of the populations that our partners serve. For example, the personal care kits included tampons, which were inapplicable to Marshallese community members “because of cultural differences.” The museum later learned that Marshallese community members asked that tampons were no longer included, compelling the community partner to go through existing care kits to remove the items. Another oversight included providing containers of hand sanitizer so large that they were not portable to organizations that served community members experiencing housing insecurity and that are “really socially mobile.” Because a very large container was not practical, that organization portioned out the hand sanitizer into smaller containers to “make it more portable.” The sizeable hand sanitizers were also reallocated at an organization that serves clients with young children. They opted to hold those back for a later event dedicated to the start of school, acknowledging that families with children going to school each day might have more use for that much hand sanitizer.

The size of the cleaning kits also created storage and consistency issues. Staff members at two community partner organizations focused on housing insecurity said that because they did not expect the kits to be in large laundry baskets “there was a space challenge” but, ultimately, they were able to accommodate them and appreciated the “full size cleaning supplies.”

**“Some clients came up the next day asking where the murals went and why they left.”**



## How did the project impact Northwest Arkansas? cont.

In addition to the kit contents, community partners offered suggestions regarding the mural installation. On the mural site survey, 91% (10 of 11 respondents) somewhat or strongly agreed that people who were interested in seeing the murals were able to see them, yet many sites shared that they wished they could have had the mural exhibition onsite for more than one day. Some community members did not expect the murals to be in one place for so short a time and they “came up the next day asking where it went and why it left.” One partner at a clinic also mentioned that “hundreds [of patients] come every day” and they’d appreciate if more patients were able to observe the mural exhibition. For the staff and patients at local hospitals, extending the mural exhibition would mean that many more people would have had the opportunity to view the artwork. Partners at healthcare facilities agreed that because “most people are there on 12 hour shifts” this experience did not reach those working the night shift. In addition to extending the mural exhibition timeframe, partners at hospitals and clinics also suggested bringing the murals back to coincide with nurse’s week, hospital week, and mental health awareness month which are all in May. One partner at a hospital shared that displaying the murals right after mental health awareness week was a “great complement” to their “own wellness initiatives.” Healthcare partners agreed that hospital patients were less impacted by the murals than the staff, sharing that the project helped “show [the staff] that we care about them.” They elaborated that the COVID-19 related restrictions meant that “patients are in their rooms” and there are “visitor restrictions.”



Mural installation



# What have we learned that could impact future community engagement efforts?

## FINDINGS

### **9 When sharing future plans for community engagement, these data suggest the importance of including internal communication about how the plan relates to the COVID-19 relief efforts and the organizational missions.**

While the overall staff perception of community engagement efforts was positive, the negative feedback identified key areas for informing future plans. When asked how Crystal Bridges and the Momentary could improve community engagement efforts on the all-staff survey, other than general suggestions, the most frequent response was to continue these efforts past COVID-19. **This theme arose for almost half of those who responded to this question and included general statements such as “keep it going!” and “continue it as a year-round effort.”** One person expanded on this brief statement and wrote, “Most importantly continue this process even after covid19 is over because if we don't all the work we have all done will be empty, it will lose its meaning to our community and we have worked so hard to build it-we lose that and we will lose trust and that is hard to rebuild.” However, a smaller proportion of question respondents said Crystal Bridges and the Momentary should reduce or change these efforts. For example, one person wrote “We are an art museum. Let's focus on art. We can still do good, relevant work by focusing on art. We can't be all things to all people, though, which is what I feel we're trying to do now. Or maybe I just need some clarification on why we're focusing so many resources on community engagement that has nothing to do with art.” This expanded focus from art to wider community relief efforts was also raised during a group debrief with individuals packing hygiene kits and My Museum Kits. When asked how they felt about the non-art elements of these strategies, one person said “seems

like long-term, it won't be as necessary. The hygiene and the food are great during an emergency, but the art is more representative of Crystal Bridges overall.” In a different debrief, another staff member articulated a positive comment about the expanded focus, saying “The experience with the food and including art kits is paving the way for authentic community engagement.” Taken together, the disagreement between staff members about the amount of community engagement and whether it should focus solely on arts-based experiences suggests there is work to do in order to gain full staff buy-in and interest for community engagement initiatives like those implemented during this period.

In addition to mission alignment, data collected from individual staff interviews and group debriefs suggest that questions remain about what the next phase will entail with respect to focus and scope. For example, during a group debrief, one staff member mentioned that the museum “will continue to engage local artists,” and asked “Where does that live? If it's community engagement, what does that mean?” Uncertainty around future plans also arose during a different staff debrief late in the project. One person said, “There have been meetings about this next thing and I haven't been invited. That's a little nerve-racking.” However, during the discussion, fellow debrief participants shared that there had been no meetings, indicating that some of the staff were uncertain about next steps. Finally, during interviews, staff members reflected on the workload required for the project over the summer and how it might need to change in the future. For example, one person stated that this phase occurred “between a lot of other pressing commitments” and that there was an overall awareness of “people's overcommittedness.” Another staff member commented that it “felt hard to stay involved and up to date. It was a challenge.” Overall, this suggests that frequent and clear internal communications will be needed about how future community engagement efforts will work, who is responsible, and how they relate



**Packing critical resources**

## What have we learned that could impact future community engagement efforts? cont.

to this March through August period. This will support staff members in both understanding the scope of the commitment and in preventing misinformation.

**This phase of community engagement efforts paved the way for 2021 initiative planning.** Currently, this will include **strategies within communities**, an **in-depth partnership** project between the museum and a social service agency, as well as other **ongoing work within the museum** (see figure). As further community engagement efforts launch internally, these data suggest the need to articulate how new plans relate to the COVID-19 phase of work and with the organizational missions.

### 2021 Community Engagement Pillars

from the Community Engagement Team



### 10 Interviews with community partners suggest that seeing the museum support critical needs made them think of the museum differently, and opened the door for future collaborations.

As found during the calls in early April, a potential partnership with Crystal Bridges and the Momentary might not have been immediately apparent to organizations in the region supporting critical community needs. A staff member at one organization shared that a potential pre-pandemic partnership looked like “Come to the museum, walk around,” but that’s not really what our homeless or near homeless populations” would need. After hosting the temporary mural exhibition at their site, this partner shared that “That whole idea of engagement and bringing what might have previously been thought of as out of reach or not for this population—I think that this recent partnership at least turned it on its head,” and now has them considering questions such as “Are we being mindful of the need that art and creativity fulfill for everyone regardless of your social status or where you sleep each night?”

Another community organization shared that this period deepened their relationship with the museum. They said, “We had these very little, brief meetings about doing other collaborations, so we’ve been in contact already. Then COVID-19 hit and immediately we switched modes...There was a prior relationship but it really came into action during COVID-19.” One organization that connects across social service agencies spoke about how organizations might not see “the immediate connection between... how they’re trying to help a client and how Crystal Bridges hopes to improve someone’s life through being able to experience art.” This partner further stated that “there was probably not an awareness that there was an opportunity for a relationship between Crystal Bridges and a human services organization beyond sort of that, you know, ‘Here’s tickets’ kind of situation.”

“This recent partnership has us thinking more critically... Are we being mindful of the need that art and creativity fulfill for everyone regardless of your social status or where you sleep each night?”

“It brought so much awareness to our residents about Crystal Bridges and what outreach that they do”

## What have we learned that could impact future community engagement efforts? cont.

Not only did organizations report a possible shift in their perception of the museum, but many partners suggested that this was also the case for community members. Partners indicated that their constituents were not familiar with Crystal Bridges and the Momentary before receiving kits of art supplies, food, personal care items, and cleaning supplies. One community partner stated that their community members perceived the museum as “out of reach” and “not my space.” Belonging in an institution is typically “experienced as a feeling of being accepted, included, respected in, and contributing to a setting, or anticipating the likelihood of developing this feeling.”<sup>3</sup> A recent research study with the region’s Latinx community revealed that some members of that community may lack that sense of belonging at Crystal Bridges or view it as something “para los Americanos” (for the Americans).<sup>4</sup> Following the summer’s community engagement efforts, one partner organization indicated that Crystal Bridges “kind of opened the community’s eyes about a different perspective.” A staff member at another organization shared that seeing the mural exhibition “was the first experience that a lot of our residents had with Crystal Bridges. A lot of them had never heard of it, or they had heard of it but never been... it just brought so much awareness to our residents about Crystal Bridges and what outreach that they do.” Many of those residents shared comments with the staff along the lines of “We had no idea, we thought it was just a museum’ or ‘We didn’t know that they did outreach or did other programs.” This suggests that community engagements such as these may contribute to building a greater sense of belonging that guests from different communities experience when visiting the museum.

3. Walton, G. M. & Brady, S. T. (2017). The many questions of belonging. In A. Elliot, C. Dweck, & D. Yeager (Eds.). *Handbook of Competence and Motivation* (2nd Edition): Theory and Application (pp. 272-293), Guilford Press: New York.

4. Garibay, C. (2020). *Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art Perspectives Initiative Research Report*, Spring 2020. Chicago: Garibay Group.

### 11 Community partners reported an interest in future arts-based collaborations and suggested a combination of onsite and offsite programs.

As noted earlier in this report, engaging with the community allowed Crystal Bridges and Momentary staff members to learn more about the contexts of Northwest Arkansas community members, as well as the operations of community organizations across the region. However, the relationships forged or strengthened between Crystal Bridges and the Momentary and community partners allowed for mutual learning. One housing organization shared their perspective saying, “We’re coming from two different spaces, right? So I think we can get a better understanding of the cultural arts space and with you guys having a better understanding –which I think is forming now especially with this partnership – of the housing insecurity space. Then we’ll be better able to figure out what is really going to benefit our clients.”

Across interviews with community partners, individuals were open to developing ideas for joint future programming. The types of programs suggested included a combination of onsite and offsite programs, and often aligned with the context of the partner organization. For example, social service partners framed their answers through a therapeutic lens, and spoke of the potential for using art as therapy. One partner said, “I would like to continue cultivating art as a therapy for those that have been traumatized. I think that’s really important for those that are homeless, and I would like to see that. And I think that Crystal Bridges would be the perfect partner to do that with.” A different housing partner mentioned the positive aspects of art in general, and said “A lot of our residents don’t have a lot of knowledge about art or, you know, how art can be positive for them and their families.” Healthcare partners suggested connecting with hospitals and clinics around existing appreciation weeks, such as nurses week. When reflecting on the mural installation, one healthcare partner said, “We celebrate hospital week and try to do neat things to say thank you.



Packing critical resources

## What have we learned that could impact future community engagement efforts? cont.

Something like this would be a way we could continue to move forward and say thank you in a unique way.” Another chimed in and mentioned the potential of reaching night shift workers saying “We do have various areas of focus that we recognize. Hospital week. Nurses week. There's lots of opportunities to engage with folks in various disciplines. Especially those that aren't in traditional hours.” Other suggestions included developing something fun within a neighborhood, seeking input from agency clients, or using a virtual format, recognizing that some partners have developed their ability to use technology with constituents as a result of the pandemic.

In addition to programs across Northwest Arkansas, partners made suggestions for programs at Crystal Bridges and the Momentary, and ways to feel welcome at the institutions. This includes providing options for transportation, offering facilitated tours for specific audience groups, and implementing changes within Crystal Bridges and the Momentary to extend the commitment to diversity and inclusion. Whenever programs at the museum were suggested, partners also spoke of the importance of providing transportation. One partner said, “We need to think about how to make it easy for families to have access to Crystal Bridges,” and suggested providing transportation options on a monthly basis. Onsite program suggestions also included facilitated tours, a group experience led by a museum staff member. One partner mentioned a past experience with this program format when it was conducted with veterans. They said, “I would love it if we were able to do small van rides or bus rides with a curated tour. When I was an intern at the VA, you would do it for our veterans. ... Even the most cynical, smartass veteran, was eaten up with it by the end. Loving it.” One partner had suggestions for making changes at Crystal Bridges in order to make it more welcoming and inclusive of diverse perspectives. This partner spoke of ways to include Marshallese community members by “hiring full time staff members with a good decent salary” and “getting a board that is very inclusive and reflects the community as a whole.” This partner had heard negative perceptions from community members, and shared, “I’ve been asked ‘How come we don’t have anything at Crystal Bridges?’...You know, it’s like either your art is valuable or you’re not being accepted at the museum.”

This statement suggests that future community engagement efforts might manifest in different ways, in some cases requiring the museum to introspectively consider its role within the larger community of Northwest Arkansas, and how those ties may be strengthened going forward.



Staff members packing food boxes



**Help us share art with those in isolation.**

This postcard was created by a local artist who will also be installing this artwork outside hospitals and assisted living facilities (at a safe distance) in our region. For details, visit [CrystalBridges.org/postcards](https://crystalbridges.org/postcards).

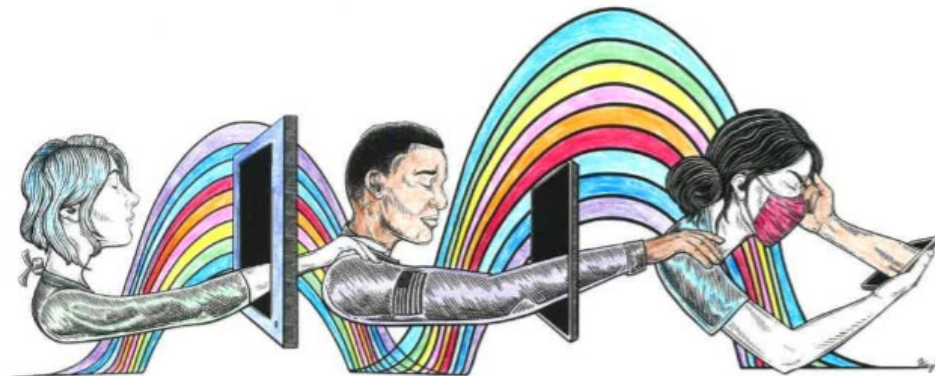
1. COLOR THE ARTWORK
2. WRITE A FRIENDLY NOTE
3. SEND BACK TO US. WE'LL SEND IT TO SOMEONE IN NEED.

Here is my interpretation of the artist's drawing of what together looks like. This note connects us, so we are also together. I admire your strength and I hope this note fortifies you and brings you joy.

PLACE  
STAMP  
HERE



Crystal Bridges Museum of  
American Art + the Momentary  
600 Museum Way  
Bentonville AR 72712



Stacey Bates

THE  
MOMENTARY

Crystal Bridges  
Museum of American Art



Matt Miller

THE  
MOMENTARY

Crystal Bridges  
Museum of American Art

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1. COLOR THE ARTWORK
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