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Teen Arts New Jersey Awarded Grant Funding
Launching the TANJ Youth Arts Initiative

Matawan, N.J. (January 2025) – **Teen Arts NJ (TANJ)** has been awarded a grant from The New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA) under Phase II of the Activation, Revitalization, and Transformation (A.R.T.) program in partnership with The New Jersey State Council on the Arts.

"Teen Arts NJ is honored to be among thirty-nine arts and culture organizations to be selected to receive funding under the A.R.T Phase II Program," **said TANJ Executive Director Kevin Ciak**. "With this funding, TANJ will be able to launch our latest program, **The TANJ Youth Arts Initiative**, in Asbury Park, NJ. This community forward program will strengthen our footprint in Monmouth County and help us to promote long-term growth with our partners in Asbury Park, as we continue our mission to bridge creativity and opportunity in arts education."

The TANJ Youth Arts Initiative centers on students and families, providing them with literary, visual, and performing arts opportunities, through a wide variety of after-school and summertime programs. Teen Arts NJ is partnering with organizations and businesses across the city to activate their spaces and stimulate the Asbury Park economy through monthly arts pop-up programs, ranging from visual arts classes and writing workshops to open-mic nights and more. "Each month our community partners will host events that are family friendly and arts focused. One of our partners might be teaching a watercolor painting workshop, while down the street another partner will be hosting an improv night," **TANJ Executive Director Kevin Ciak** explained. "We want to create a warm and inviting program that offers a wide variety for those with different interests, skill levels, and ages, that is community centered and easily accessible," he continued.

Students will also have an opportunity to work directly with professional artists in our mentorship program and work in the arts community through a paid internship program. The mentorship program is student directed and goal driven. It will provide students with the opportunity to focus on developing their technique within specific art forms, strengthen their portfolios, and broaden their skill sets. "**The TANJ Youth Arts Initiative** internship program will support local artists, small businesses and arts organizations while simultaneously empowering young people to see a path towards a career in the arts and establishing meaningful connections in the Asbury Park arts community," **continued TANJ Executive Director Kevin Ciak**.

The TANJ Youth Arts Initiative will begin its first monthly pop-up in Asbury Park in March 2026 and events will continue through September 2026. The program will conclude with a two-day festival in October 2026. The festival will highlight our community partners, showcase student artwork and performances, feature interactive workshops, and more.

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About Teen Arts NJ

Teen Arts NJ (TANJ) leads the state in programming focused on middle and high school students' development and growth in arts education. Teen Arts New Jersey provides comprehensive programming, support, access, and resources to empower students to explore, excel, and thrive creatively. We are leaders in a community that empowers every young artist with the resources to confidently pursue their dreams by bridging creativity with opportunity.

About the NJEDA A.R.T. Phase II Grant Program

The A.R.T. Phase II grant program aims to catalyze community placemaking efforts by leveraging New Jersey's arts and cultural sector as a creative force for change, and by supporting non-profit organizations focused on public art installations and arts-based initiatives. Funded through the American Rescue Plan (ARP), A.R.T. Phase II replicates the first phase of the program, which focused on Atlantic City and Newark, by expanding eligibility to municipalities throughout the state.

If you would like to learn more about **Teen Arts NJ** and **The TANJ Youth Arts Initiative**, contact Teen Arts NJ's Executive Director, Kevin Ciak at: kevin@teenartsnj.org. You can connect with our office phone at: 732-566-2787 or visit our website at: https://teenartsnj.org/. Follow us on Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn @teenartsnj.