

2023  
No. 1

# ARTS/99

The publication of Arts and Culture El Dorado

## Mobilizing Veterans in the Arts





# THIS ISSUE

# MAKING SPACE

Dear Reader,

The stories in this issue of Arts 99 feature creatives, public servants, and arts organizations like our own. Our subjects are from different backgrounds, engaged in different kinds of service for many different people. This shared field of activity—service to others—may resemble the diverse topography of our county; and as the county line draws a common boundary around our distinct regions, so too are our subjects drawn together by their shared commitment to creating space for service.

Arts and Culture El Dorado unveils its new, publicly accessible office space on Main Street; Switchboard Gallery makes (and remakes) a space to display what is special about El Dorado County; Arts HQ gathers Veteran artists in a space of their own to display work to the public; the Creative Forces Convening bridges the distance between a national network of arts organizations so that they can learn and connect together in Washington DC; Poetry Out Loud transitions nimbly from a physical space to a virtual one, allowing the show to go on; and Dr. Ed Manansala expands our understanding of education beyond the classroom, cultivating an environment in which students are safe, supported, and free to achieve.

Perhaps this issue of Arts 99 will encourage us to seek out those spaces in which our community is being served; it might also remind us to make space in our own lives for service. Thank you for your support.

## ARTS/99

**EDITOR** Jordan Hyatt-Miller

**DESIGNER** Caitlin Thompson

**PRINTER** Array

**COVER IMAGE** Vet Art Pop Up Cafe,  
Sacramento, 2022. Photo by Caitlin Thompson





# Poetry Out Loud

**P**oetry Out Loud is a national poetry recitation competition for high school students. In El Dorado County, the competition is administered by Arts and Culture El Dorado in partnership with the California Arts Council. A vehicle for inspiration and instruction, Poetry Out Loud provides students with a variety of resources to help them memorize, interpret, and recite poetry, instilling in students not just an appreciation of poetry, but also a sense of accomplishment and confidence in their public speaking abilities.

The 2023 El Dorado County Poetry Out Loud Finals were slated to take place on Friday, February 24 at Imagination Theater, but due to unsafe weather conditions, the competition was moved to a virtual format. Everyone involved—from teachers to students to judges—adapted quickly to ensure that the competition would still be a success. Students submitted videos of their recitations, which were reviewed and scored by a panel of local judges:

- Peter Wolfe – Co-Founder and current Artistic Director of Imagination Theater
- Lara Gualarte – El Dorado County Poet Laureate
- Pete Miller – Former El Dorado High School and Union Mine High School Drama teacher
- Audrey Keebler (Accuracy Judge) – a perennial supporter of Poetry Out Loud and several quilt guilds, genealogical, and historical societies
- Darin Coelho-Spring (Prompter) – Co-owner of the The Bookery
- Maggie Bush (Tabulator) – Owner of Madroña Vineyards along with her husband, Paul

Poetry Out Loud has a profound impact on the students who choose to participate. Beyond their exposure to a rich literary heritage, collected in the Poetry Out Loud anthology from which they select their poems, the students also get the opportunity to engage with poetry outside of the classroom, which situates the poems in a fresh, vibrant context. The act of recitation recasts poetry as an embodied art form rather than an abstract work of contemplation, igniting a lifelong passion for poetry in some students. As Lara Gualarte says, “Poetry Out Loud encourages finding the voice of the poem, the meaning, sound, and the rhythm.”

In the 2023 competition, Oak Ridge High School’s Alison Lee took first place and represented El Dorado County at the statewide Poetry Out Loud competition. Charter University Prep’s Summer Smith took second, and Union Mine’s Gabrielle Garlick rounded out the winners, taking third place in the competition.

The Poetry Out Loud winners received their awards at the final stop of the Laureate Trail on Saturday, April 29.

*Left to right:  
Alison Lee,  
Summer Smith,  
Gabrielle Garlick*



# NEW CONNECTIONS AT OLD TELEPHONE BUILDING

The building at 525 Main Street in Placerville is not quite as old as some of the historic buildings in town, but it has already lived several lives: first, as the central office of the Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company, whose switchboards served 1,190 telephones in Placerville at the time of its opening in 1936. Later, it became the annex to the District Attorney's office. Now there is something new in the space: The offices and gallery of Arts and Culture El Dorado.

Executive Director Terry LeMoncheck notes her appreciation for the City of Placerville, which is partnering with Arts and Culture El Dorado to renovate the historic Confidence Hall and Emigrant Jane buildings while Arts and Culture El Dorado occupies 525 Main Street. "They have been a great partner so far," LeMoncheck says of the City of Placerville. "We look forward to working closely with them on this important renovation project."

The opening of the hybrid office and gallery space at 525 Main Street represents a significant new addition to the increasingly vibrant Placerville downtown area. "One of our most important functions is as a kind of help-desk and public resource for people, so it's important to have a physical, convenient location for locals and visitors alike to come talk to us," LeMoncheck explains. It will also serve as an event space and "a hub of activity" on Main Street, particularly as a result of the exhibitions in the Switchboard Gallery, so named for the switchboards that once filled the space. Perhaps Manager Hearn of the Pacific Telephone Company said it best in 1936: "As evidence of our pride in the progress of Placerville, we dedicate this new office to the service of our community and its citizens."

## THE SWITCHBOARD GALLERY



Successor to Arts and Culture El Dorado's Firehouse Gallery, the Switchboard Gallery, which opened on May 5, 2023, will feature non-commercial, rotating, curated exhibitions that celebrate what is special and unique about El Dorado County, making it the only gallery of its kind in the County. Notably, the Firehouse Gallery was smaller than the Switchboard Gallery, and its rectangular layout was static; in contrast, the larger Switchboard Gallery is flexible in layout and dimension, as it consists of modular walls that make the space a kind of plastic medium whose changing design constitutes the art behind the art.

Marya Osucha, Exhibitions Curator, is still exploring the potential of a space that is as versatile as its





Portion of "Antepasados: Those Unseen" exhibition

endlessly reconfigurable namesake—the switchboard. “It’s a process of discovery right now. The modular walls will allow us to reconfigure the space to create a sense of surprise and a new experience every time a visitor comes into the gallery.” As Marya works with local creatives to bring their art to an audience, she engages in a creative practice herself: “As a creative, my process is definitely hands on. I don’t have a complete vision until I am already in the process. In the Firehouse Gallery, I thought about how the images would relate to one another,

but for the Switchboard Gallery, I get to also think about the ways that I can create pathways and actually direct visitors through the space.”


Fittingly, given that the space was once used to connect the circuits of telephones, Marya views the new gallery above all as a site of connection—between art and viewer, artist and public, locals and visitors. “I see the relationship that we develop with a participating artist in each show as an opportunity to connect with the community that they are part of. They bring their community and network to the space, and that helps us better realize our mission of representing and celebrating the various facets of our regional cultures... One of my biggest motivators as I think about our shows is figuring out how to use our resources to create a sort of nexus for different cultures from all the far reaches of our county. It’s a crossroads—everything can pass through here.”

The gallery space also represents an opportunity for a different kind of connection: the way that a community relates to itself, and the way that its identity is communicated to the world. “There are so many assumptions made about our regional culture. There are assumptions about the caliber of the artwork or the caliber of our intellectual engagement with the artwork. I love highlighting the real creative wealth we have here and the wonderful, engaging minds that create it and experience it.”

# ANTEPASADOS: THOSE UNSEEN

Original works by Sigrid Benson and Marisa Sayago

MAY 5 - JUNE 4, 2023



# Mobilizing Veterans in the Arts

**O**n Saturday, May 20, 2023, from 10 am to 4 pm, local Veteran artists will display their work and present demonstrations and performances to the public in the Upper Parking Lot of the Veterans Memorial Building in Placerville. This free arts event—which takes place on Armed Forces Day and during Mental Health Awareness Month—will raise awareness about issues relating to Veterans’ mental health, and will include resources for Veterans and their caregivers.

Arts HQ is part of a series of “pop-up community creative arts cafés” that are being presented on an ongoing basis throughout California. These pop-up cafés are the result of a partnership between MHSOAC (California’s Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission) and VETART, a San Diego-based arts non-profit. MHSOAC and VETART are partnering with Arts and Culture El Dorado to produce Arts HQ, the El Dorado County pop-up café.

“These events empower, uplift, and promote Veterans’ voices so that they can be heard and seen in the community,” explains Steven Dilley, the founder and Executive Director of VETART. At VETART, military-connected individuals receive arts instruction and gain access to resources that support them as artists. After decades of work with military-connected individuals, Steven has seen firsthand the powerful impact that art can have on mental health. “People gain agency by being able to express themselves through non-verbal means... The outcome is that we see people’s wellness go up, and their participation avoidance goes down, and that is translated into their life.”

When Steven flies to events around California, he says that he sits in the window seat and looks at the

ground as they fly over cities. He sees an endless repetition of stadiums and arenas, malls, massive parking lots, sprawling businesses. He wishes that community arts centers were as ubiquitous as those other fixtures of any city, large or small. Steven hopes that pop-up cafés like Arts HQ might serve as a kind of floating community arts center, a mobile space for arts instruction, creation and appreciation that can move from one community to another, serving Veterans throughout California.

Jordan Hyatt-Miller, Arts and Culture El Dorado’s Program Coordinator, sees Arts HQ as a unique opportunity to promote Veteran artists, forge new connections in the community, and kickstart dialogues about mental health, art-making, the Veteran experience in El Dorado County, and their many intersections. “This event will fold in so many different perspectives and even artistic practices, from the literary arts to painting to music,” Jordan explains. “We are grateful to our partners in the City and County government here in El Dorado County, as well as VETART and MHSOAC. Above all, we’re grateful to the Veteran artists who are the real focus of this special event.”

Arts HQ will take place in the Upper Parking Lot of the Veterans’ Memorial Building while VFW 10165’s Veterans’ Coming Home event takes place in the Lower Parking Lot. Both events are free and open to the public. At Arts HQ, County representatives from Veteran Services and Behavioral Health will be in attendance to support Veterans and the public with mental health resources. The event will feature several interactive discussions and demonstrations, including a drum circle and a listening session, as well as opportunities to meet and have conversations with local Veteran artists.





# Creative Forces Convening

Jordan Hyatt-Miller

As we disembarked the plane in Washington D.C., Jack Carman, facilitator of the Veterans' Voices Writing Workshop, said that we should try to see some of the sights before dinner. Our hotel, it turned out, was walking distance from the National Mall. We took in the disorienting height of the Washington Monument and watched teenagers film a TikTok dance on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. When we arrived at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Jack approached a docent for help finding the names of two high school friends who had died in the war. He took pictures of their names, and I took pictures of him at the memorial to show the participants of the Veterans' Voices Writing Workshop, many of whom are Vietnam Veterans. It was our only chance for sightseeing before the Creative Forces Convening began that night.

Creative Forces is a national network of arts organizations engaged in service to Veterans. An initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with the Mid-America Arts Alliance, Creative Forces supports its grantees as they administer a diverse array of programs for Veteran artists, from a dance production in New York City to a culinary workshop in Fayetteville. At the Creative Forces Convening in Washington DC, these organizations appeared both virtually and in-person to learn, connect, and gain new focus and a deeper commitment to the work.

At the Convening, I was struck by a feeling of common cause and mutual purpose among the grantees. I was surprised by how rapidly connections were made and how freely advice and offers of assistance were given. It was a rare opportunity for an El Dorado County organization to be recognized by and gain connections to national organizations that are based in areas, such as New York City or Cleveland, that would not typically engage in much cultural commerce with a rural town in California.

Jack and I brought several copies of the most recent Veterans' Voices Writing Workshop Anthology, entitled "Close to Home", along with us to the Convening. Many attendees complimented us on the Anthology—both for the quality of the participants' work and for the manner of its presentation. We encouraged attendees to take them home. There were none left when Jack and I left the conference hall on the last day and departed for the airport.

Arts and Culture El Dorado takes great pride in its Veterans Voices Writing Workshop, which is supported in part by the El Dorado County Veterans Affairs Commission and the California Arts Council. We invite all veterans, regardless of writing skills, to join this free workshop, where they will find a safe, respectful space where veterans support and encourage each other, compare experiences both in wartime conflict and at home, laugh a lot, and discover the power of the creative process through the written word.



Jack Carman at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial  
Photograph by Jordan Hyatt-Miller

# 2023 Carpenter Award honoring Dr. Ed Manansala

**D**r. Ed Manansala, the El Dorado County

Superintendent of Schools, will receive the 2023 Normadene Carpenter Award. The Normadene Carpenter Award recognizes exceptional achievement and extraordinary contributions to the community. “Ed Manansala is the perfect embodiment of the Carpenter Award,” states Arts and Culture Executive Director Terry LeMoncheck.

“His commitment to our students and families

– really, to the well-being of the entire County – is evident in everything he does. And he is always quick to point out that he’s not the only one responsible for the good work, it’s because of the staff, educators and other professionals in the various El Dorado County school districts.”

Ed’s lifetime of service to children and students and his professional commitment to education were prefigured by his parents’ singular goal as they raised him and his sisters: to provide them with a good quality education. “It is generational in nature,” Ed says of his commitment to education, “because my parents valued that so much.” After Ed received his undergraduate from Sac State and a graduate degree from UC Davis, he felt called to immerse himself in service to children and families. “I’ve always valued being part of a healthy community that cared for me and created the conditions for my sisters and myself to do well, and I really wanted to



pass that on. That was the bridge into education.”

Ed moved to the Oak Park neighborhood of Sacramento and began tutoring and mentoring, as well as working with Sutter Health to create a comprehensive clinic for families. He even coached basketball. One day, when he was dropping a student off after practice, he witnessed the shooting of a teenager. The basketball player he was dropping off asked him, “Why are you so bothered? That’s just what happens here.” The experience crystallized his growing commitment to cultivating a

healthy community, particularly for young people. He became a counselor and later a principal at a Sacramento high school; while he was principal, he spearheaded a remarkable turnaround effort that saw, among other indicators, skyrocketing rates of admission to 4-year universities. When his friend Jeremy Meyers, who was poised to become the El Dorado County Superintendent of Schools, invited him to work in the Superintendent’s office, Ed thought that he would only be in El Dorado County for a few years. “But you know how this place is,” he laughs. “It’s just beautiful.” He stayed, and eventually succeeded Jeremy as Superintendent.

Informed by his experiences in his earlier roles, Ed, as Superintendent, takes a broad view of what constitutes a “quality education”. Instruction in the classroom is just part of the “holistic, comprehensive” environment of wellbeing and achievement that he seeks to create for young



people in El Dorado County. “We all want to live in a vibrant community, where children and youth feel safe, and welcomed, and where they’re developing to their potential,” he explains. To this end, he doesn’t cloister himself in the school system. Rather, he seeks out partnerships throughout the community, working with artists, non-profits, local businesses, hospitals, faith leaders, and governmental entities to improve as much as possible every facet of the lives of students, their families, and those who work in schools. “We are trying create one of the finest education systems in the nation here. I feel like we are on that path.”

Ed’s passion for public service is reflected in his personal life, as well. He is housing a family of Ukrainian refugees from war-torn Mariupol. He remarks wonderingly at the changes that he has seen in the children since they arrived in El Dorado County; coming from a place where their most basic needs were not being met, they are now flourishing in an environment where they are supported, challenged, and given opportunities to succeed. He sees their experience as a microcosm of the kind of outcomes that he wants to produce in El Dorado County by forging an environment where young people can “be supported in every single way.”

The Carpenter Award will be presented to Dr. Ed Manansala on Thursday, June 22, at 6 pm in the Galleria at David Girard Vineyards, where friends and supporters will gather to celebrate arts, culture, creativity and education, all of which make for a healthy, vibrant community.





# Recognizing Creative Potential

## 2023 Young Artist Awards

In 2019 and 2020, El Dorado County lost four beloved members of its community: Richard H. Bush, Lanny Langston, Joey Cattone, and Jane Van Camp. In their memory, and as a way of celebrating their impact and their legacies, Arts and Culture El Dorado created the Young Artist Awards, which honor juniors and seniors at El Dorado County high schools in four categories: Music, Theatre, Visual Art, and Nature-inspired Art. The recipients



*Dan Cattone presents visual art award to Anandita Gupta*

of these awards also receive \$500.

Paul and Maggie Bush, joined by Leslie Bush, presented the 2023 Richard H.

Bush Award for Music to Audrey Ewing a senior at Oak Ridge High School. Audrey, nominated by Paul Verloff, is a standout clarinet player who has assumed a leadership role in the band program. She was admitted to the prestigious Conservatory of Music at the University of the Pacific with a Major in Music Therapy. "With her outstanding musical skills and compassion to help others, Audrey no doubt has a bright future," Paul says.

Dan Cattone awarded the 2023 Joey Cattone Award for Visual Art to Anandita Gupta, a senior at Oak Ridge High School. Anandita, nominated by Michelle Kite, is a gifted artist whose haunting, evocative pieces often concern "the feminine, children, and the innocence of life," according to Michelle. Anandita is also active in the community as a leader and volunteer. "We are stronger through the arts and artists like Dita," Michelle says.

Tish Langston awarded the 2023 Lanny Langston Award for Theater to Jayce Kaldunski, a senior

at El Dorado High School. Jayce, nominated by Paul Tomei, has been involved in theater—first at Imagination Theater, then at Studio 81—for most of his life. Beyond being a star talent on stage, Jayce is also active in the community. Paul Tomei says, "He puts his heart, energy, and time into countless community organizations. He leads from the heart in all matters."

The 2023 Jane Van Camp Award for Nature-inspired Art was awarded to Macie Douglas, a junior at El Dorado High School. Macie, nominated by Krista Potter, is a dedicated member of the Natural Resources Program. She has designed the shirts for the program two years in a row, contributed art to the program's 10'x50' mural, and will lead a learning station focusing on the intersection of nature and art at the program's Natural Connections Day. "Her artistic talents enrich our program and the community," Krista says.

An annual program, the Young Artist Awards will continue to celebrate the great promise of younger generations and honor the lives and legacies of the "bright lights" who came before them.



*From left to right:  
Jayce Kaldunski, Award for Theater  
Anandita Gupta, Award for Visual Art  
Audrey Ewing, Award for Music  
Macie Douglas, Award for Nature-Inspired Art*



**POP-UP COMMUNITY ARTS CAFÈ**

# arts HQ

## **Mobilizing Veterans in the Arts**

**Free arts event for veterans,  
their families and caregivers, and the public**

**SATURDAY, MAY 20 • 10 AM - 4 PM**

**UPPER PARKING LOT OF THE VETERANS MEMORIAL BUILDING  
130 PLACERVILLE DRIVE, PLACERVILLE**

***Art Exhibitions • Performances • Music • Support Services***







P.O. Box 2400  
Placerville, CA 95667  
(530) 295-3496  
ArtsAndCultureElDorado.org

Non-Profit  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Permit #1841  
Sacramento, CA

Address Service Requested

# ARTS/99

**The publication of Arts and Culture El Dorado**

Arts and Culture El Dorado's mission to promote, connect, and empower arts and culture throughout the county is achieved by targeted programs and services, a vibrant gallery exhibition series, and a focus on initiatives which support and sustain the cultural life of the region.