



Newsletter January 2026

EAA HOSTS SUCCESSFUL FUNDRAISER

On December 8, 2025, Embracing Arlington Arts hosted a special reception and fundraiser at The Filling Station at the Ballston Exchange. The event was attended by over 75 arts enthusiasts, who created an energetic and exciting buzz in the room. The event featured co-masters of ceremony John Gonzalez (news reporter from ABC7/WJLA) and JChris (Urban Latin singer-songwriter, pianist, and producer) with a line up of talent that included Rajesh Mirchandani (international storyteller) and Courtney LeBlanc (Arlington County Poet Laureate 2024).

Embracing Arlington Arts Co-presidents Eric Rubio and Sara Barker recognized all of the support that has been garnered in 2025 and the successes that were delivered through the leadership of Carlos Velázquez, the Acting Executive Director. The year began with a fresh look and feel for the website, podcast format, and marketing assets. We also rolled out a community engagement plan in the spring that has increased our partnership network.

We hosted a booth at the Arlington County Fair with much success as we were able to promote many of our partners' great work in the area. We recorded 100 podcasts in less than 11 months which through some strategic marketing efforts has catapulted the program into one of the most downloaded podcasts for theater in the US.

Our special podcast series has become quite popular which included a focus on World Pride artistry, Black Excellence in the Arts, American new plays, women in the arts, and Latino excellence in the arts. The special podcast series was underwritten by local arts groups and patrons. We are very grateful to the host committee whose leadership made the event a success. The host committee members included: Wanda Baez, Matt de Ferranti, Hamish Park, Michael Ramirez, Irma Maldonado, Jeremy McCan, Marsha Semmel, Sara Strehle Duke, Michael Burke and Carl Wayne Smith.

EAA at The Filling Station

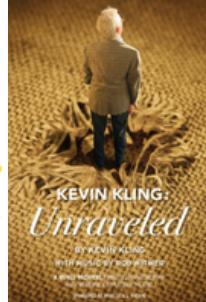
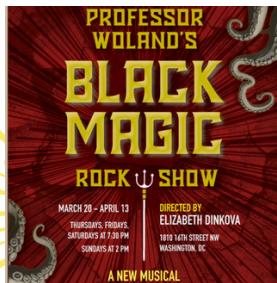


A Year in Review 2025

With the launch of two new podcast series that focus on Latino Excellence in the Arts which is underwritten by Wanda Baez and HMA Associates, Inc. and Women in the Arts, sponsored by Marsha Semmel the year is off to a great start in 2026. However, a look back for 2025 reveals a line up of nuanced conversations with the region's great actors, directors, writers, poets, dancers, directors, and musicians. It would be impossible to pick the top ten podcast interviews because the measure of intelligent and insightful content is not just by the number of downloads any one podcast might generate. Instead if you listen to the conversations that emerge from an interview you will discover a deeper appreciation for the value that the arts represents.

You will also gain an insight about the thinking and inspirations of an artist in order to paint a canvas into a work of art; the choreography that advances a story forward; or the deeper political, psychological and emotional motivation for character development.

Take a moment to listen to some of the most moving interviews captured in 2025 by Embracing Arlington Arts Talks which includes Kevin Kling (renowned storyteller), George Salazar (The Untitled Unauthorized Hunter S. Thompson Musical), Nygel D. Robinson and Brian Quijada (Mexodus), Elizabeth Dinkova (Spooky Action Theater), Manuel Olivar (Quac), and Eduardo Cervantes Fonseca (Mexican visual artist)



An Interview with Jeri Y. Huntley

I recently had the privilege interviewing Jeri Y. Huntley, who is the founder and president of Our Story Bridge, which empowers every community to cultivate connections across generations, encourage civic engagement, celebrate diversity, and engender shared and durable stories. She was introduced to Embracing Arlington Arts by our underwriter for the Women in the Arts podcast series Marsha Semmel. We are grateful for her generosity and warm introduction to a remarkable woman.

The full interview with Jeri can be heard on our [website](#).

CARLOS: Jeri, it is so nice to meet you. I am so impressed by your background and your project Our Story Bridge. Please share with our followers a bit about yourself and your project.

JERI: *When I retired after many years as a librarian I moved to a rural part of the state of New York. I volunteered in a school and the library and realized there was so much history in this community, we were losing it, the population skewed old. And the kids didn't really know anything about their community. So, I thought, how can we retain this history? How can the children understand where they live, and hopefully come back and live there if they go to college, or enjoy living in their town?*

Then I thought about the world today. Everyone's online. And even though I know you have great listeners listening to your entire podcast, the attention span of young and old is short. It's 5 minutes. So, I got this idea. Why don't we record five-minute audio stories from people about their past and present, guided, so they have cohesive, meaningful stories.



An Interview with Jeri Y. Huntley (cont.)

CARLOS: How has your project evolved since that early concept of capturing stories?

JERI: *The old teacher and librarian in me, said “Write a manual.” “Do instructional videos.” “Make documents that can help people easily accessible.” I did that with very small grants. I gave a keynote at the Association of Rural and Small Libraries. I thought no one was going to listen. It would just be me talking about my COVID project, because it was September of 2020. I gave the speech.*

I built a website. I uploaded all of the materials. I was shocked when I found out that over 400 librarians all over the country listened to that speech. The librarians started to use the materials. In 2022 we received our official nonprofit status. We now have projects in 15 states. We have supported 43 projects.

CARLOS: What do you think is the impact of your project?

JERI: *Stories mean something. The stories have American history in them, but they are personal narratives from people's hearts about what matters to them. And they hit the hearts, we hope, of the people that listen to them. And so stories matter. In these troubled times, when so much media is from so many places, and so little are believable we need personal narratives. Stories are among the best ways for people to understand their world, going down to the level of their neighbors—their community.*

You will love the insights Jeri provides in our full interview. Listen to it today. Our hope is to bring the project to Arlington to capture personal narratives of arts lovers and the creative people who make art possible. If you think this project is worth supporting send us a note. We would love to hear from you! carlos@embracing-arlington-arts.org



Arts Calendar

11/4/25 - 1/25/26 - Fiddler on the Roof, Signature Theatre. For more information and [tickets](#).

12/4/25 - 1/11/26 - Holding Together, Arlington Artist Alliance exhibit, 2700 Clarendon Blvd Suite R330, Arlington, VA. For more [information](#).

1/15/2026 - Public Art and Creative Placemaking: Activating Nontraditional Spaces. For more [information](#) for the online panel discussion.

12/9/25 - 2/1/26 - In Clay (An American Premier), Signature Theatre. For more information and [tickets](#).

9/27/25 - 1/25/26 - Joey Enríquez: As I Look Towards What Could Have Been Mine. Museum of Contemporary Art Arlington. For more [information](#).

1/30/26 - 2/14/26 - Xanadu, Dominion Stage. For more information and [tickets](#).

1/31/26 - 2/15/26 Peter and the Starcatcher, The Arlington Players, For more information and [tickets](#).

1/22/26 - 2/22/26, Strength Through Stories, Arlington Artist Alliance. For more [information](#).

1/18/26, The Resistance Readings, Avant Bard at The Filling Station. For more [information](#).

For a full calendar of events visit our website
<https://www.embracing-arlington-arts.org/events>





Partner with Us

2026 Corporate Sponsorships Open

Opportunities for corporate sponsorship are open and we encourage local businesses and allied groups to consider becoming a supporter of Embracing Arlington Arts. We certainly could not be as successful or effective as we have been or continue to be without the support of our partners. And we offer many opportunities to acknowledge these generous supporters. **Support the second most downloaded theater podcast in the country.** For more information, follow this [link](#).



Corporate Sponsor Spotlight

We are thankful for Amazon's support. Their mission is to be earth's most customer-centric company which is guided by four principles: Customer obsession rather than competitor focus; passion for invention; commitment to operational excellence; and long term thinking.



Support Us

If you would like to support the work of Embracing Arlington Arts by making a donation, here's how:

- Make tax deductible contributions [online](#).
- Tax-deductible contributions by check made payable to Embracing Arlington Arts and send it to Embracing Arlington Arts, 2104 North Kenmore Street, Arlington, VA 22201

Every dollar helps us help artists and arts organizations in so many ways. Thank you in advance!