

open line

a monthly newsletter for you, our residents.

MAY 2024



City of Auburn



a cultural destination

Jan Dempsey Community Arts Center reopens after expansion

From potters and painters to dancers and actors, the Auburn arts community is celebrating a return to its home at the Jan Dempsey Community Arts Center.

The arts center on East Drake Avenue closed for construction in January 2023 and reopened in March after an extensive renovation and expansion. The existing building was updated and reconfigured to maximize space, and an 8,000-square-foot addition was constructed.

The finished product includes a new home for the City's ceramics studio along with a new art gallery and dance studio, an added dressing room for theater performances, a patio for outdoor art creation and more. This reimagined space brings all of Parks and Recreation's cultural offerings under one roof for the first time.

Cultural Arts Director Sara Hand Custer says the finished product is the culmination of years of dreaming and planning.

a new home for the ceramics studio

Since it first opened in 1999, the center has always housed an art gallery and classroom space, but the City's ceramics studio has been off-site since its inception. Parks and Recreation's ceramics programs were initially held at East Samford School. As the school system continued to grow, the studio relocated to Dean Road Recreation Center.

Sara joined the Parks and Recreation Department in 2007 as an art education specialist. A trained ceramics artist, she came with a vision for upgrading the studio, which was mostly offering paint-your-own pottery classes. With the help of donations, she was able to outfit the studio with pottery wheels, tables, hand-building equipment and a



The 10,000-square-foot facility was renovated and an 8,000-square foot addition was constructed.

few other essentials to begin transforming the space into a professional studio.

The Dean Road Ceramics Studio initially consisted of one small room with a kiln in a closet. Over the last 17 years, it expanded into another classroom, but the interest in ceramics programming continued to balloon. That interest was the catalyst for the arts center expansion.

"The cool thing about ceramics is you can go from ages 4 to 99 — we're really catering to the whole community," said Emillie Dombrowski, Parks and Recreation's art education specialist. "Particularly since the pandemic, the demand for ceramics classes has skyrocketed, and we haven't had enough space to meet the growing interest."

The new studio has not only expanded the amount of space available for ceramics programming, but it provides

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Day in Clay participants press texture into clay as they form elements they will shape into mugs and pots.

versatility that wasn't possible at Dean Road. Before, they could only accommodate up to seven pottery wheels at a time. That has more than doubled in the new space, which has a capacity for 20 wheels. At Dean Road, there was one room for hand-building and one for wheel-throwing. In the new space, there are two significantly larger rooms that are more versatile and can accommodate both hand-building and wheel-throwing classes simultaneously. A large kiln with a higher firing capacity was added to the studio, bringing the total number of kilns to five.

Building the new studio from scratch allowed staff to create a safer and more efficient space specifically designed for the needs of a ceramics studio. A drainage system was installed under both studio rooms with grates that allow for easy floor cleanup. There is a dedicated glaze mixing room with a ventilation system to help reduce the exposure to chemicals and elements used in the mixing process. And the kiln room is equipped with adjustable ventilation hoods to speed up the cooling process, helping sustain the quality of the kilns.

an improved space for arts lovers

Along with more space for creating, the renovated arts center has dedicated space for showcasing art. The new art gallery has an upgraded track hanging system and lighting, making it easier for partners like the Auburn Arts Association to professionally display art exhibitions. The former children's gallery will now function as a second gallery that artists can rent to display their own shows. A track hanging system was installed in the hallway, transforming the cement block facade into another avenue to showcase art.

Next to the art gallery is a brand-new dance

studio — the first dedicated space for dance classes in a Parks and Recreation facility. Beginning with the spring quarter, Parks and Recreation is now able to expand the number and variety of dance classes offered. The new dance studio also means the Auburn Area Community Theatre will no longer have to share the performance room, giving them more flexibility for working on their productions. A new dressing room was added to the performance room along with a fresh coat of paint and refinished floors.

expanded space = expanded reach

While they look forward to welcoming back familiar faces, Sara and Emillie see the new space as an opportunity to bring together even more of the arts community and those interested in getting involved.

"With this expansion, we can really think of the Jan Dempsey Community Arts Center as a cultural destination for our region," Sara said. "We want to invite other arts organizations to be a part of our art center and foster those symbiotic relationships that help us build up the arts here in Auburn."

Along with the traditional classes they're known for offering, the arts center hopes to host more workshops and artist demonstrations that the community can participate in without having to commit to weeks-long classes. Each piece of the upgraded facility will have a hand in improving and elevating the center's summer art camps.

"Not only did we expand our building, but we're expanding our reach back out into the community," Emillie added.

All of this just touches the surface of what the Jan Dempsey Community Arts Center does year-round. To learn more about upcoming events and programs, visit auburnalabama.org/arts. If you're interested in seeing the new space, Sara invites the community to pop in – they'd love to show you around.



Ceramics Studio



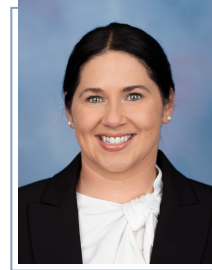
Dance Studio



Art Gallery

Introducing our new HR director

After nearly 16 years serving Auburn residents as a leader in the Auburn Fire Department, Elinda Dannar is beginning a new role as the City of Auburn's Human Resources director.



Dannar is a two-time graduate of Auburn University, having earned a master's degree in industrial and organizational psychology in 2023 and a bachelor's degree in human development and family studies in 2010. She is a certified professional through the Society for Human Resource Management and has a passion for employee development.

Dannar joined the City as a student firefighter in 2008 and rose through the ranks to her most recent position as a fire captain. For more than 10 years, Dannar has been instrumental in Auburn Fire's personnel efforts, from hiring to training and development. She has worked to streamline policies and recently revised all departmental standard operating guidelines to align with City policy and field standards.

Alongside her job with Auburn Fire, Dannar was a small business owner from 2012-2017 where she oversaw all aspects of the business, including talent acquisition and employee management, development and training.

"Whether it's a small business or a larger organization, you

have to be the person to create the culture you want for your team and your customers," Dannar said.

The culture of Auburn is exactly what's kept her around for the last 16 years. After graduating and beginning her career in fire service, she fell in love with the community and built a life with her family in Auburn. Over time, she realized the parts of her job she was most passionate about revolved around helping and empowering her team.

"I realized I enjoyed helping my team find their own solutions. I enjoyed empowering them to reach levels they didn't think were possible. I enjoyed seeing them succeed," Dannar said. "I began to see the potential impact I could have beyond the bounds of the department and decided to make a change."

Moving forward, Dannar wants to continue improving employee engagement throughout the organization and empowering City employees to reach their full potential.

"Elinda has proven herself to be an incredibly capable and driven individual during her time as a firefighter, and I know she will continue to excel as HR director," said Auburn City Manager Megan McGowen Crouch. "It's rare to find someone who has Elinda's compassion and empathy for people along with the knowledge and recognition of the importance of guidelines and consistency. We're fortunate to have her here at the City, and I look forward to working alongside her."

Parks & Rec Fishing Rodeo

MAY 11 • 7 AM

Cast into summer with the 30th-annual Fishing Rodeo sponsored by Evans Realty! Join us at the lake at Auburn Technology Park South on Saturday, May 11, from 7-11 a.m.

Registration is \$5 per child and will open for Auburn residents on April 1 at auburnalabama.org/parks/register. Anyone outside of Auburn may register beginning April 15. Every participant must be pre-registered — there will be no registration the morning of the event.

The first 175 kids registered will receive a free fishing rod and reel courtesy of Evans Realty, and Auburn Parks and Recreation will supply the bait. Each child may bring home five fish and must be accompanied by an adult. If you plan to take home fish, please bring a bucket.

Door prizes will be given out to lucky participants, and prizes will be awarded to the biggest and smallest fish caught in each age category. A prize will also be given to the kid who catches the most fish overall.



MEMORIAL DAY ANNOUNCEMENTS

MEMORIAL DAY BREAKFAST

The 24th-annual Mayor's Memorial Day Breakfast will be held at 8 a.m. on May 27 at the Hotel at Auburn University & Dixon Conference Center. Tickets can be purchased at City Hall. A free memorial wreath laying ceremony will be held at 10 a.m. at the Auburn Veterans Memorial Monument.

MEMORIAL DAY CLOSURES & SCHEDULE CHANGES

Auburn City Hall and most City facilities will be closed in observance of Memorial Day on Monday, May 27. Police, fire and communications will remain on their regular schedules. Garbage, trash and recycling collection will be delayed by one day during the week of May 27-31.

RON ANDERS, JR, MAYOR
334.703.9000
randers@auburnalabama.org

CONNIE TAYLOR, WARD 1
334.704.3970
ctaylor@auburnalabama.org

KELLEY GRISWOLD, WARD 2
256.975.8183
kgriswold@auburnalabama.org

BETH WITTEN, WARD 3
334.740.8575
bwitten@auburnalabama.org

TYLER ADAMS, WARD 4
334.748.3198
tadams@auburnalabama.org

SONNY MOREMAN, WARD 5
334.748.3075
smoreman@auburnalabama.org

BOB PARSONS, WARD 6
334.704.3657
bparsons@auburnalabama.org

MAX COBLENTZ, WARD 7
334.748.2920
mcoblentz@auburnalabama.org

TOMMY DAWSON, WARD 8
334.559.3021
tdawson@auburnalabama.org

OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER
Megan McGowen Crouch • 334.501.7261
mmcgowen@auburnalabama.org

COMMUNITY SERVICES
334.501.7280
communityservices@auburnalabama.org

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
334.501.7270
webcondev@auburnalabama.org

ENGINEERING SERVICES
334.501.7390
webengineering@auburnalabama.org

ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES
334.501.3080
webenvirsvc@auburnalabama.org

FINANCE
334.501.7233
webfinance@auburnalabama.org

HUMAN RESOURCES
334.501.7240
webhr@auburnalabama.org

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
334.501.7200
webit@auburnalabama.org

INSPECTION SERVICES
334.501.3170
webcodes@auburnalabama.org

AUBURN PUBLIC LIBRARY
334.501.3190
weblibrary@auburnalabama.org

MUNICIPAL COURT
334.501.3180
webjudicial@auburnalabama.org

PARKS AND RECREATION
334.501.2930
webparksrec@auburnalabama.org

PLANNING
334.501.3040
webplanning@auburnalabama.org

PUBLIC SAFETY (POLICE & FIRE)
334.501.3110
webpubsfty@auburnalabama.org

PUBLIC WORKS
334.501.3000
webpw@auburnalabama.org

WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
334.501.3060
webwtrswr@auburnalabama.org

MAY 2024 upcoming events

Open Line is produced by the Office of the City Manager
334.501.7268 | openline@auburnlabama.org

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	<p>Auburn Public Library auburnlabama.org/library</p> <p>City Meetings auburnlabama.org/boards</p> <p>Parks & Recreation auburnlabama.org/parks</p> <p>Citywide Events auburnlabama.org</p>	<p>Programs & events are subject to change.</p> <p>Find up-to-date information at auburnlabama.org.</p>	<p>1</p> <p>Baby's 1st Story Time Wednesdays @ 9:30 a.m.</p> <p>Untidy Tales Wednesdays @ 1 p.m.</p> <p>Culture Explorers Club (Grades 4-6) Wednesdays @ 4 p.m.</p> <p>Board of Zoning Adjustment 4:30 p.m.</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Toddler Tales Thursdays @ 9:30 a.m.</p> <p>Lullabies for Little Ones Thursdays @ 1 p.m.</p> <p>City Council Agenda Review Meeting 4 p.m.</p> <p>Spring Sundown Concert Series @ Kiesel Park, 6 p.m.</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Puppet Shows (in person/virtual) Fridays @ 9:30 a.m. & 3:30 p.m.</p> <p>Tree Commission 11:30 a.m.</p>	<p>4</p> <p>Family Story Time Saturdays @ 9:30 a.m.</p> <p>Untidy Tales Saturdays @ 10:30 a.m.</p> <p>Movers & Shakers Saturdays @ 1 p.m.</p>
5	<p>6</p> <p>Planning Commission Packet Meeting Noon</p> <p>Movie Matinee @ 3:30 p.m.</p> <p>Cemetery Advisory Board 4 p.m.</p>	<p>Preschool Story Time Tuesdays @ 9:30 a.m.</p> <p>Parks & Recreation Advisory Board 11:45 a.m.</p> <p>PreK in PJs Tuesdays @ 1 p.m.</p> <p>S.T.E.A.M Lab (Grades K-3) Tuesdays @ 3:30 p.m.</p> <p>High School Book Club (Grades 10-12) @ 4:30 p.m.</p> <p>Committee of the Whole TBD</p> <p>City Council 6 p.m.</p>	<p>8</p>	<p>9</p> <p>Blueey Party! 3:30-4:30 p.m.</p> <p>Planning Commission 5 p.m.</p> <p>Spring Sundown Concert Series @ Kiesel Park, 6 p.m.</p>	<p>10</p>	<p>11</p> <p>Fishing Rodeo @ Auburn Tech Park South, 7-11 a.m.</p> <p>Adult Create! @ 2 p.m.</p>
12	<p>13</p>	<p>14</p> <p>Historic Preservation Commission 4 p.m.</p>	<p>15</p>	<p>16</p> <p>City Council Agenda Review Meeting 4 p.m.</p> <p>Spring Sundown Concert Series @ Kiesel Park, 6 p.m.</p>	<p>17</p>	<p>18</p> <p>First City Market @ Town Creek Park, 8-11 a.m.</p>
19	<p>20</p> <p>Movie Matinee @ 3:30 p.m.</p>	<p>21</p> <p>Library Board 10 a.m.</p> <p>Greenspace Advisory Board Noon</p> <p>Reader's Review Virtual Book Club 5:30 p.m.</p> <p>Committee of the Whole TBD</p> <p>City Council 6 p.m.</p>	<p>22</p>	<p>23</p> <p>Water Works Board 4 p.m.</p> <p>Spring Sundown Concert Series @ Kiesel Park, 6 p.m.</p>	<p>24</p>	<p>25</p> <p>City Market @ Town Creek Park, 8-11 a.m.</p> <p>Opening Day at Samford Pool</p>
26	<p>27</p> <p>Mayor's Memorial Day Breakfast 8 a.m.</p> <p>Most City Facilities Closed</p>	<p>28</p>	<p>29</p>	<p>30</p> <p>City Council Agenda Review Meeting 4 p.m.</p> <p>Babysitting 101 (Grades 7-12) 4:30-6 p.m.</p> <p>Spring Sundown Concert Series @ Kiesel Park, 6 p.m.</p>	<p>31</p>	<p><i>Background Photo: City Market</i></p>