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The 15th Annual Viola Award Nominees

FLAG LIVE & CREATIVE FLAGSTAFF STAFFS

Mar 2, 2023

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For 15 years, the Viola Awards have been recognized by Flagstaff’s creative community as our town’s most cherished celebration of the arts, science and culture. Over the years, this awards show has grown and garnered a significant

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amount of acclaim from the public, consistently welcoming in new faces and celebrating the legacies of the most familiar, and this year, the ceremony is shaping up to be the grandest one yet.

With more than 40 nominees in 11 categories, the community is widely represented as they showcase some of the most original and noteworthy submissions in recent years, and today, in partnership with Creative Flagstaff, Flag Live is announcing the nominees.

In the following pages, you will have the opportunity to learn a little bit about each of the nominees and their many merits, but more importantly, you will be able to catch a quick yet encompassing glimpse at what makes this place and these awards so special.

And with that, here are the nominees for the 2023 Viola Awards.

Excellence in Visual Arts



Things Not Seen: Art and Healing through Narratives of Hope, Grief, Loss, and Struggles for Self-Acceptance

Debra Edgerton

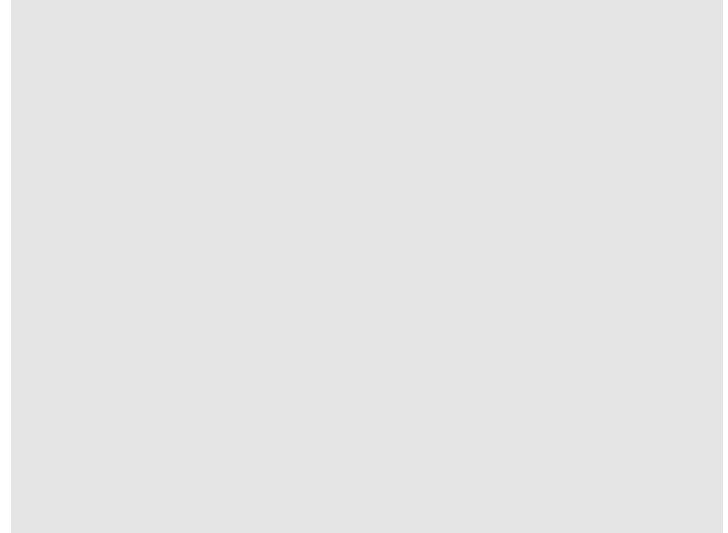
Things Not Seen: Art and Healing through Narratives of Hope, Grief, Loss, and Struggles for Self-Acceptance

The exhibition “Things Not Seen: Art and Healing through Narratives of Hope, Grief, Loss, and Struggles for Self-Acceptance” was conceptualized by Edgerton, the assistant professor in the School of Art at Northern Arizona University. The exhibition focuses on the threat that mental health issues related to trauma, grief, isolation, and death can pose.

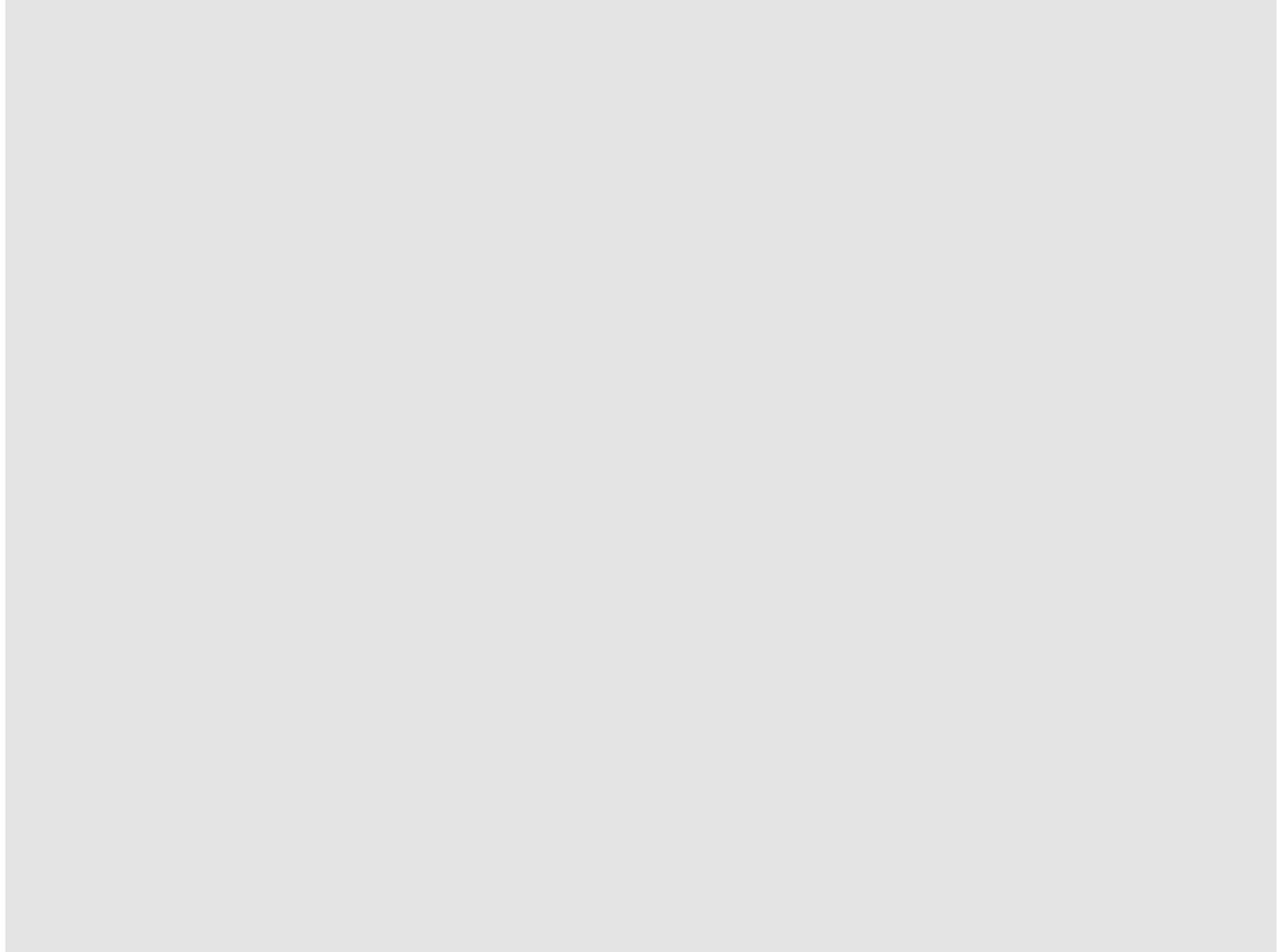
Baje Whitethorne Sr.

Nááts’íilid/Rainbow Light

Bursting with color, this retrospective exhibit at the Museum of Northern Arizona presented the full spectrum of art by Baje Whitethorne Sr., a visual storyteller acclaimed for his colorful paintings full of life and energy.



Nááts’íilid/Rainbow Light



Art Meets Nature - A Community Pond and Wetland at Elizabeth “Liz” C. Archuleta County Park, A Multicultural Art and Nature Park

Geoffery Gross

Art Meets Nature - A Community Pond and Wetland at Elizabeth “Liz” C. Archuleta County Park, A Multicultural Art and Nature Park

Gross's bronze casting, stonework, carpentry and welding at the Elizabeth “Liz” C. Archuleta County Park interprets the natural world to visitors, cultivates an interest in science and promotes conservation on a subliminal level.

Shawn Skabelund

Virga: Beneath the Sierra sin Agua

"Virga: Beneath the Sierra sin Agua" was exhibited at Coconino Center for the Arts in the fall of 2022.

Skabelund stated, "'Beneath the Sierra sin Agua' is my attempt to make sense of these things as I work alone in my studio. The last course I taught at Northern Arizona University in 2011 was a place-based, site-specific installation class titled Ecological & Cultural Genocide in Arizona. This exhibition builds on what I shared with my students that semester."



Virga: Beneath the Sierra sin Agua

Excellence in Performing Arts



Flagstaff Shakespeare Festival

Crumbs from the Table of Joy

"Crumbs from the Table of Joy" is a nuanced look into a Black family's experience in 1950's Brooklyn, written by the dynamic and renowned playwright, Lynn Nottage. "Crumbs from the Table of Joy" was produced by Flagstaff Shakespeare Festival in the spring of 2022.

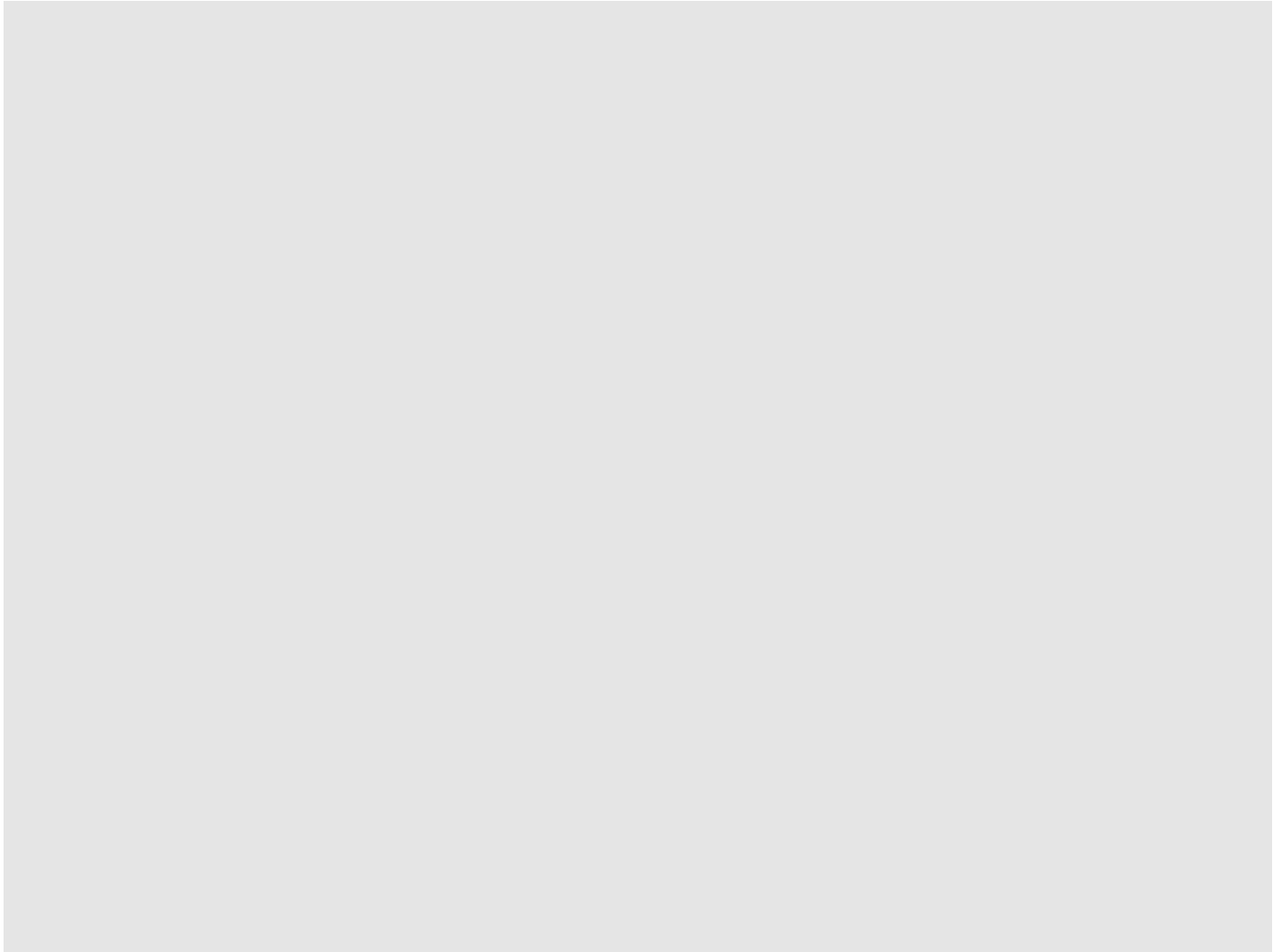


Julie Espisito in *Miracle on 34th Street*

Julie Espisito

Miracle on 34th Street

"Miracle on 34th Street" presented by Theatrikos Theatre Company included a cast of 32 actors that brought a holiday classic to the stage. Julie Espisito's performance as Doris shined as she delivered an exemplary performance.

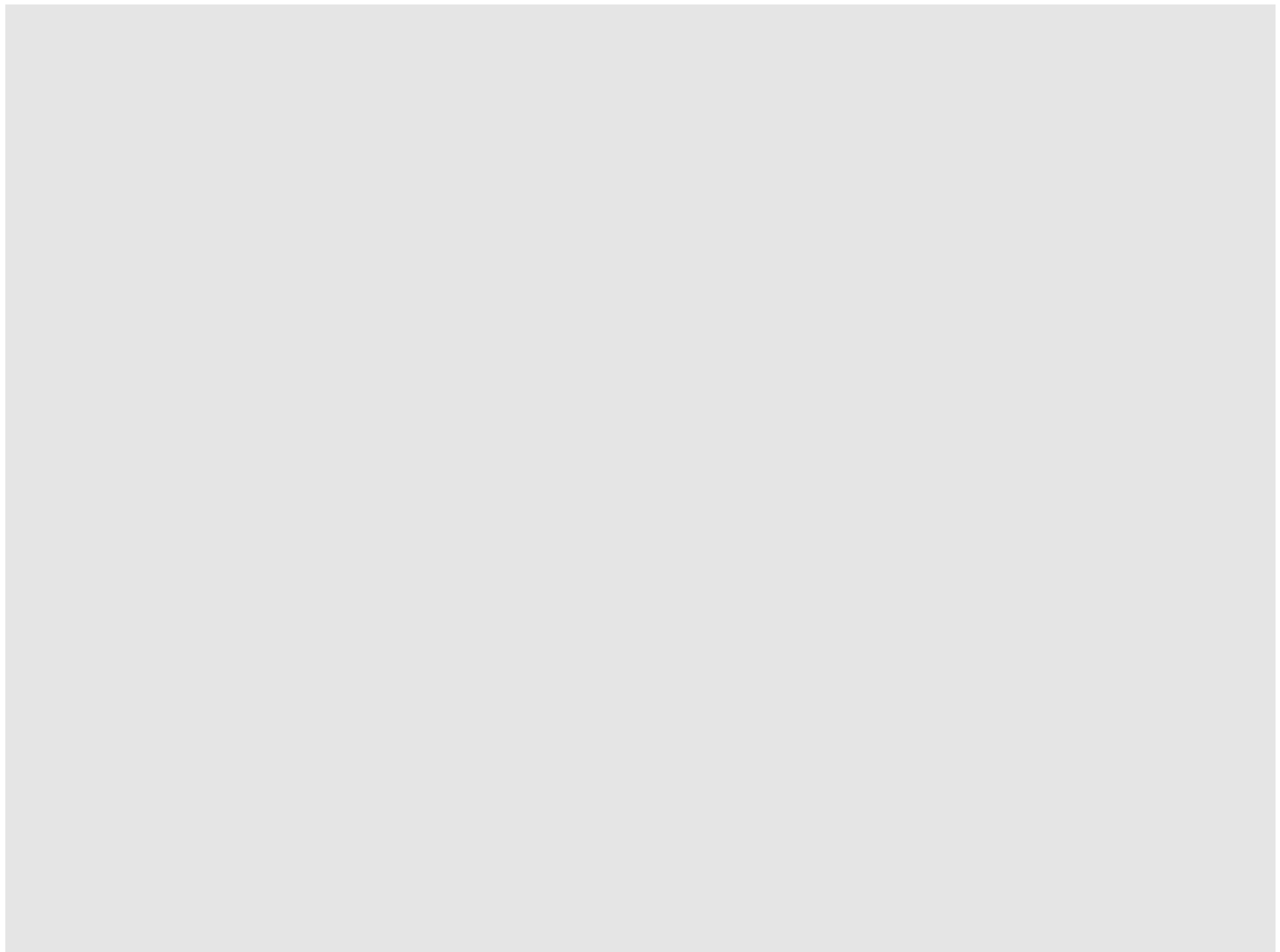


Michael Rulon in *Cemetery Club*

Michael Rulon

Cemetery Club

In 2022 Rulon performed a hysterical female role (Lucille Rubin) in the Theatrikos production of *The Cemetery Club*. The performance tackled subjects of death, morality and living on after those loved are no longer there.

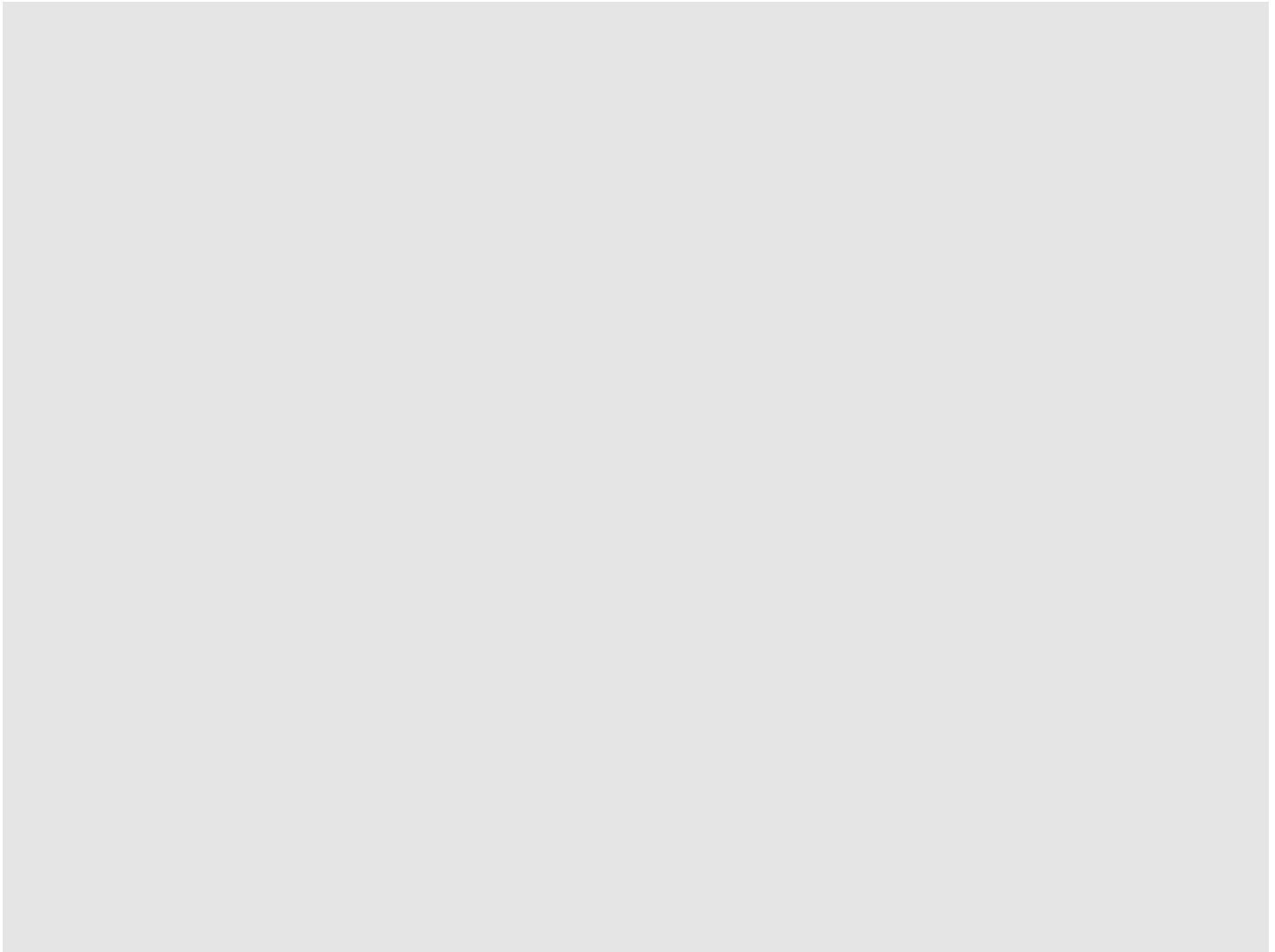


Robot Apocalypse

Monster Universe & Culture Shock Productions

Robot Apocalypse

"Robot Apocalypse" was a variety show featuring robot performances, inspiring fantastical art and cosmic comedy held at Yucca North on July 9, 2022. This show brought together an invigorating and imaginative cast of performers from every corner of Flagstaff's creative community to create a one-of-a-kind robotic, apocalyptic, sultry and sensational experience.

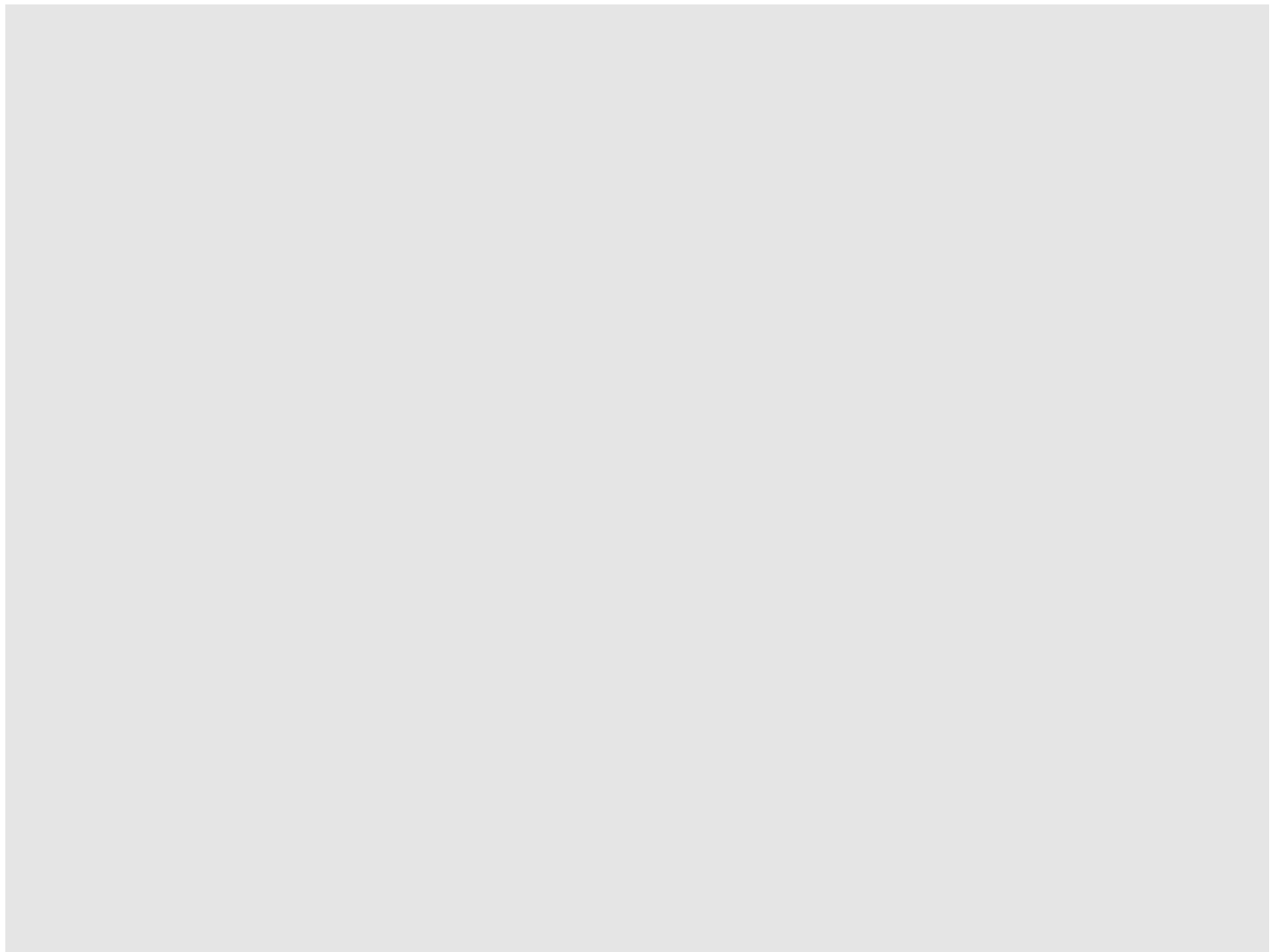


Sara Bendel Ryan

The Hardy Girls

"The Hardy Girls" is an original musical written by Flagstaff native Sara Bendel Ryan. "The Hardy Girls" arrive in Northern Arizona in 1900 to work in a new food joint along the railroad, which serves railway clientele and the cowboys. Each Hardy Girl has her own reason for coming to the wild west.

Excellence in Music



Safe Harbor: Songs of Refuge & Home

Master Chorale of Flagstaff

Safe Harbor: Songs of Refuge & Home

Performed on Sunday, November 13th at Coconino Center of the Arts. The performed music built a bridge with cultural and current events in Syria, Ukraine and East Africa and the U.S. and was sung in several different languages.

Flagstaff Community Band

30th Anniversary Season Performances

In 2022, FCB celebrated its 30th season with a series of outstanding performances directed by Tim McKay. Performances included service events such as the Memorial Day Ceremony at Citizens Cemetery, as well as several performances in Heritage Square, and a collaborative July 4th weekend concert with Master Chorale of Flagstaff at Ft Tuthill Military Museum.

S.E. Willis

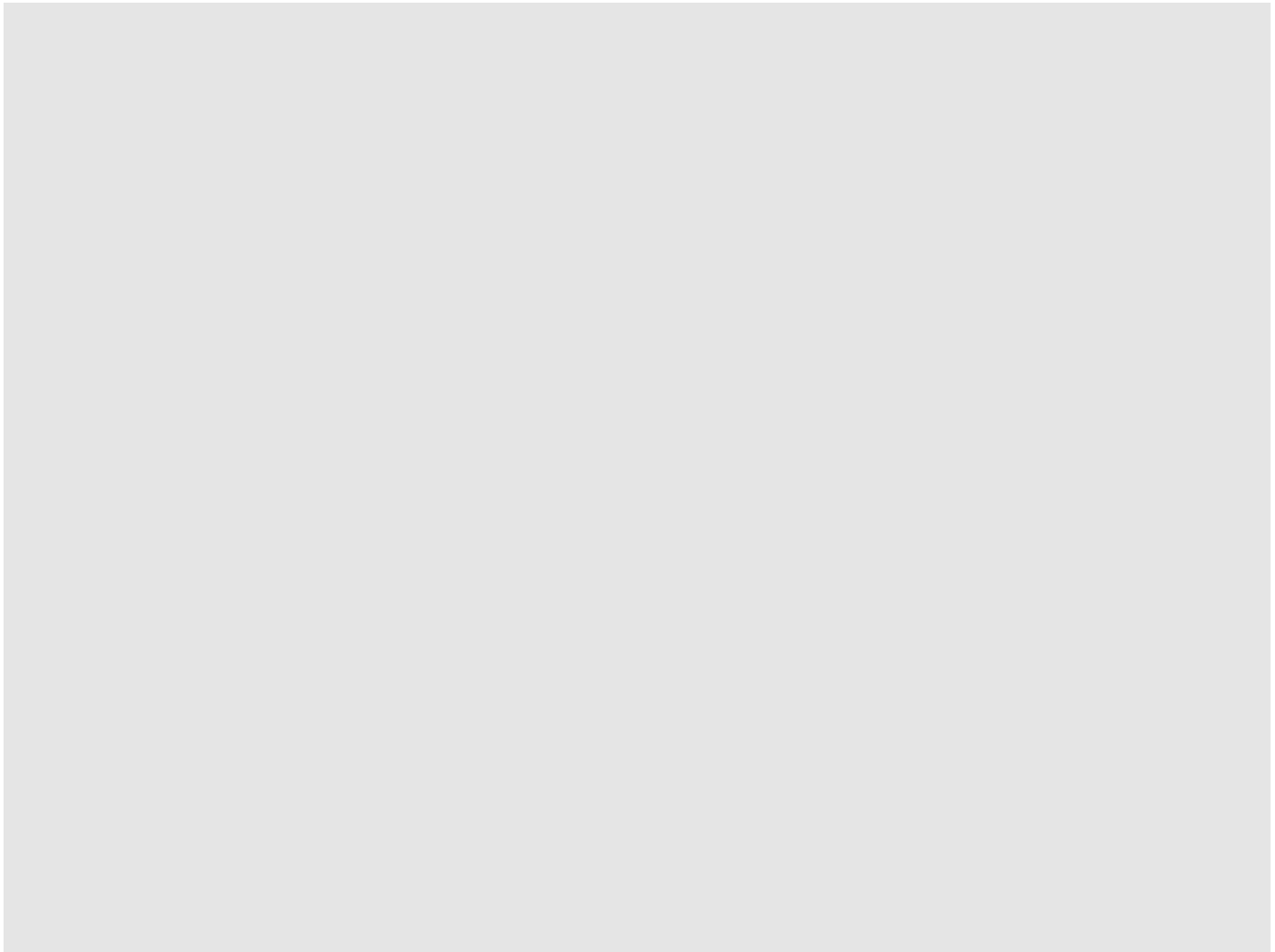
2023 Music Performances

S.E. (Steve) Willis is an accomplished musician with 50+ years of experience performing blues, boogie and Americana music. In 2022, Willis was the headliner for the Flagstaff Music Festival in Heritage Square.

Craig Yarbrough

A Dream We Dreamed One Afternoon, Long Ago

In 2022 Yarbrough released and performed "A Dream We Dreamed One Afternoon Long Ago". He performed these arrangements at the 15th Annual Jerry Garcia Bash at the Orpheum Theater which honored what would have been Jerry Garcia's 80th birthday.



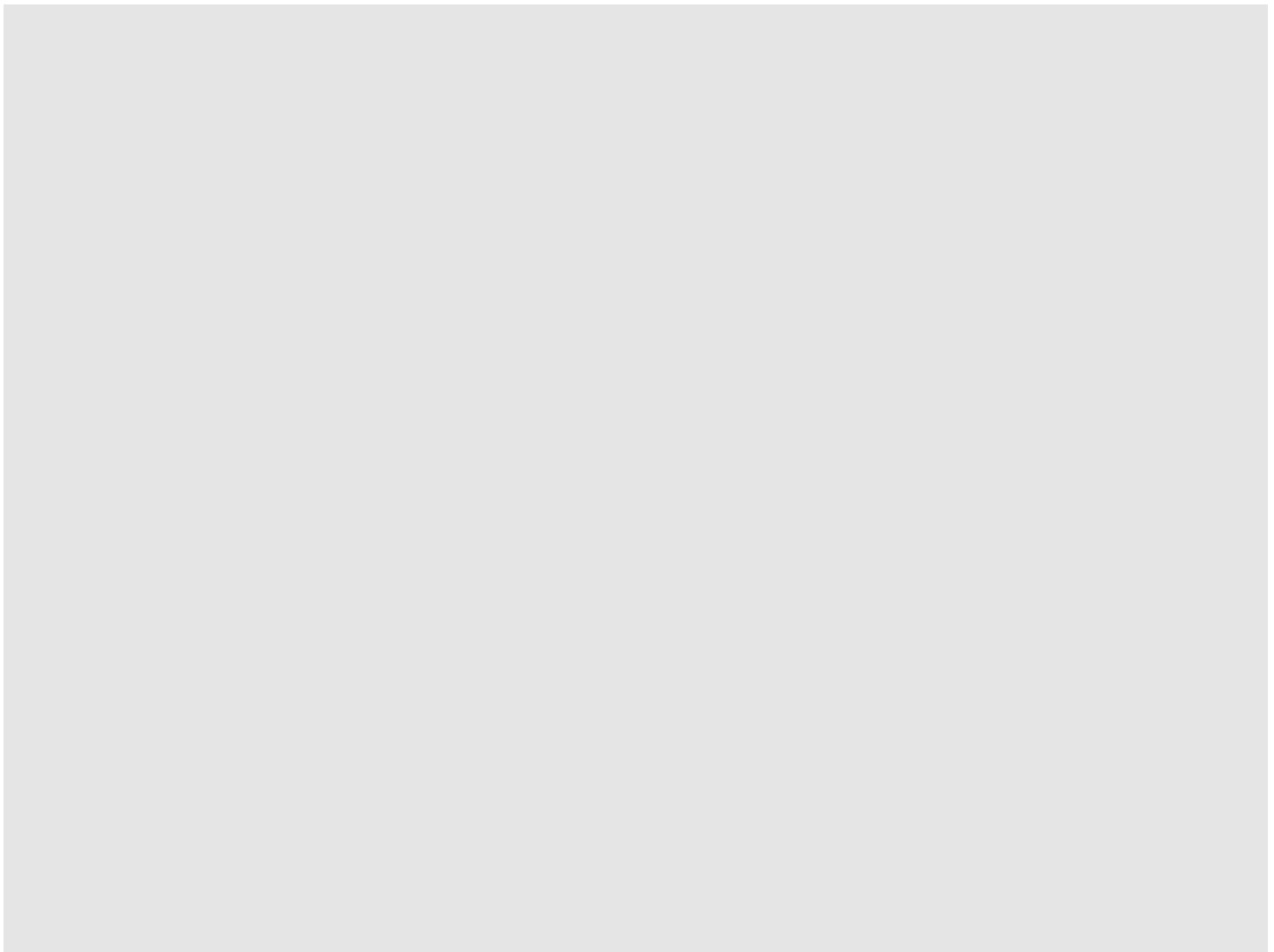
VanSamuel Diggs, a.k.a. BGNFTY

VanSamuel Diggs

2023 Music Performances

VanSamuel Diggs, also known as BGNFTY, has become a familiar face around Flagstaff. A self-taught DJ, Diggs has advocated for events that promote education around the music scene. In 2022 Diggs collaborated with Gold'n Brown and the Southside Community Association to program a Juneteenth celebration at the Murdoch Center.

Excellence in Written Storytelling

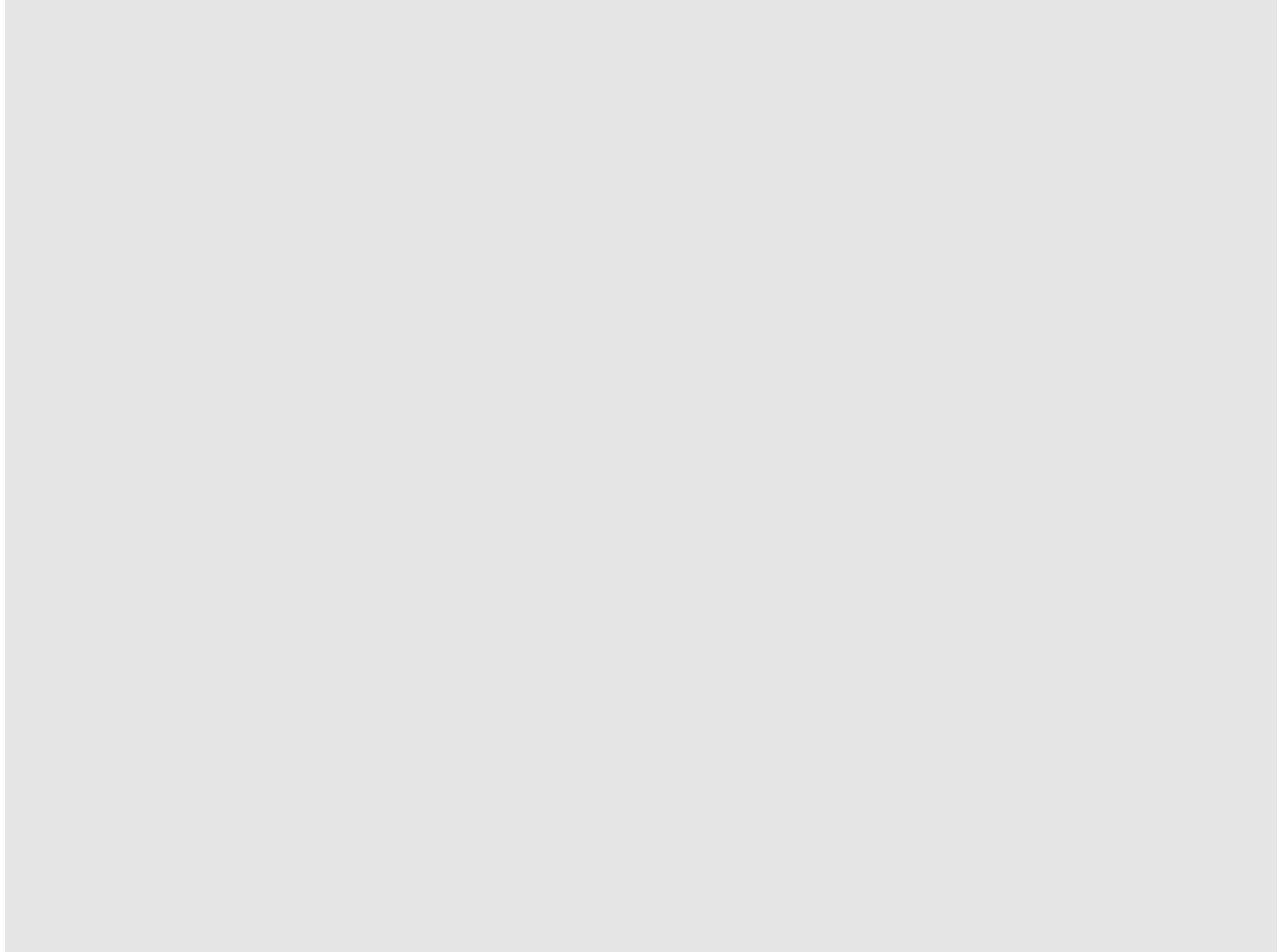


Peter Friederici, author of *Beyond Climate Breakdown: Envisioning New Stories of Radical Hope*

Peter Friederici

Beyond Climate Breakdown: Envisioning New Stories of Radical Hope

Peter Friederici is an award-winning author and freelance journalist who writes about climate change, science, nature and the environment. In “Beyond Climate Breakdown” Friederici argues that to address the prospect of climate breakdown, we must empower ourselves to acknowledge and repair the deep causes of the climate crisis that we tend to ignore.

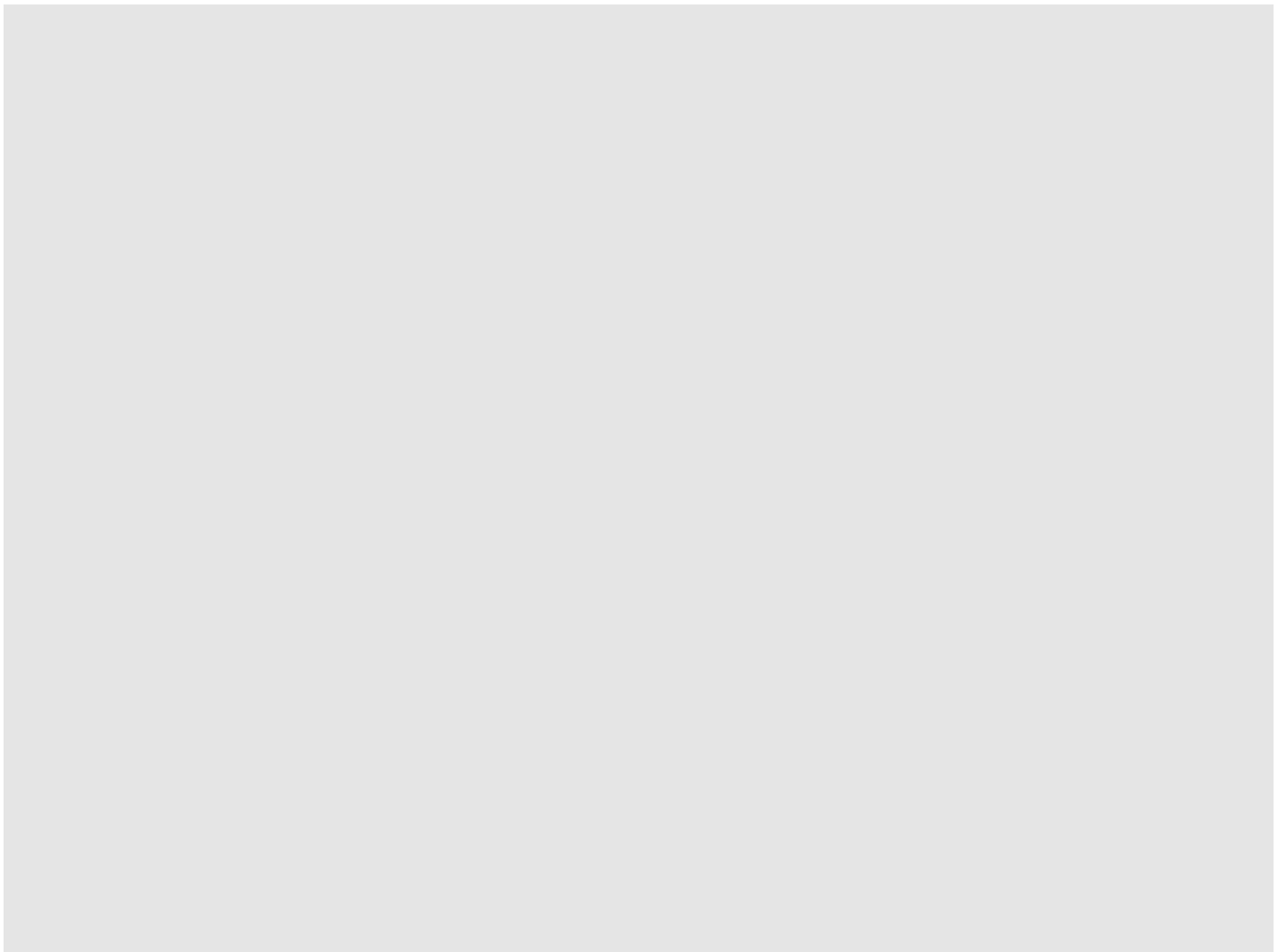


Voices of Navajo Mothers and Daughters: Portraits of Beauty

Kathy Eckles Hooker

Voices of Navajo Mothers and Daughters: Portraits of Beauty

“Voices of Navajo Mothers and Daughters: Portraits of Beauty” is a book in which Navajo grandmothers, mothers and daughters in twenty-one families tell their stories. In a series of intimate, revelatory personal histories prompted by interview questions, the women share about how they have been shaped by powerful cultural and historical forces, the natural world - and by their love for each other.



John L. Vankat holding his book *The San Francisco Peaks and Flagstaff: Through the Lens of Time*

John L. Vankat

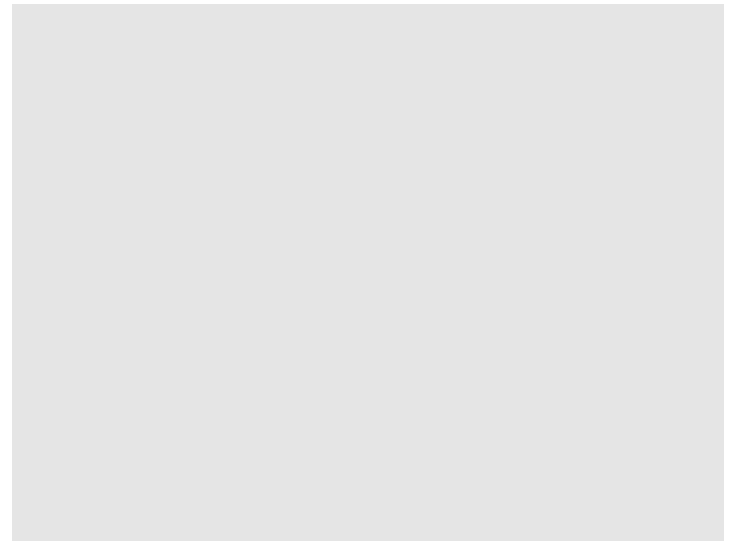
The San Francisco Peaks and Flagstaff: Through the Lens of Time

Vankat is an ecologist, educator and writer intrigued by this region. Over the last seven years, he has focused on precisely repeating historical photographs taken on and around the San Francisco Peaks in the 19th century and first decade of the 20th. Vankat's book features over one hundred historical photographs and several earlier drawings, each precisely paired with his modern-day repeat photograph.

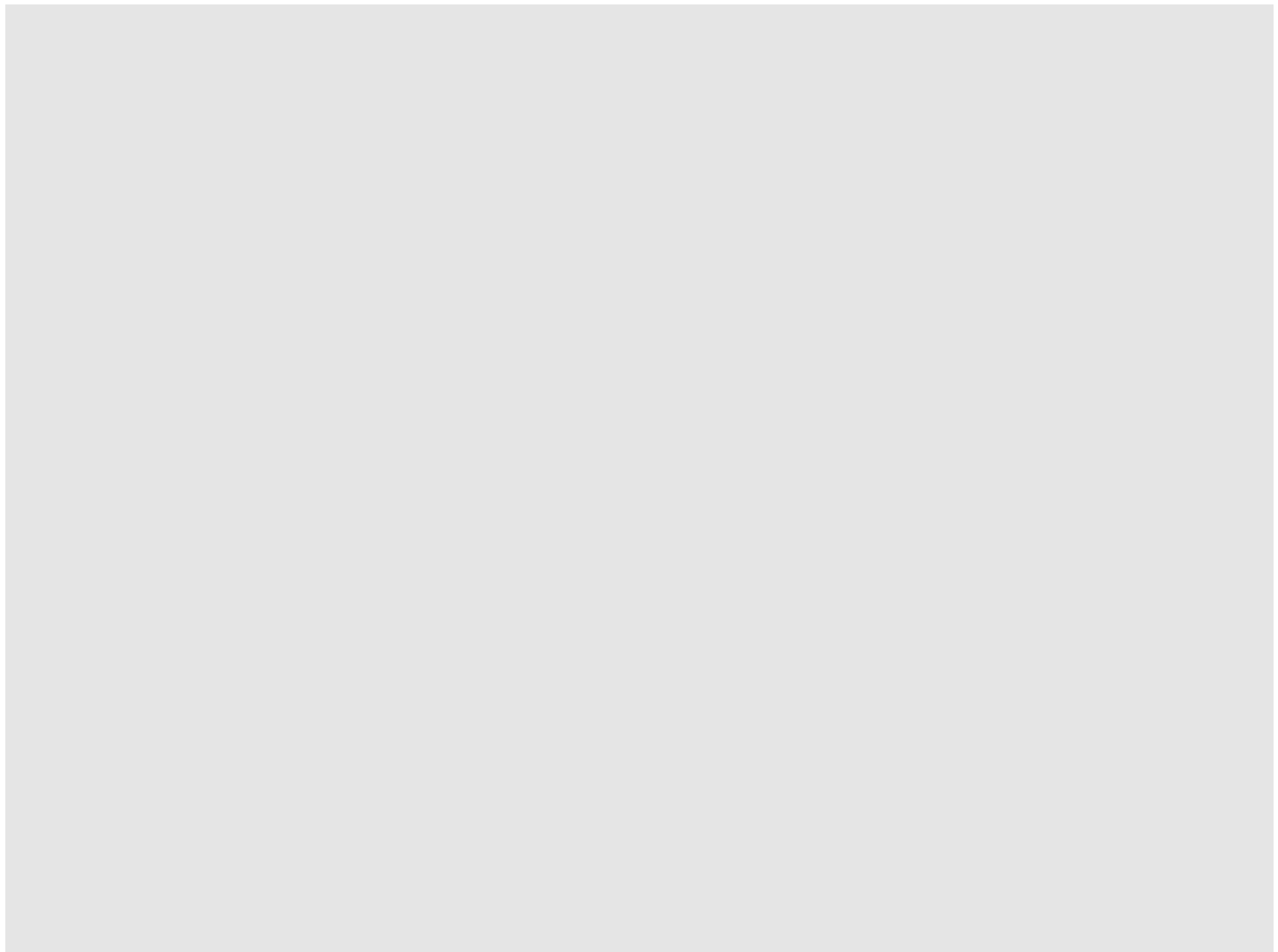
Susan Johnson

Haunted Flagstaff

Susan Johnson's "Haunted Flagstaff" is a collection of stories which sheds light on the ghostly shadows of Flagstaff's past. Johnson recounts many of the longstanding sightings and hauntings claimed by locals and offers anecdotes on the eerie tales that have been passed along through oral tradition.



Susan Johnson and her book, *Haunted Flagstaff*



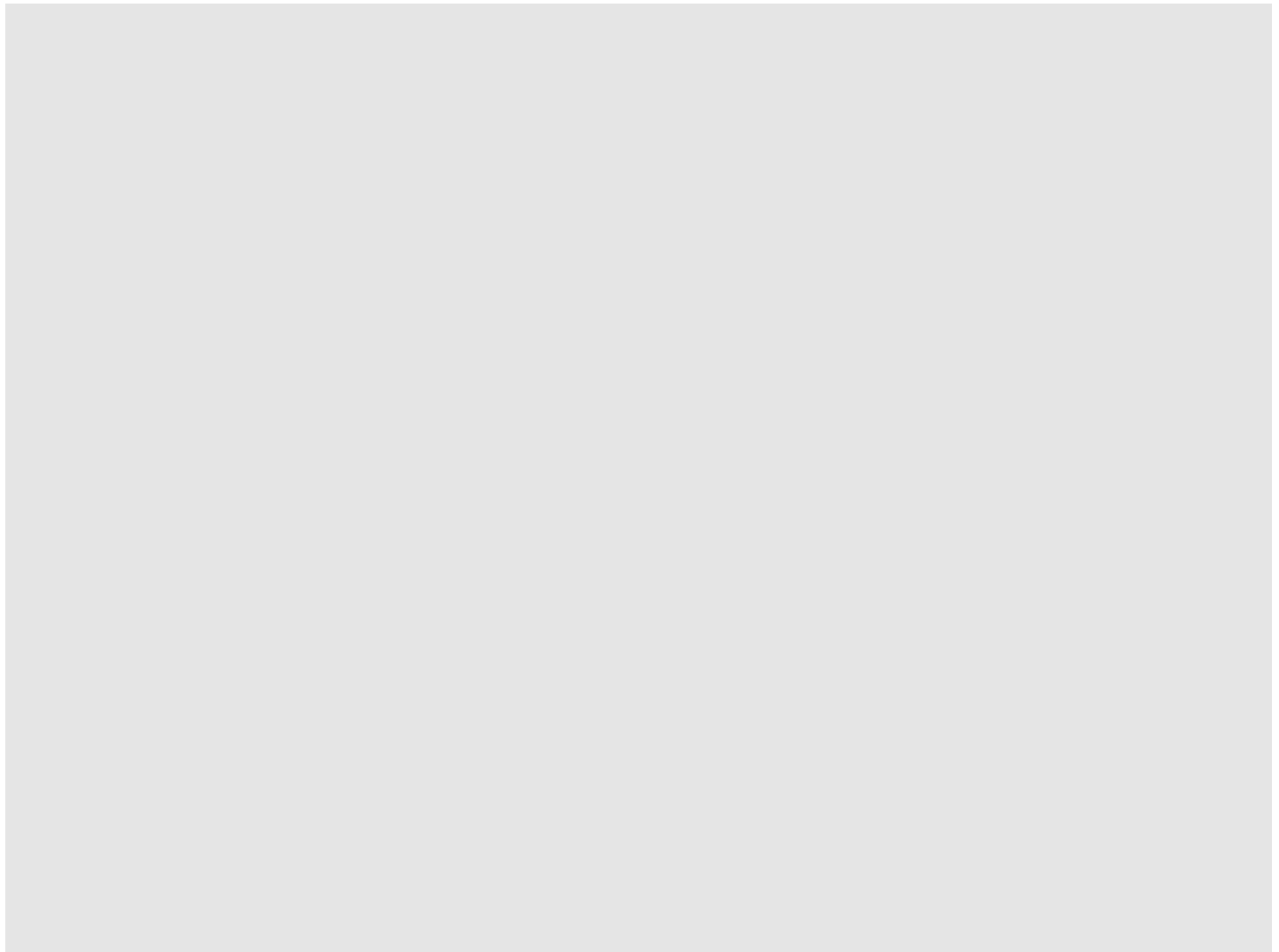
A Fresh Start Will Put You on Your Way

Andie Francis

A Fresh Start Will Put You on Your Way

"A Fresh Start Will Put You on Your Way" is a poetry chapbook by Andie Francis. "A Fresh Start will Put You on Your Way" was published by Finishing Lie Press in 2022.

Excellence in Digital Storytelling



Laurel Morales, the host of the *2 Lives* podcast

Laurel Morales

2 Lives

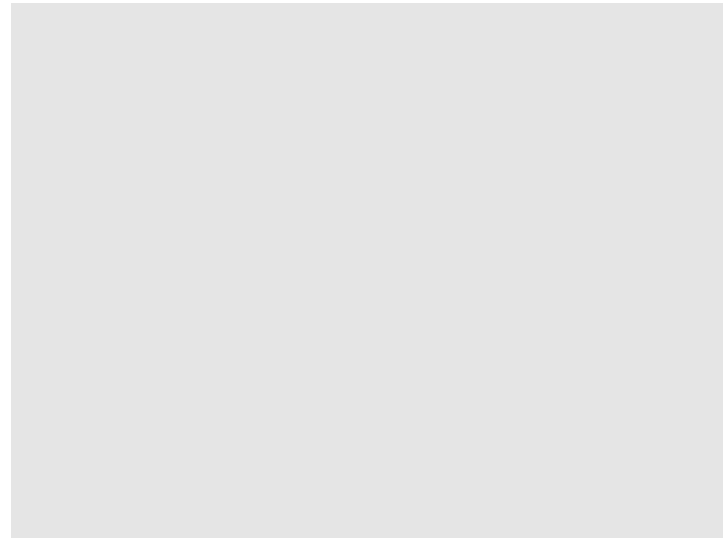
Laurel Morales has been sharing the stories of her northern Arizona community for the past 20 years through KNAU, KJZZ and NPR. In June of 2021 the Flagstaff-based storyteller introduced listeners around the world to her community through

her podcast "2 Lives" – stories of people who have faced darkness and how those moments transformed them. “We all have two lives. The second begins the moment we realize we have only one.”

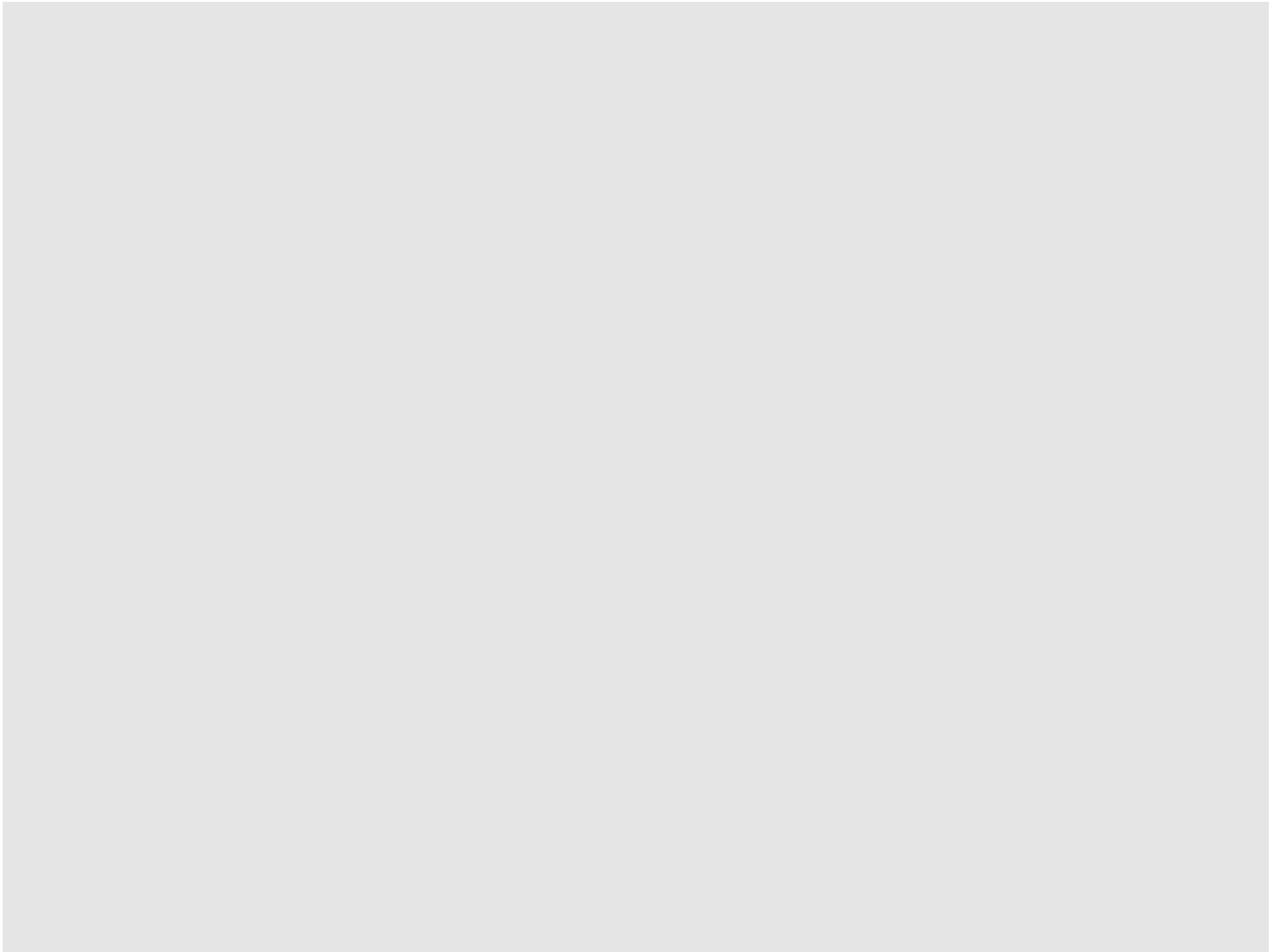
Tamara Seaton, DJ Tam Taco

Audio Offerings Season Five

"Audio Offerings" brings you a wide variety of indie shoegaze and electronics, with some true gems in between. Season 5 centered around “Emotions, Space and Music” with each episode focusing in on an emotion and featured an interview with a special guest including DJ LRY, Deidra Peaches and Dapper Dre.



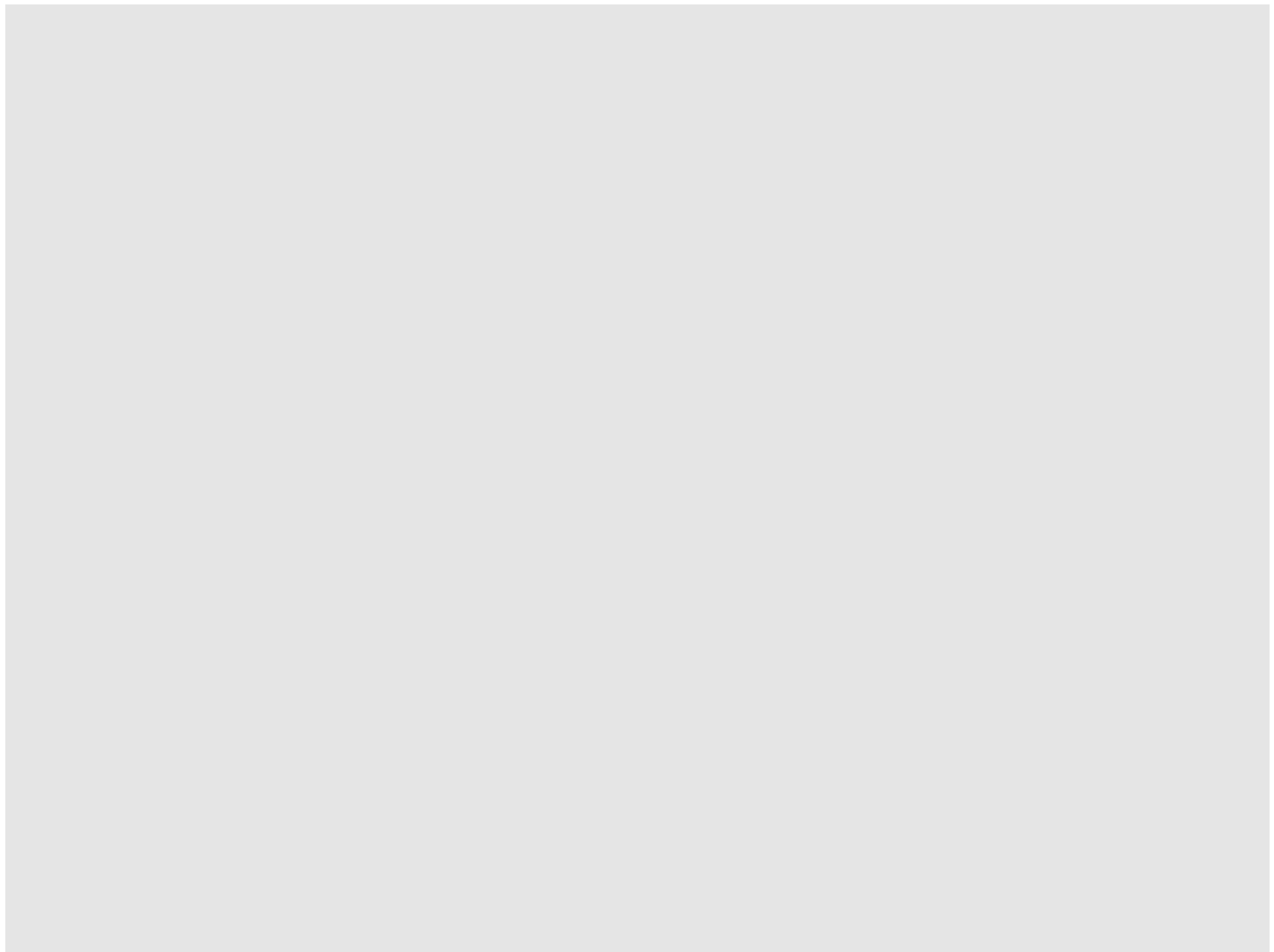
Tamara Seaton, a.k.a. DJ Tam Taco, host of *Audio Offerings*



Lowell Observatory

Star Stuff: A Space Poddity

"Star Stuff: A Space Poddity", by Lowell Observatory, is a conversational podcast recorded on Mars Hill that aims to make astronomical science and space exploration fun and accessible to wide audiences using humor, facts and casual banter. Various members of Lowell's staff meet to discuss astronomy, planetary science and space exploration via news articles, movie reviews, audience questions, pop culture discussions and guest speakers.

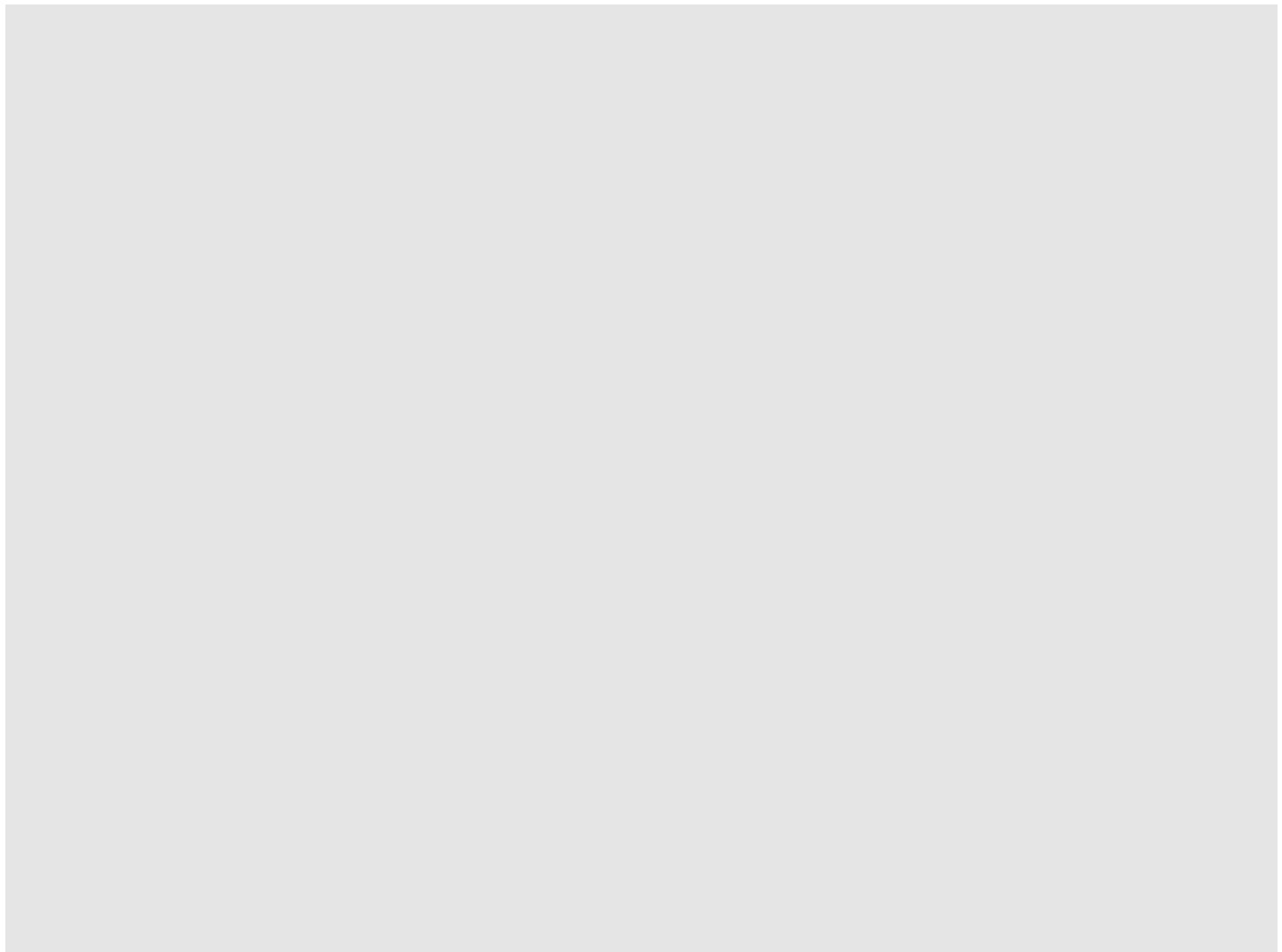


Tad's Emerging World: Glen Canyon Exposed, directed by Dawn Kish & Cierra Murrietta

Dawn Kish & Cierra Murrietta

Tad's Emerging World: Glen Canyon Exposed

"Tad's Emerging World: Glen Canyon Exposed" is a film from Dawn Kish & Cierra Murrietta. The film tells the story of Kish's journey documenting Glen Canyon: the hidden treasure of the Southwest. Kish was given Tad Nichols' 4x5 film camera a few years ago, and in the film, she returns to Glen Canyon to expose what she finds.



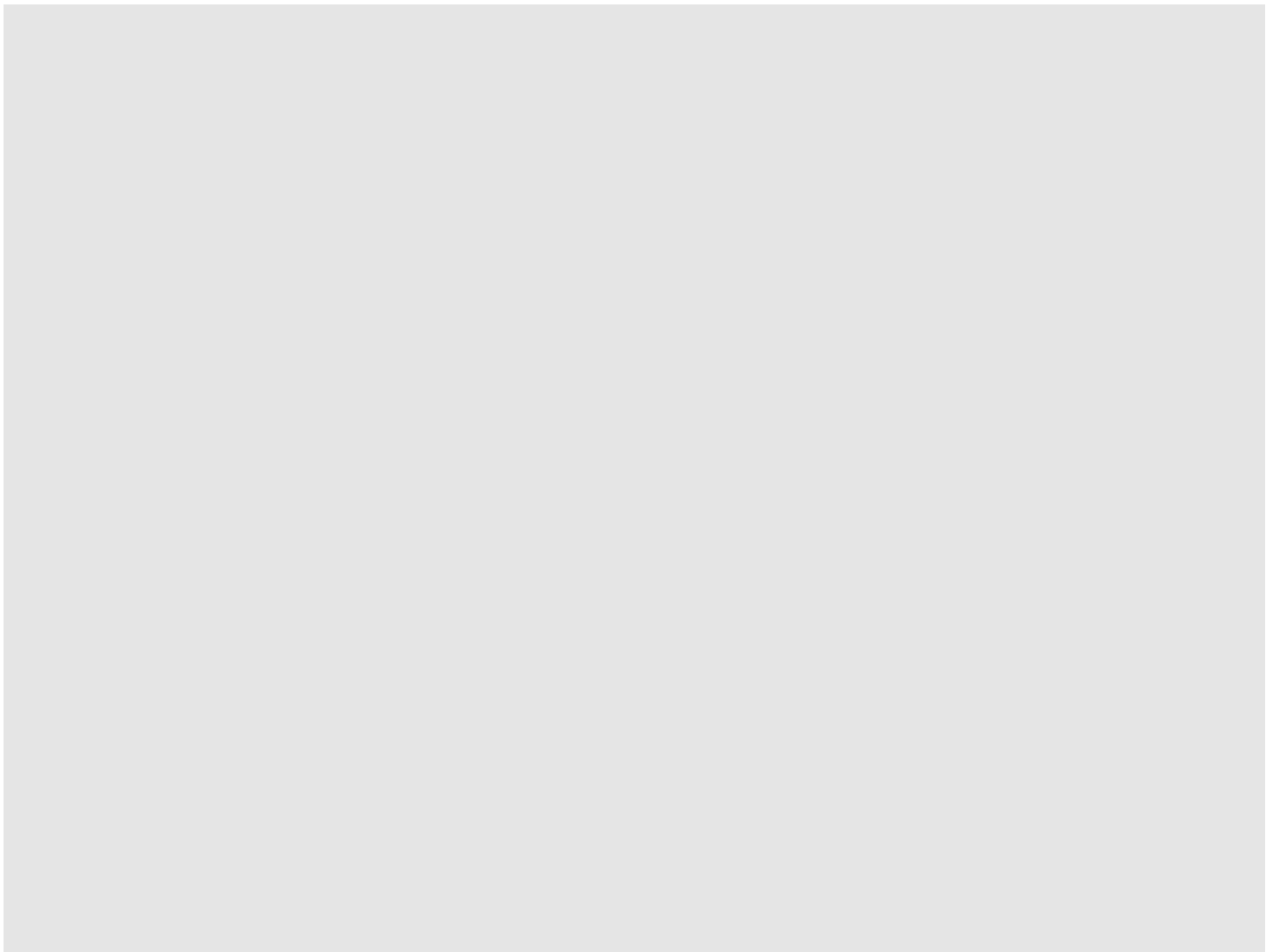
The Man in the Dog Park (film)

Cathy Small, PhD

The Man in the Dog Park (film)

"The Man in the Dog Park" film (2022) is an innovative animated documentary, based on real-life stories, designed to share a poignant message of empathy and dignity about our homeless neighbors. Based on the Viola award-winning book, the film goes a step beyond text in its storytelling, hoping to reach viewers who might never choose to read a book about homelessness.

Emerging Artist



Planet Cree

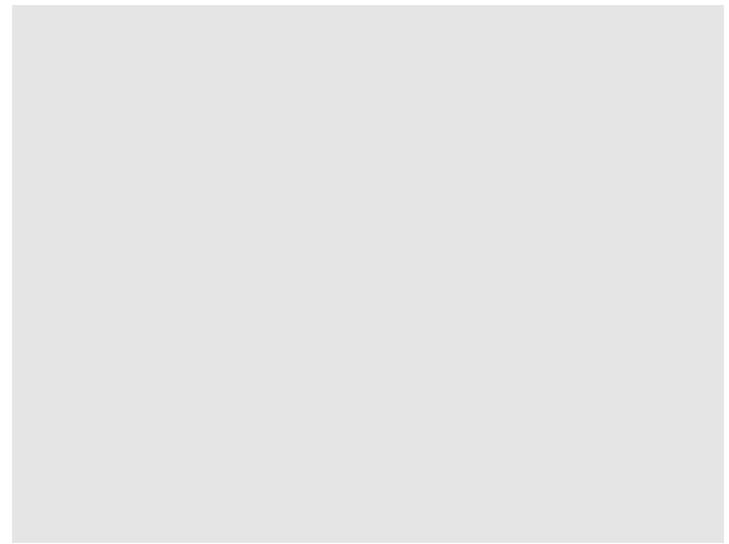
Planet Cree

Cree is a young Havasupai artist who is currently attending NAU. Her work explores a vast selection of subjects but mainly, portraiture. She has started other endeavors besides painting, and performed all over Flagstaff this year as a drag queen and has made an impact on the nightlife.

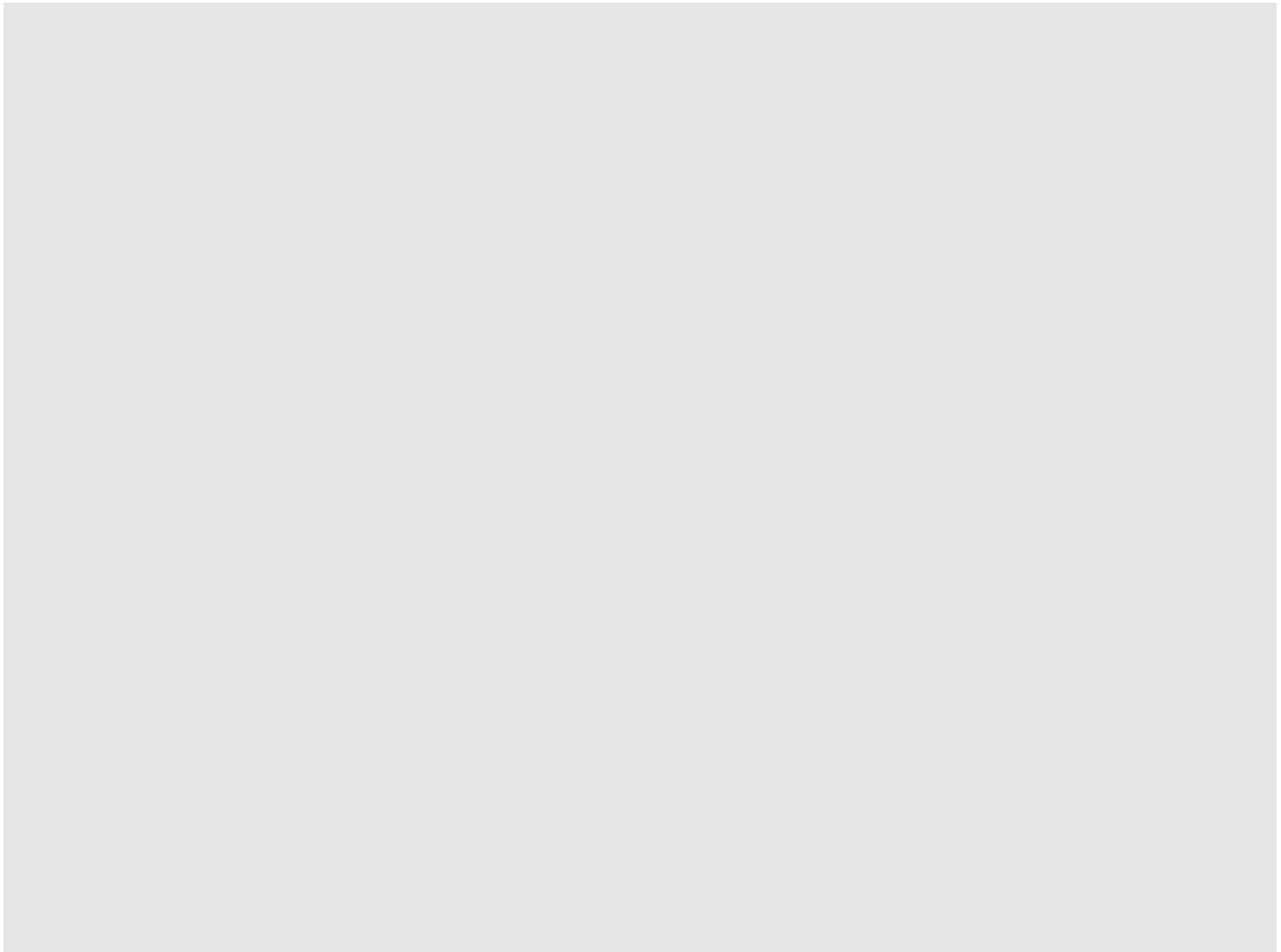
Dana Kamberg

As a creative artist, Kamberg is highly skilled and versatile in her craft, working in both digital and fine art mediums. Her work is not only visually striking but also thought-provoking and challenges audiences to think differently. This is especially

apparent in her recent project, "Trauma and the Time Traveler", which is a poignant and thought-provoking exploration of mental health that is both accessible and creative.



Art by emerging artist, Dana Kamberg



Micaela Merryman

Micaela Merryman

Merryman is a 24-year-old Native and African American Poet and a great contributor to the literary and arts community in Flagstaff. She has founded Sonder Zine, an independent magazine which covers historically underrepresented or unconventional magazine topics, hosts the monthly reading and music series "Off the Rails" at Late for the Train, is a board member of the Northern Arizona Book Festival and is now the first Flagstaff Youth Poet Laureate and coordinates the Northern Arizona Youth Poetry Council.

Excellence in Education

Debra Edgerton

Debra Edgerton is an Assistant Professor at the School of Art & College of Arts & Letters at Northern Arizona University. In the wake of the pandemic, mental health awareness has become increasingly important and prevalent. The student-driven exhibition "Things Not Seen: Art and Healing through Narratives of Hope, Grief, Loss, and Struggles for Self-Acceptance" was conceptualized by Edgerton and was exhibited in 2022. This exhibition focused on the threat that mental health issues related to trauma, grief, isolation and death can pose.

Janeece Hennes

Hennes is currently teaching multiple concepts in art education at Northern Arizona University, from a children's art course to current trends in art education. She has taught at multiple Flagstaff schools, and after receiving her Master's Degree in Education continued to encourage her students in service learning and the arts

Sonja London-Hall

For over 30 years London-Hall has been involved in many aspects of education, including science, music, adult education and ELL instruction. Sonja is currently the band and theater director at Northland Preparatory Academy. London-Hall works hard at blending her love of art with her love of education.

Mary Lara

Lara has taught and served the Flagstaff Community for over 40 years. Starting as a professional educator in Kindergarten, she has taught all levels of elementary education with an unbound passion in getting children to reach their full potential while encouraging discovery and a love of learning.

Excellence in Collaboration

Frightful Fête

Frightful Fête was a Halloween-inspired aerial performance featuring local and regional performers from Arizona and narrated by Flagstaff local, Dapper Dre. The inaugural performance featured a variety of aerial apparatuses and was created as a celebration of all things weird and spooky.

Safe Harbor Songs of Refuge & Home Concert

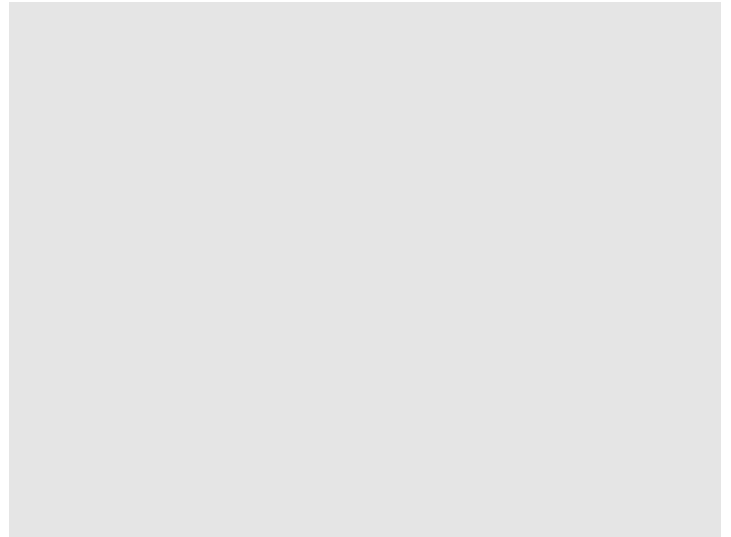
Master Chorale performed this concert on Sunday, November 13th in collaboration with the opening weekend of Coconino Center of the Arts exhibition “25 Million Stitches: One Stitch, One Refugee”. The performance began in the gallery amongst the fabric panels and slowly moved into the theater space. The music built a bridge with cultural and current events in Syria, Ukraine, and East Africa, and the U.S. and was sung in several different languages.



Sonja London-Hall

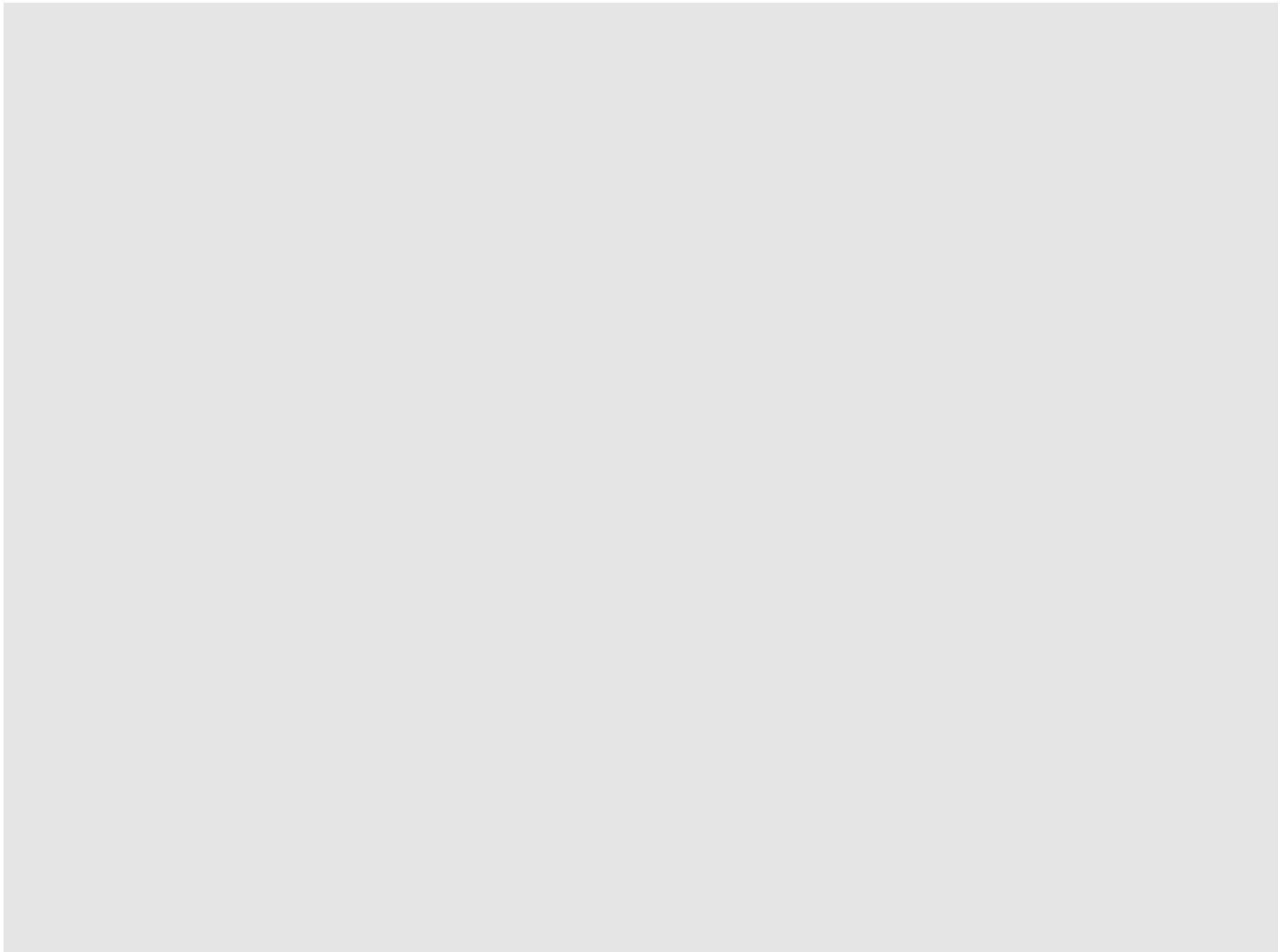


Mary Lara



Frightful Fête

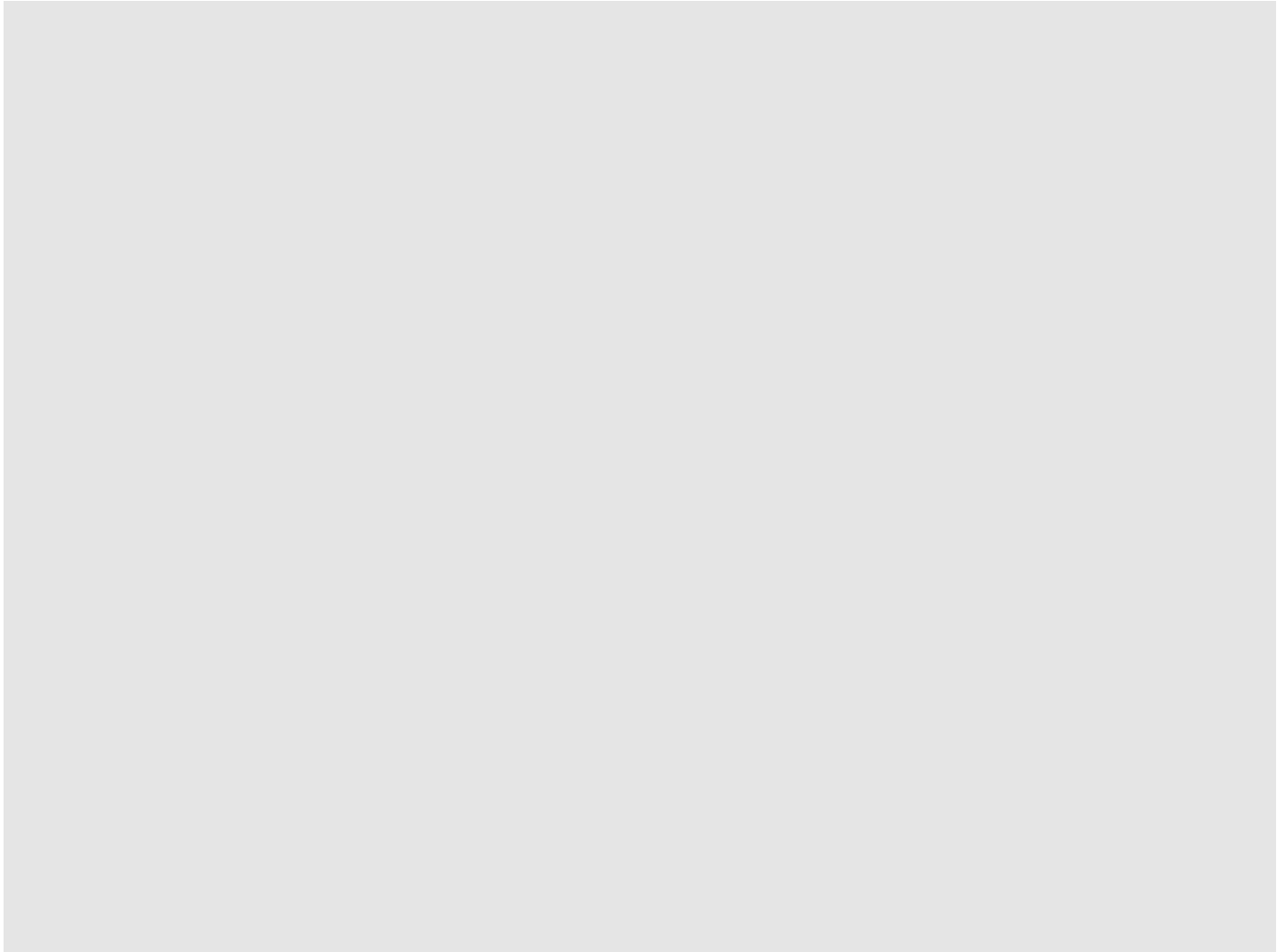
Michelle Badger



Volunteerism: A Pathway to Peace Mural

Volunteerism: A Pathway to Peace Mural

“Volunteerism: A Pathway to Peace” is a large, vibrant mural located in Downtown Flagstaff. This mural was a collaboration between the major partners of: Rotary Club of Flagstaff, visual artist Lindsey DeStefano, City of Flagstaff and Peace Surplus (Lola’s Kids, LLC.). The mural was a celebration of the Rotary of Flagstaff’s centennial year. This mural symbolically celebrates volunteerism and its impact – direct and indirect – on peacebuilding and making the world a better place.



Fangsgiving

Fangsgiving

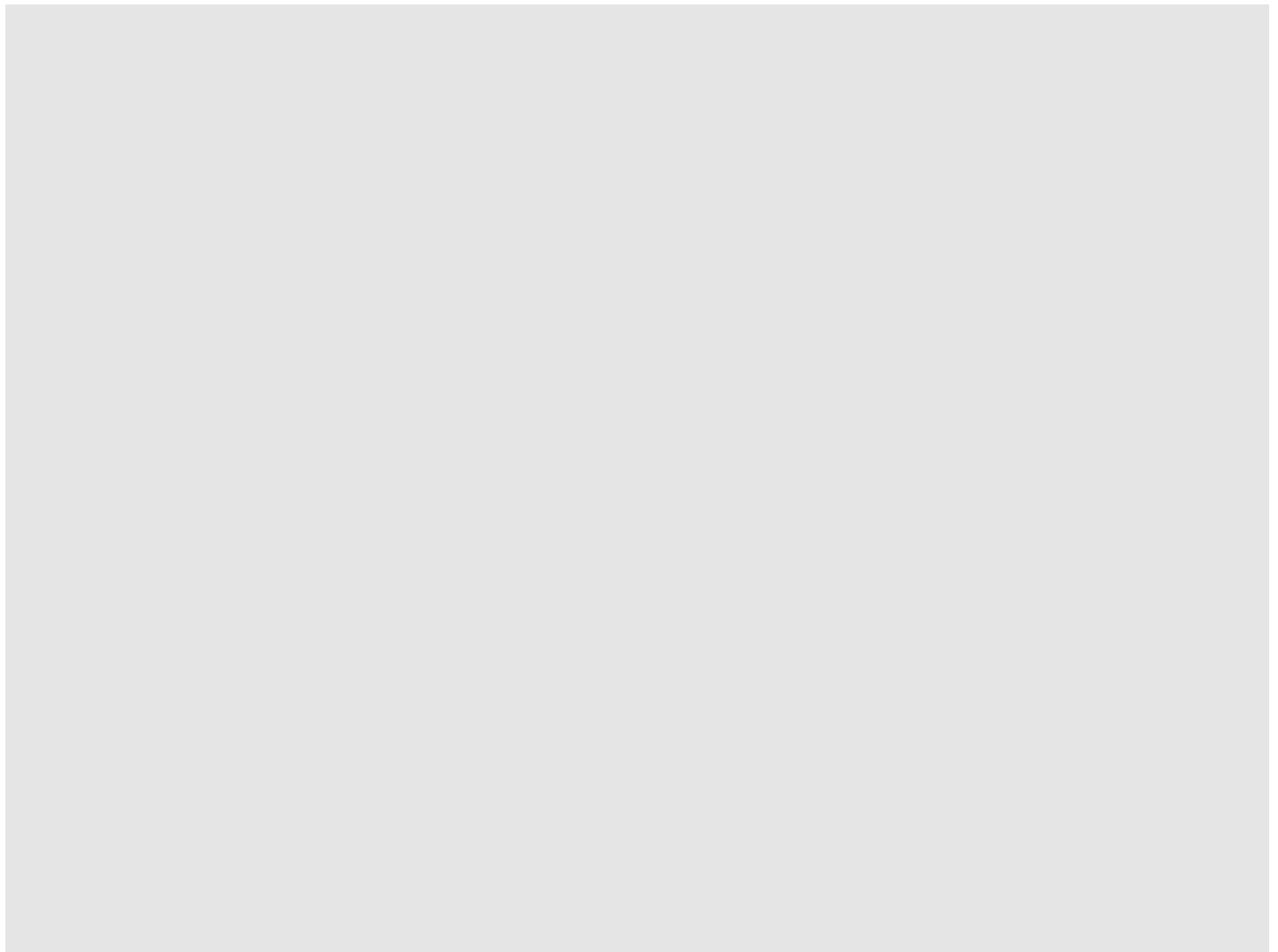
Fangsgiving was a two day music festival held at MOCAF, and Flagstaff Brewing Company featuring the talent of over 36 Hip-Hop performers from all over the Southwest; Rappers, DeeJays, Beatmakers and Painters were included throughout the weekend. People traveled from throughout Arizona, New Mexico and Colorado

to perform at, or support the show. The event, while a collaborative effort, was spearheaded by Cecil Tso. It was a community fueled, and focused event that celebrated artists and culture from all walks of life and experience.

Community Impact Organization

Lived Black Experience CommUnity Project

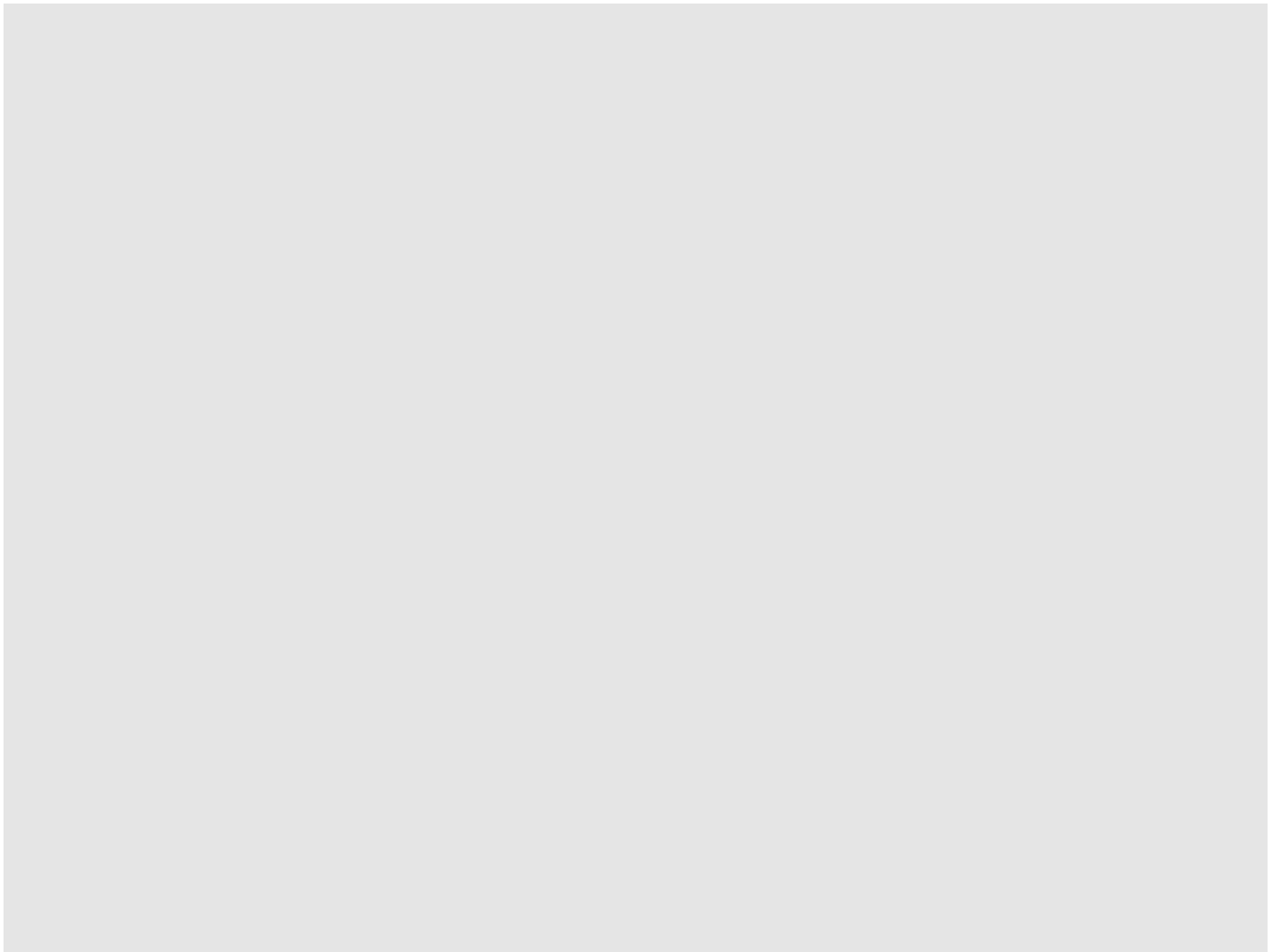
The Lived Black Experience Project, a program of the Southside Community Association, continues to advance efforts pursuing unity in community through partnerships in hosting numerous events including the 2022 three-day Juneteenth celebration, monthly community dinners and artisan markets, community dialogues and other works advancing the strategic plan adopted by the City of Flagstaff, "Flagstaff's Lived Black Experience: A Forgotten People Forging a Path Forward". Through its various programs, community dialogues and offerings, the LBE continues to advance the LBE team's mission to "create a better, more holistic, and more fully inclusive Flagstaff community for all."



Native Americans for Community Action

Native Americans for Community Action

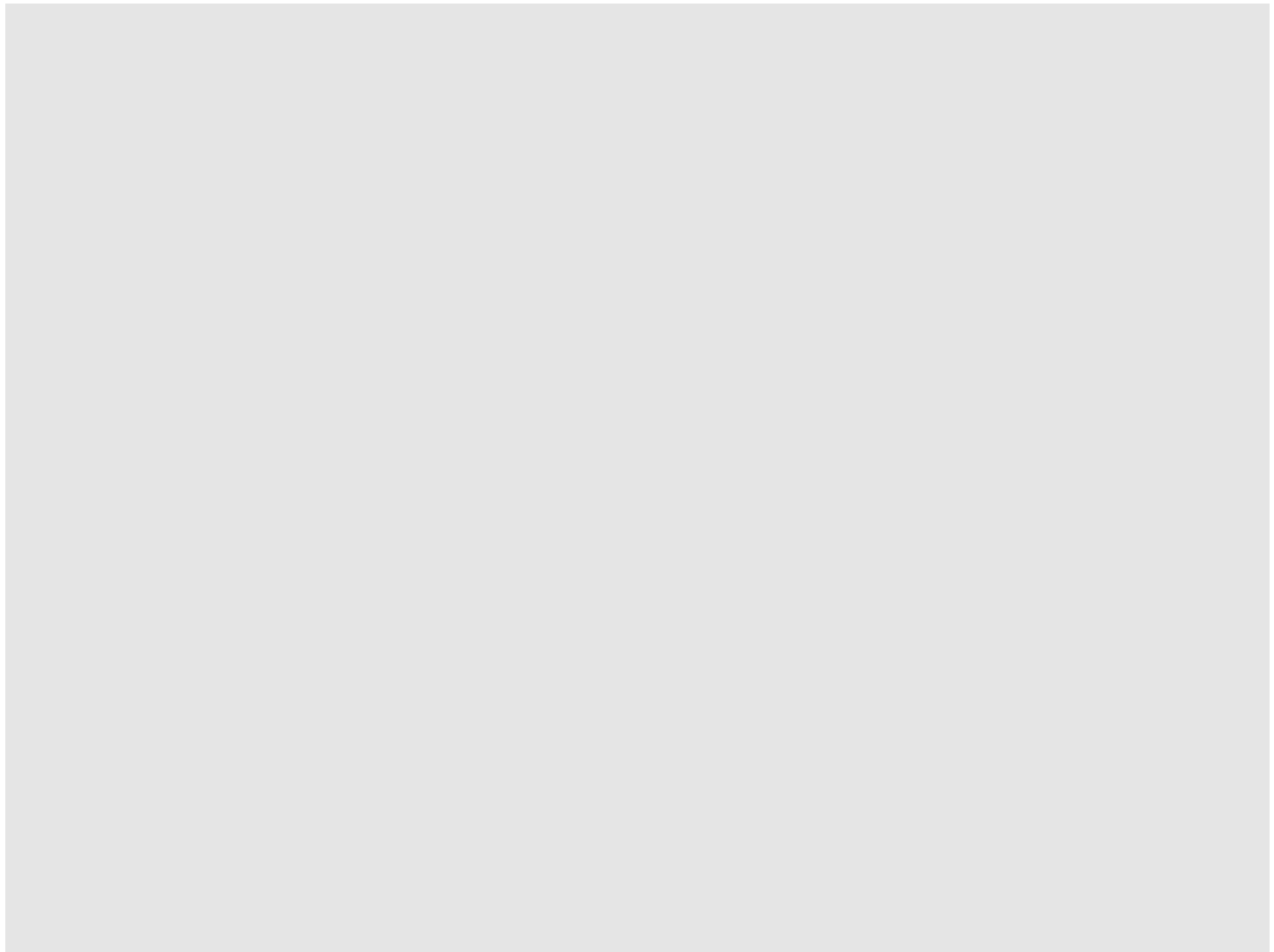
Native Americans for Community Action provides quality healthcare services to the Native and non-Native populations of Flagstaff and other surrounding communities. Focusing on holistic and family care, NACA prioritizes the overall wellbeing of patients by honoring their customs, culture and beliefs.



Threaded Together

Threaded Together

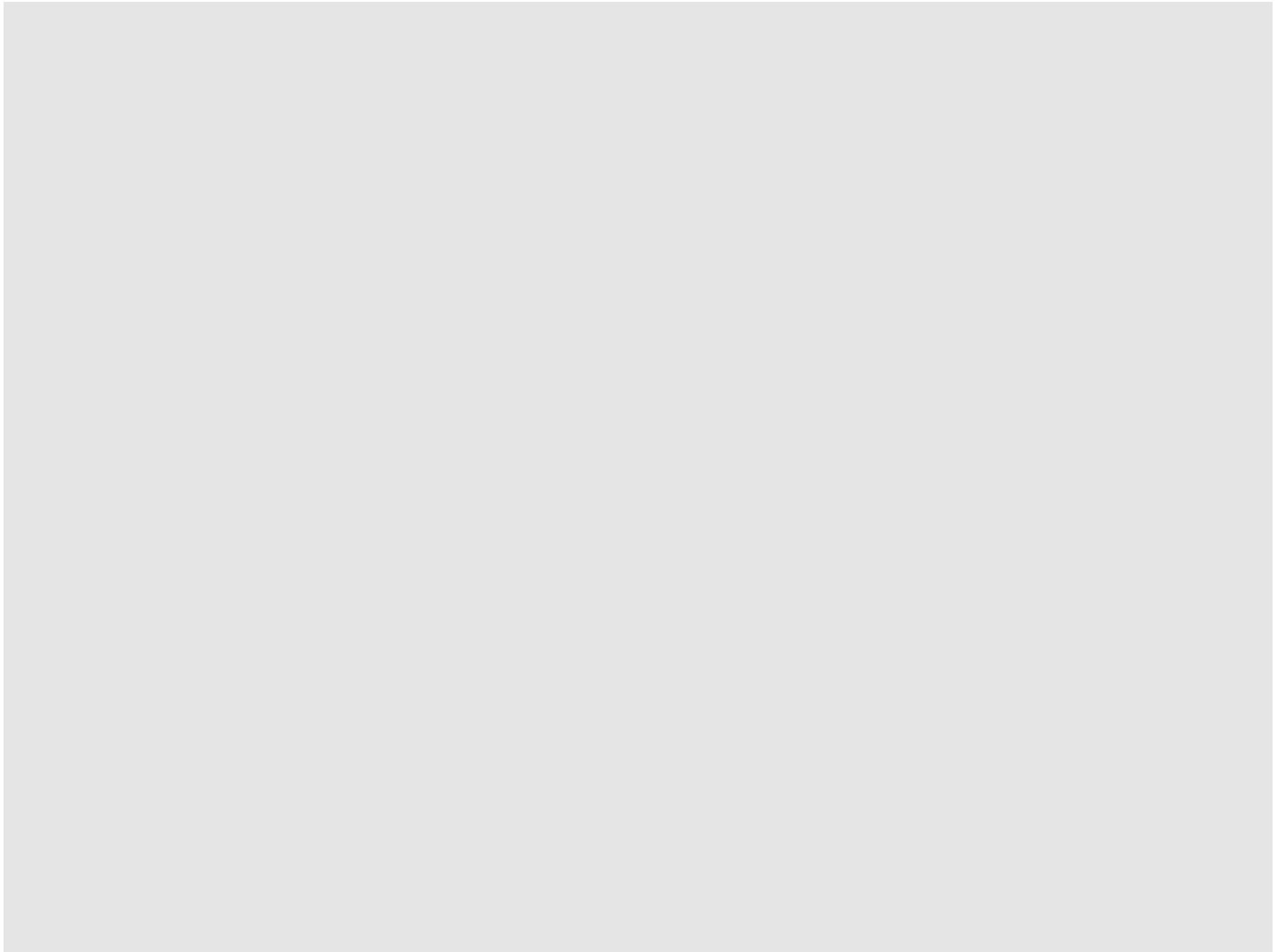
Through inclusive and accessible textile arts programs, Threaded Together partners with participants to nurture community and cultivate agency. By providing educational and economic opportunities—like free after-school sewing classes and paid sewing apprenticeships—Threaded Together gives kids, teens and adults opportunities to express their unique creative voices and realize their own capacity to make a difference for themselves and others.



Liminal Community Center

Liminal Community Center

Liminal is a nonprofit café and community center in downtown Flagstaff run entirely by volunteers, where all purchases are made on a donation-only basis. All sales and donations go directly into keeping the space up and running. Liminal encourage people to pay for their services when they are able to, so that those in our communities who can't pay are collectively supported. Their programs include live music, art exhibitions, winter clothing drives, poetry slams, Narcan training and much more.

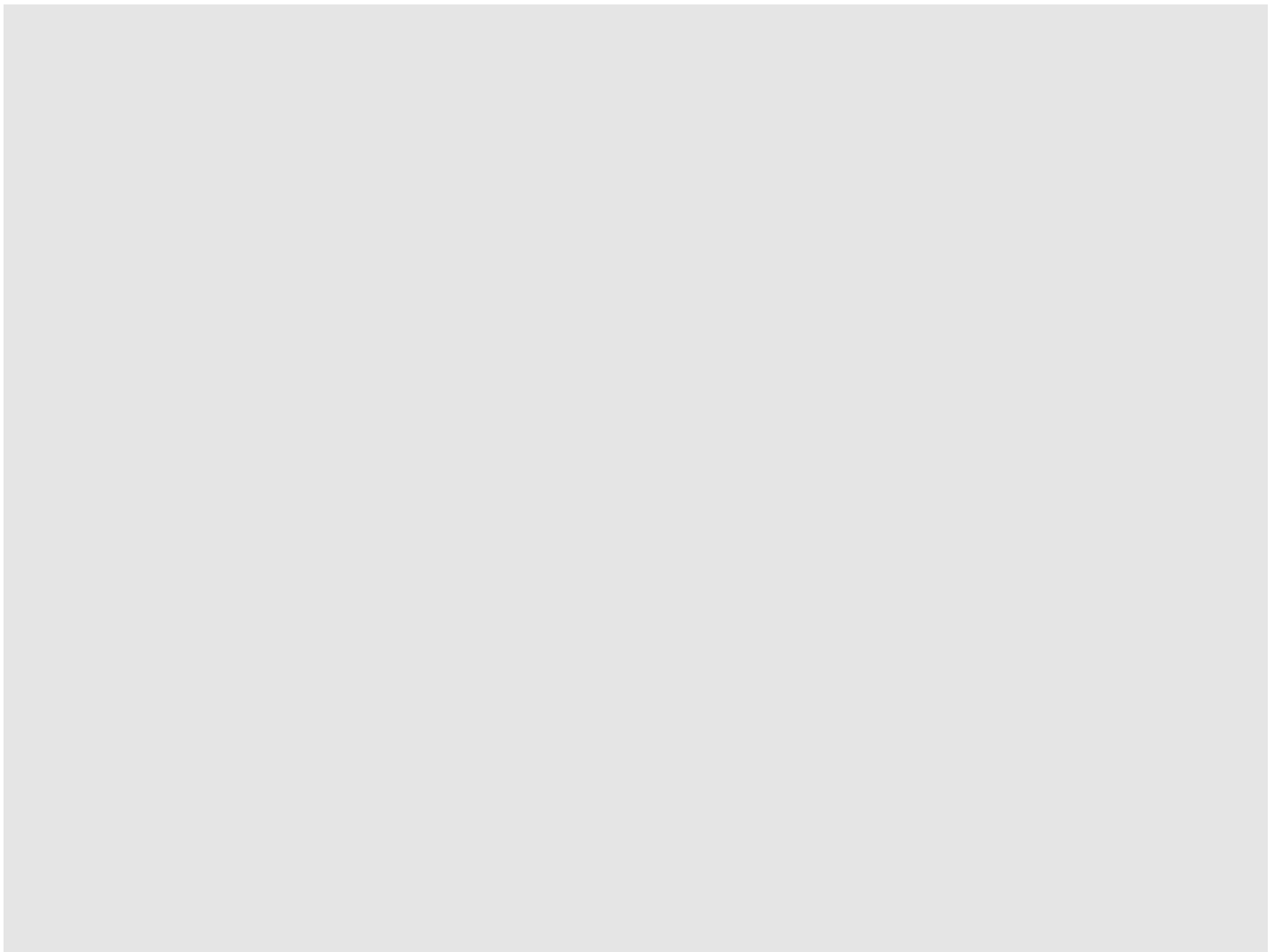


Flagstaff Community Band

Flagstaff Community Band

The Flagstaff Community Band (FCB) aims to enrich the community with free, quality, public concert performances in service to the community, provide a fun, inclusive and welcoming environment for musicians of all ages, and collaborate with other local organizations to serve the community with entertaining and educational musical experiences. In 2022, FCB celebrated it's 30th season.

Community Impact Individual



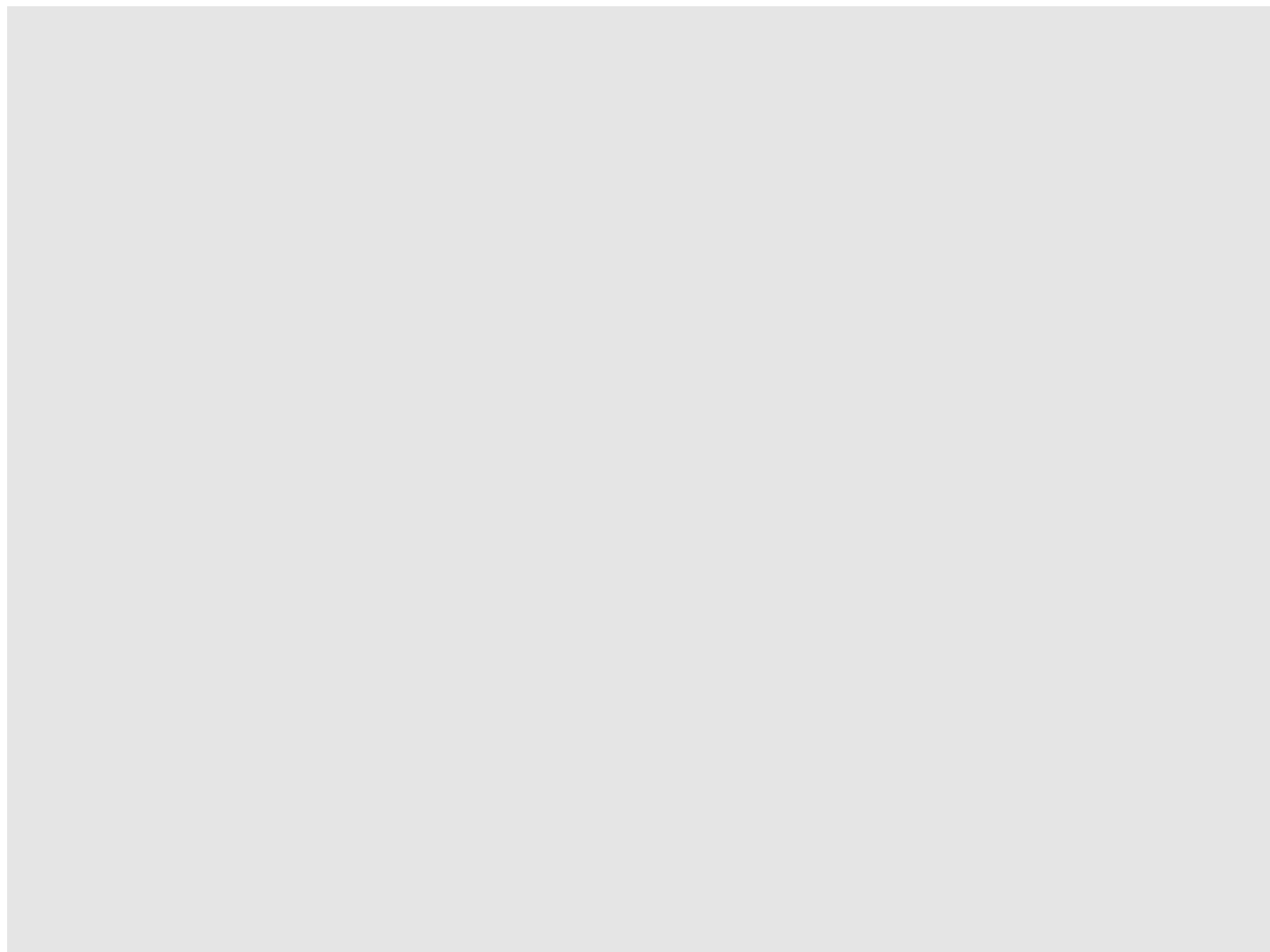
Audra Travelbee

Audra Travelbee

Audra Travelbee is the founder and executive director of Culture Connection AZ, a non-profit whose mission is dedicated to providing community-led programs, events and projects to foster awareness and understanding of cultures and the humanities in order to create a more informed, compassionate and interconnected community. Travelbee works tirelessly through Culture Connection AZ for Flagstaff's creative community. Many of the programs and events at Culture Connection AZ focus on providing space for marginalized artists including monthly events during First Friday ArtWalk which "provided exposure and access to almost 100 indigenous and LGBTQIA artists who had not yet had the opportunity to expose their work."

Owen Davis

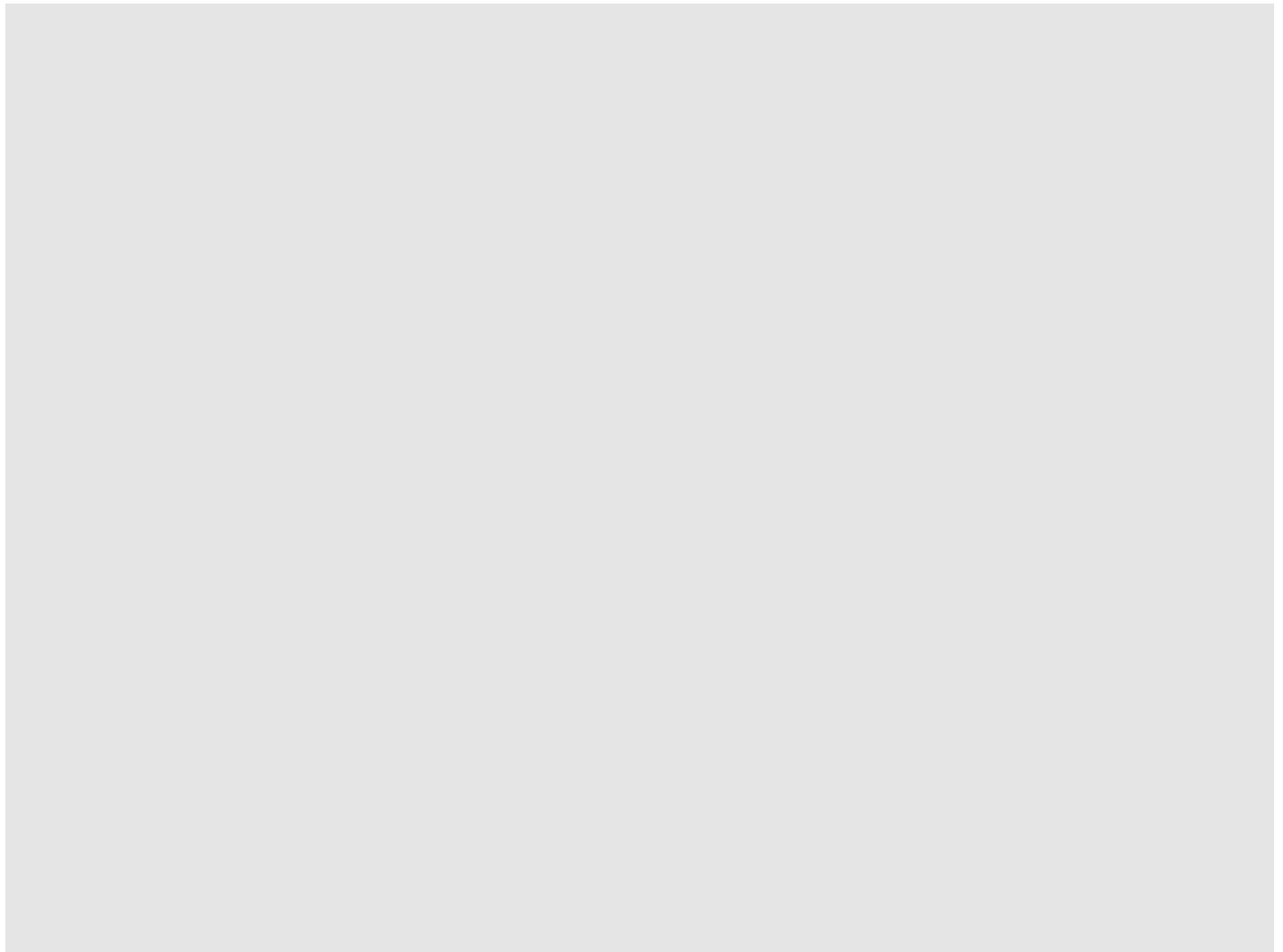
Owen Davis is a composer, percussionist and educator based in Flagstaff, AZ. He is employed as a teacher at Sturgeon Cromer Elementary School in Flagstaff Unified School District and also operates a private percussion studio, instructing students at all ages. Davis's contributions to Flagstaff's creative community are almost too vast to count. From his work with the Interference Series to playing with Flagstaff Community Band, if there's an interesting thing happening in town, Davis is likely tied to it.



Dillion Duvet

Dillion Duvet

Dillon Duvet is a young drag performing who works to organize and promote drag shows that bridge the Phoenix and Flagstaff drag communities including a “Flagstaff takeover” event at a venue in Phoenix as well as bringing drag performers from Phoenix to Flagstaff. Duvet also participated in the “Get Tested AZ” campaign which provides free HIV testing throughout the state and promotes the campaign through their social media channels. Duvet is the President of Spectrum at CCC, which is CCC’s LGBTQ Alliance Club. To add to that, Duvet uses their platform as a drag performer to promote LGBTQ activism during the shows. Their mission statement is to educate and advocate.

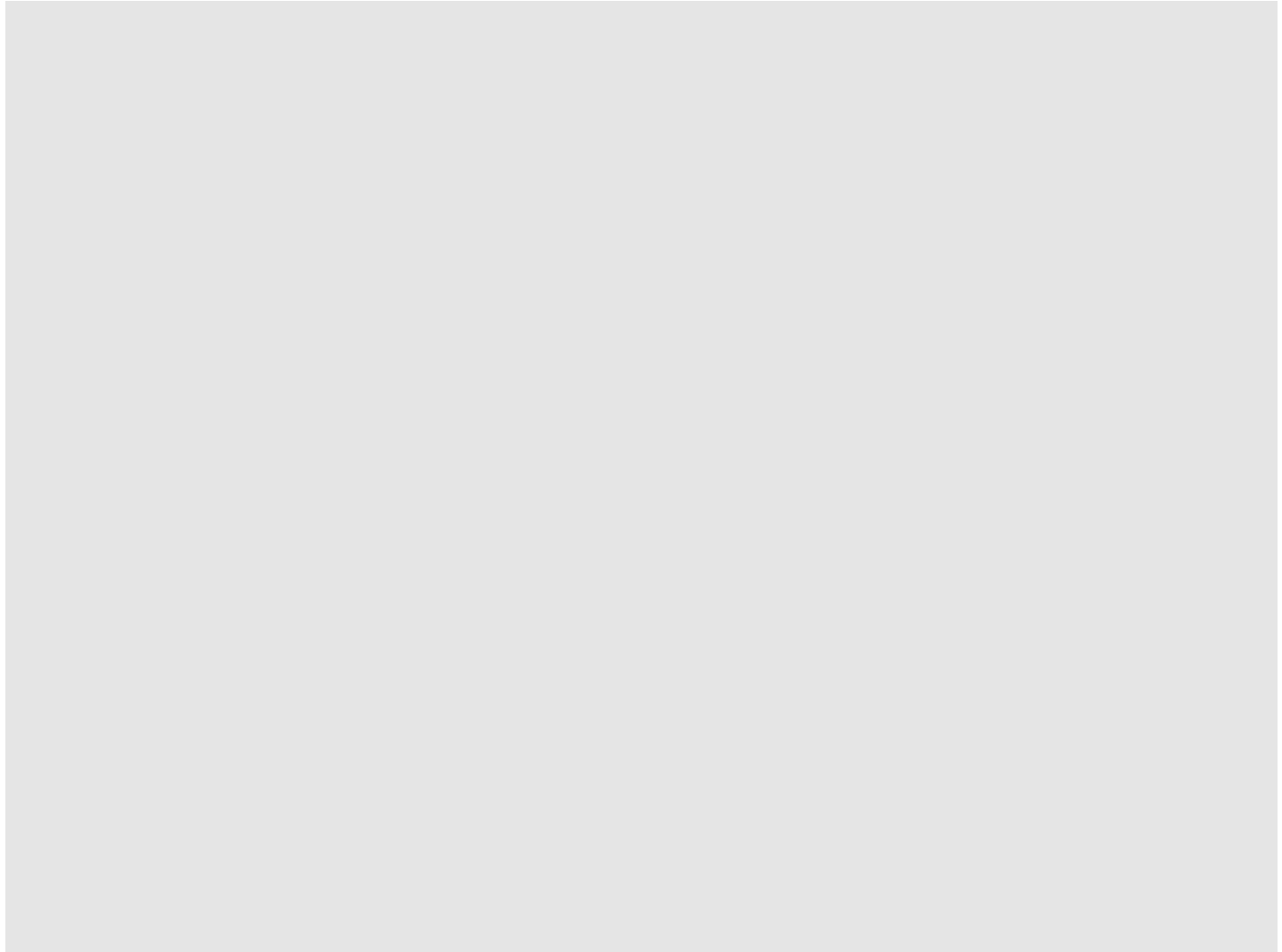


Duffie Westheimer

Picasa

Duffie Westheimer

Dufie Westheimer serves on the Townsite Community Land Trust Board of Directors. Westheimer has always lived in historic neighborhoods. Flagstaff has been her home for 40 years. Westheimer spearheaded creating Flagstaff's first and currently only local Historic Residential District for the Townsite neighborhood. She is conducting the Townsite Oral History Project. Those two projects led her to found Townsite CLT.



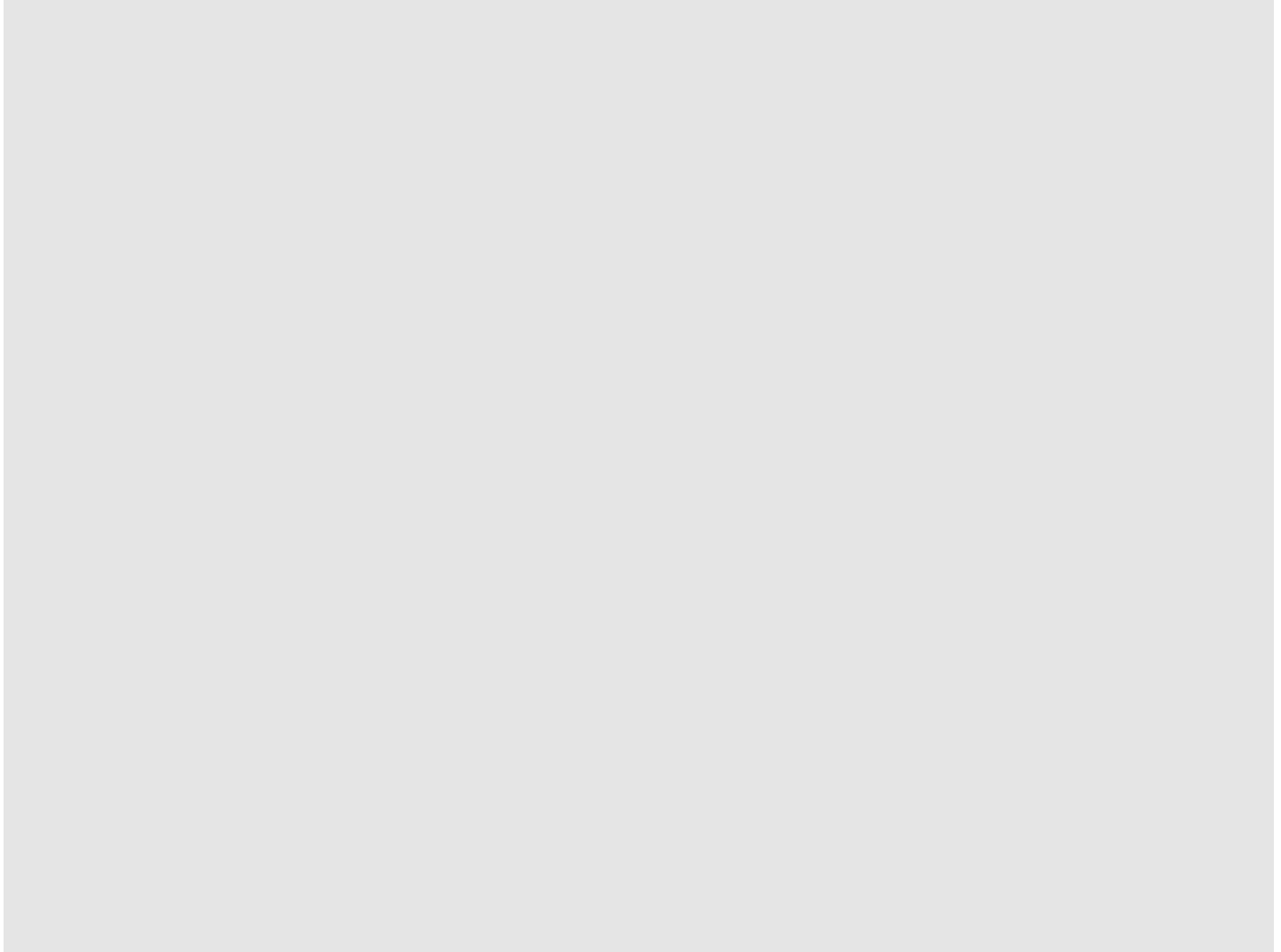
Geoffery Gross

Geoffery Gross

Geoffrey Gross is the Natural Resources Supervisor with the Coconino County Parks & Recreation department. Gross designed and constructed the Community Pond and Wetland at Elizabeth "Liz" C. Archuleta Multicultural Art and Nature County Park which was opened in 2022. This imaginative work in the heart of

Flagstaff is the culmination of a recently completed, multi-year project to create an Arizona Watchable Wildlife Experience (AWWE) at Willow Bend, with the goal of providing wildlife habitat and educating Flagstaff residents and visitors about wild animals, their habitat requirements and conservation.

Philanthropy Award



Arizona Community Foundation

Jason Grubb(JEHU)

Arizona Community Foundation

Arizona Community Foundation's (ACF) mission is to lead, serve and collaborate to mobilize enduring philanthropy for a better Arizona. In 2022, ACF of Flagstaff awarded \$96,730 to arts focused nonprofits through their Pickard Arts & Culture

and Music Education Funds for Flagstaff. With the help of this funding, 21 organizations are providing cultural experiences and education to the residents of our community.

Women Empowering Northern Arizona

WENA is a 100-who-care women's giving circle with the goal to gather 100 women, each giving \$100, resulting in a \$10,000 donation three times a year. They've raised over \$300,000 since their formation in 2014. Organizations they have supported include Northland Family Help Center, Threaded Together, Tynkertopia, The Literacy Center, Flagstaff Arts Council, Sharon's Manor and Flagstaff Shelter Services.

Troy Gillenwater

Since 2021, Gillenwater has served as the chair of the Museum of Northern Arizona (MNA) Board of Trustees, committing significant time, expertise, personal financial resources and fundraising expertise to the museum during a particularly challenging time not only in MNA's long history, but across the globe as the pandemic shut down and in many cases, shuttered cultural institutions for good. Thanks in large part to Gillenwater's leadership and generosity, MNA begins 2023 on solid financial footing and with a new strategic plan that will chart the course for the museum through its centennial in 2028. Prior to serving as board chair, Gillenwater was chairman of the MNA development committee for four years.

Desert Financial Credit Union

Desert Financial Credit Union opened their Flagstaff branch in July 2022. Since their opening, they have made a significant effort to support the Flagstaff community through sponsorship and corporate giving. In 2022 Desert Financial Credit Union sponsored many events in town including the First Friday ArtWalk and Flagstaff Oktoberfest in addition to giving to local non-profits Tynkertopia & Lowell Observatory.

Tags

