



NEWS FROM TCA: MAY 2026

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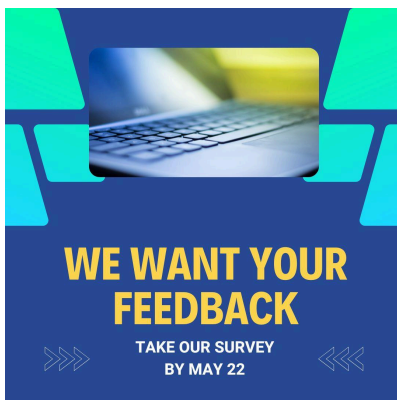
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We met the talented 2026 class of Young Masters last month at the Capitol, and we can't wait to see what they do next! Scroll down for more details!

We Need Your Feedback: Complete TCA's Customer Service Survey



The Texas Commission on the Arts is assessing the quality of its customer service. Please take a few minutes to complete our online survey. We plan to use the information gathered through this survey to refine our services and help the Legislature understand the scope and quality of our work. Through this process, we hope to better serve you and the arts industry in Texas!

Your feedback on this survey is of tremendous importance. Please complete the online survey

no later than **May 22, 2026**. To get to the online survey, use [this link](#). Thank you for sharing your time and viewpoint with us.

TCA Speaker Series: Measure Your Impact & Boost Your Funding

Texas Commission on the Arts' next Speaker Series professional development opportunity is this month! This free optional online webinar is titled **Measure Your Impact & Boost Your Funding**. Our speakers will discuss why quantitative data is important to funders and how organizations can raise more money more effectively by developing a framework for capturing that information and incorporating it into communications, applications, and reports.



The virtual meeting will be on **Wednesday, May 20 from 2:00 - 3:30 PM Central**. It is open to arts nonprofits, artists, and members of the public. TCA is excited to feature our speakers, who bring a wealth of information and experience evaluating the impact of organizations here in Texas.

Stacy Keith, Director of the **Lubbock Cultural Arts Foundation**, is a member of the Association of Fundraising Professionals and attained her Certified Fundraising Executive designation in December 2012. Stacy has worked in the nonprofit and higher education sector since 1999. She loves the art of fundraising and working with volunteers. After ten years as a fundraising and campaign consultant, Stacy was selected as the founding Director of the Lubbock Cultural Arts Foundation in 2020. In this role, she manages the Texas Music Friendly, Texas Film Friendly, and Texas Digital Media Friendly Certifications alongside the City of Lubbock and works to serve the artistic community.



Danielle Demetria East is an interdisciplinary artist, culture bearer, and organizer originally from La Grange. She has a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor. She moved to Lubbock in 2019 to be an artist-in-residence at the Charles Adams Studio Project and is now the Founder and Executive Director of **East Lubbock Art House**. In addition to this position, East holds a variety of leadership roles in organizations rooted in the arts, equity, and education and was named a 2024 Housing, Land and Justice Artist Fellow by Race Forward. She recently had a solo art exhibition at the School of Art at Texas Tech University titled

Black Venus and received the 2026 Rising Star Award from the Lubbock Chapter for the Association of Women in Communications.

[Register](#) today and mark your calendar! TCA selected this topic using feedback from constituents, and we expect that future meetings in this series will address other needs expressed by members of the Texas arts field.

Register Now to Be a 2026 Blue Star Museum

The National Endowment for the Arts has opened [registration](#) for the Blue Star Museums Program, in partnership with Blue Star Families. The program encourages museums, zoos, botanical gardens, historic houses, etc. to offer free admission to active-duty military personnel and up to five family members. The program will launch on Armed Forces Day, Saturday, May 16, 2026, and continue through Labor Day, Monday, September 7, 2026.



Please consider registering for this program; it's a great way to express appreciation for service and sacrifice, and to recruit life-time museum goers!

Upcoming TCA Application Deadline

TCA has a few upcoming application deadlines. As always, the TCA staff is happy to discuss your goals and eligibility to determine which programs are right for you. You may also request that a TCA staff member review your application and provide feedback. Ideally, these draft review requests would be made at least two weeks before the application deadline.

Designation Program: Cultural District Designation

This program designates special zones in Texas cities and communities that harness the power of cultural resources to stimulate economic development and community revitalization.

Application deadline: Letter of intent to apply due February 2; application due June 15

Application form: On [Cultural Districts Program page](#)

Resources: [Program guidelines](#), [contact TCA staff](#)

Grant Program: Cultural District Projects

This program is designed for projects that focus on significant cultural tourism projects happening in a designated cultural district, by established arts organizations that are based in the cultural district and authorized to apply by their cultural district's managing entity.

Activity dates must occur: Between September 1, 2026 and August 31, 2027

Application deadline: Midnight on June 15, 2026

Application form: [Online](#) now for eligible organizations

Resources: [Grant guidelines](#), [contact TCA staff](#)

Young Masters Celebrated on April 13

The Texas Cultural Trust celebrated the 2026 class of Young Masters during an awards ceremony and concert on April 13 at Austin's ZACH Theater. The evening featured Ray Benson, Lauren Anderson, Elizabeth Crook, Trevor Scott, and Texas Young Masters alumni. Earlier in the day, TCA staff conducted a welcome and orientation for the 2026 class of Young Masters at the Texas Capitol.

The Young Masters program is a joint initiative of the Texas Commission on the Arts and the Texas Cultural Trust (TXCT) and is generously supported by the Butler Texas Young Masters Endowment. The grant program provides exemplary art students in grades 8-11 with the financial help they need to pursue advanced study in the areas of visual arts, literary arts, music, theater, dance, musical theater, folk &

traditional arts, and media arts. This year's promising young students come from 12 cities and together display a variety of artistic talents.

The state's most talented young artists receive the title of "Young Master" and are awarded grants of \$5,000 per year to further their studies in their chosen arts disciplines. Students are eligible to receive the grant for two years. This gifted group of 15 students represents the thirteenth class of Young Masters. Since the program's inception in 2002, the TXCT and TCA have named 214 Young Masters, awarding over \$1.3 million to aspiring artists from across the state. The Young Masters were selected by a citizen panel of experts from across the state based on artistic excellence, level of commitment and quality of their proposed plan of action.

In order to be considered for the Young Masters grant, students must be legal U.S. residents living in Texas and participating in a school-based program, a summer institute, a specialized course of study, or receiving private lessons from a qualified professional instructor. They must also maintain passing grades in all academic areas. Young Masters are selected by a citizen panel of experts from across the state based on artistic excellence, level of commitment and quality of their proposed plan of action.

Sydney Bridgewater, 9th Grade, Frisco, Dance ●
Emmalynne Brown, 10th Grade, Richmond, Dance/Ballet ● **Isabella Cervera**, 11th Grade, San Antonio, Musical Theater ● **Josephine Chow**, 11th Grade, Austin, Music/Piano ● **Jenny Chu**, 11th Grade, Dallas, Literary Arts/Poetry ● **Matthew Conway**, 9th Grade, Prosper, Dance ● **Alessandro Dieguez**, 10th Grade, Amarillo, Musical Theater ● **Joseph Kirillov**, 10th Grade, Prosper, Dance ● **Caroline McGowan**, 10th Grade, Dallas, Dance ● **Annie Newton**, 9th Grade, Kingwood, Music/Percussion ● **Hana Reel**, 10th Grade, The Woodlands, Music/Vocal ● **Emilia Tovar-Catete**, 11th Grade, Mission, Film/Media Arts ● **Elim Wong**, 9th Grade, Plano, Music/Violin ● **Ayden Yang**, 8th Grade, Dallas, Music/Voice ● **Jonathan Zhang**, 11th Grade, Houston, Music/Saxophone



Texas Young Masters

Apply to Be a TCA Grant Evaluator

Each year, TCA invites roughly 200 Texans to serve as peer reviewers of the grant applications we receive. We are grateful to these members of our arts field who donate their time and knowledge to our panel review process and

assess the quality of grant applications. The peer review process is central to the Commission's efforts to maintain an accountable, accessible awards system for the State of Texas.

If you would like insight into the grant evaluation process, we invite you to nominate yourself to serve on a panel. TCA is not able to pay for this work, but it will allow you to gain experience as a grant evaluator, see how other organizations present their programs and challenges, and ensure that TCA grant decisions can be made—we really can't do this without you. Nominations are accepted year-round and can be made [here](#).

Panels can be held online or in person in Austin. TCA reimburses for travel and hotel costs for in-person meetings. For online panels, TCA assigns reviewers no more than 25 grant applications to help keep the workload reasonable.

Evaluators can also be grant applicants—TCA excludes evaluators from reviewing and scoring an application that they submitted or have any other conflict of interest with.

Support Texas Arts with the *State of the Arts* License Plate



TCA's chic black-and-silver *State of the Arts* minimalist design license plate is available to order at <https://www.myplates.com/go/arts>.

This plate design can go on a passenger car, motorcycle, trailer, or private bus (attention, Texas bands!). TCA will receive a portion of the sales of the plate. Note that

this plate is part of MyPlates' "Lone Star Series," but only the *State of the Arts* plate supports TCA. There is a price break for those ordering their plate for multiple years. Make a long-term commitment to the arts!

TCA Rural Tours Bring More Arts to Underserved Areas



In our continuing efforts to provide more quality performances and arts opportunities to rural areas of the state, TCA has selected five Texas Touring Roster artists and groups to provide free performances in rural counties during the spring. Each artist or group provides five performances in an assigned area, and the performances are hosted by local nonprofits, units of government,

or schools. TCA pays each artist a flat fee for the performances directly, eliminating costs to host organizations. Hosts are reminded that any Texas nonprofit or unit of government, including a school or library, is eligible to apply for a Performance Support grant for up to half of a Texas Touring Roster artist's fee.

This month, we are excited to share news about recent and upcoming performances in Kleberg, Wharton, Bosque, Erath, Jasper, Newton, and Sabine counties.

Students and community members enjoyed visits with renowned band **Del Castillo** at Texas A&M Kingsville on April 9 and at Kingsville's Santa Gertrudis Academy High School the next day. Del Castillo has become a symbol of the cross-cultural power of music with their eclectic blend of flamenco, rock, Latin, blues, and world music. Audiences learned about and experienced their unique sound through workshops and performances.

Bosque County audiences are invited to celebrate Mother's Day at Clifton's Bosque Arts Center on May 10 at 2 PM with accordionist and trumpet player **Alex Meixner**.



Erath County residents can enjoy his family-friendly world music presentation at the Dublin Public Library on May 19 at 1 PM. Alex is known for his seamless transitions from traditional folk to unexpected covers, bringing polka music to new audiences with high energy and charisma.



Nia's Daughters Movement Collective will be in Wharton County on May 15 to host an 11 AM Seniors in Action Workshop at New Hope Community Church in Wharton. Nia's Daughters Movement Collective is a congressionally recognized, multigenerational dance group of like-minded Black women dance and multidisciplinary artists. Their

mission is to create and support art and wellness initiatives through the lens of Black women and girls.

Mr. Will/Will and the Wilderness will be visiting Jasper, Newton, and Sabine counties May 17-19. Will Dupuy has energized crowds for two decades performing as Mr. Will for young audiences, and country music sets for the young-at-heart as Will and the Wilderness. Themes of Texas and conservation run throughout his music. Sabine County residents can enjoy a solo Will and the Wilderness show at 3 PM on May 17 at Hemphill Little Theatre in Hemphill. Students at Brookeland Elementary in Jasper County will enjoy performances by Mr. Will on May 18. On May 19, Mr. Will will perform at the Newton Public Library in Newton County at 10 AM, and at the Kirbyville Public Library in Jasper County at 1 PM.



If you are local to any of these venues, we hope you'll enjoy these free performances! We'll have summer performances to share in our June newsletter. Special thanks to the fantastic artists conducting rural tours on behalf of TCA and to their host organizations.

Photos: Del Castillo by Mark Del Castillo; Alex Meixner by Speedbump Media; Nia's Daughters Movement Collective by Keda Sharber of Images by Papillion; Mr. Will by Nicola Gell.

Belen Escobedo Named a 2026 National Heritage Fellow

San Antonio's Belen Escobedo was recently named one of the 2026 National Heritage Fellows by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). The National Heritage Fellowships are the nation's highest honor in the folk and traditional arts. Including the 2026 class, the Arts Endowment has awarded 502 National Heritage Fellowships since 1982, recognizing artists working in more than 200 distinct art forms. Each Heritage Fellowship includes a \$25,000 award and the recipients will be honored in Washington, DC in fall 2026.



In the announcement, the NEA noted that “Belen Escobedo performs early Mexican and Tejano fiddle tunes once common across South Texas. Through decades on stage and in the classroom, she has helped keep this rare style alive.” We congratulate Ms. Escobedo on this recognition for her important work.

Photo: Ramón Gutiérrez

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