



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Using the Power of Arts and Culture to Support Older Adults**

*Oberlin Center for the Arts and StoryLens Pictures Bring Innovative Solution to Connect Community*

Oberlin, OH (May 6, 2020) - As Ohioans prepare to return to initial states of normality as a part of the Responsible RestartOhio program, many older adults continue to face prolonged isolation and will do so for the foreseeable future. As the community members most vulnerable to the effects of coronavirus, older adults in care facilities and hospitals, and even those living independently, are distanced from friends, family, and daily activities. While protecting them against the disease, this isolation also puts them at greater risk for other health concerns.

In response, Oberlin Center for the Arts and StoryLens Pictures are proud to present interACTS, a program to virtually engage and enrich older adults across Lorain County, using the power of arts and culture to help alleviate the effects of social isolation.

Through the interACTS program, Oberlin Center for the Arts and StoryLens will offer performances and educational programs drawing on resources from the arts and culture community and from public and partnering institutions. StoryLens will also create original films using these and additional resources from the local community. Oberlin Center for the Arts will also commission individual artists to produce original works in an effort to direct much-needed income to those whose livelihood has been put on hold by the pandemic. All works will be curated into thirty-minute episodes hosted on the [artsoberlin.org](http://artsoberlin.org) website and delivered on-demand to care facilities, medical institutions, and individual households throughout Lorain County.

The public can participate directly in the interActs program by creating virtual "Postcards"; short films that include personal messages along with creative acts -- like musical, dance, or spoken word performances -- which can then be submitted through the Oberlin Center for the Arts website at [artsoberlin.org/interacts](http://artsoberlin.org/interacts). As this program evolves, Oberlin Center for the Arts will be collecting personal reflections and other contributions from older adults that will form the basis of a public conversation that will foster creative and long-term exchanges between hired artists and elders in the region.

“We envisioned this as a great opportunity to show how arts and culture can impact the health of a community and improve the lives of others,” noted Darren T. Hamm, executive director of Oberlin Center for the Arts. “Artists are seeking ways to create, organizations are seeking new ways to deliver their work, and older adults are seeking ways to connect. interACTS is a way to bring all of these needs together.”

“Our guiding mission at StoryLens has always been to produce films that address actual needs in the local community and that bring about real change,” said Geoff Pingree, StoryLens’ director. “When Darren shared the interACTS plan with us, we were moved and impressed -- and we knew immediately we wanted to support this innovative initiative. We have long valued our relationship with Oberlin Center for the Arts and are delighted to partner with them now in the interACTS program.”

For older adults living in group settings, interACTS will be broadcasted on-demand into each resident’s room through internal TV channels or personal devices as available. “Our facility and our industry as a whole are seeking ways to support residents during this crisis,” says Heidi Freas, Vice President of Welcome Nursing Home. “This program is exactly what we need right now.”

To reach older adults living independently, Oberlin Center for the Arts will be partnering with the Oberlin Cable Co-op, a community-based nonprofit internet and television service provider serving the 44074 zip code, that has agreed to stream interACTS programming to all its subscribers. “This partnership can demonstrate how our public TV channels can be used to reach those in need and provide critical interactions during this time” noted Ralph Potts, the Co-op’s General Manager.

“The older adults and the artists we’ll be able to support through this program can use all the help they can get,” claims Hamm. “Financial contributions will pay artists to perform and create these programs. We’d also welcome the donation of unused devices like iPads or tablets, which would put this program in the hands of older adults. The more support we receive from the community, the more programming we can deliver.”

To learn more about the interACTS program visit [artsoberlin.org/interacts](http://artsoberlin.org/interacts).

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### **About Oberlin Center for the Arts**

Oberlin Center for the Arts is a nonprofit organization located in Lorain County whose mission is to “connect arts and the community”. To learn more about their work in advancing arts and culture throughout the region, the interACTS program, and how you can help, visit [artsoberlin.org/interacts](http://artsoberlin.org/interacts).

## About StoryLens Pictures

StoryLens Pictures produces short independent documentary films about pressing social issues in order to promote education, encourage public dialogue, and facilitate change. To learn more about their work, including viewing their films, visit [storylens.org](https://www.storylens.org).

**Related links:** <https://www.artsoberlin.org/interacts>  
<https://www.artsoberlin.org/interacts/postcards>  
<https://www.storylens.org/>

**Contact:** Darren T. Hamm, Executive Director  
Oberlin Center for the Arts  
216-533-3878  
[darren@artsoberlin.com](mailto:darren@artsoberlin.com)

Geoff Pingree, Director  
StoryLens Pictures  
[films@storylens.org](mailto:films@storylens.org)