

# the Sopris Sun

## TACAW expands educational programming for youth

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The Arts Campus At Willits (TACAW) is once again partnering with the New York International Children's Film Festival's (NYICFF) "Kid Flicks" national touring program, which will host 4th-grade students from Crystal River Elementary School (CRES) on Feb. 23.

NYICFF is the largest film festival for kids and teens in North America. According to their website, it presents "lively collections of short animation, live action and documentary films [that] reflect NYICFF's commitment to storytelling and diversity and are sure to spark meaningful conversations."

Art Williams, TACAW's education and community partnership coordinator, said Carbondale Middle School students will visit TACAW on Apr. 4 for a Latinx-centric film program called "¡Hola Cine!" Basalt Middle School students will visit later in April.

Teachers will distribute curriculum guides to students in preparation for the TACAW visit. After the film, a short discussion will focus on



After a theater performance, Art Williams asks students about their experience. Courtesy photo

introducing them to the world of cinema, Williams shared.

Williams explained that these programs "are to get kids to not only have a day outside of school and to be interacting at TACAW, but also to learn a little bit more about storytelling and how that medium works."

TACAW board member and landscape architect Julia Marshall was involved in the first discussions about the development of Willits as a live-work community. She participated with Michael Lipkin and David Warner, of Lipkin Warner Design and Planning, in drawing up

plans for the Willits subdivision.

The TACAW performance space honors Colorado's historic opera house circuit. Old West opera houses served as arts and cultural centers. "Even at the time [of planning Willits], we had drawn in the performing arts parcel because we believe, like many towns in Colorado that had an opera house, that TACAW is the new version of the opera house," Marshall shared.

Wanting to take TACAW's educational youth programming beyond "the field trip element," Williams said, "we asked

ourselves, 'How do we introduce the arts into kids' daily lives and routine in rhythm with our community?'"

The answer came with the creation of TACAW's Youth Art Pass, underwritten by FirstBank. The Youth Art Pass provides 7th- and 11th-graders from Basalt and Carbondale public schools two free tickets to any age-appropriate eligible shows, throughout the year, for them and one guest.

On Feb. 28, TACAW, in partnership with the Aspen Art Museum's "Art in the Field" teen program, presents the Colorado Shakespeare Festival's (CSF) Violence Prevention Program. The seated show is free, open to the public and recommended for ages 11 and up. A 45-minute abridged performance of "The Merchant of Venice" will be followed by a discussion, led by CSF actors, examining the play's themes and will offer strategies that youth can use to navigate conflict in their daily lives.

On March 9 at 8pm, Americana and Roots singer-songwriters Jake Blount and Kaia Kater will perform an all-ages seated show. Blount is also a scholar of Black American music, and Kater, of Grenadian-Canadian ancestry, made genealogical discoveries that led her to new creative expressions.

Marshall added, "[TACAW] is a very unique family that offers

students a way to see themselves in the world, but you have to nurture it. That's why I'm so happy that Art [Williams] is now full-time and that we will continue to build our educational program. We want to be an educational force, and I love that we're partnering with other people to do that."

Williams added to that sentiment saying, "The more kids that are in here taking in the arts, the better."

To register for a Youth Art Pass, go to [www.tacaw.org/the-youth-art-pass](http://www.tacaw.org/the-youth-art-pass)

For more information on TACAW events and programming, go to [www.tacaw.org](http://www.tacaw.org)