



Empowering Art, Empowering People:

SAY Sí is in the midst of an incredible transformation, featuring exciting new spaces, daring original artwork, and bold organizations shifts.

As we rise from the pandemic, we're focusing on empowerment and putting youth front and center.



2023
REPORT



SAY Sí ignites the creative power of young people as forces of positive change. We value artists, empower marginalized communities* and advance culture.

**SAY Sí defines marginalized communities as people of color, women, LGBTQ+, and the economically disadvantaged.*

Dear Friend,

Twenty-nine years ago, SAY Sí was founded with a vision to enrich the lives of San Antonio youth through the Arts, and our studio programs are nationally recognized leaders for this mission. SAY Sí works with student voice as the guiding light for positive change in our communities.

Nine months ago, I joined SAY Sí as Interim Executive Director. Their story of the COVID years is one of overcoming obstacles to continue their passionate and skilled work with students uninterrupted, whether in person or online. Combine this with our ambitious growth and move to a new campus on the near Westside, we must applaud the versatility of all staff and families. Yet administratively, these years also included many staffing transitions and challenges.

I have been so proud to work with the dedicated board and staff in 2023. The staff’s trust and respect have enabled SAY Sí to create relationships with new community partners, build our professional capabilities, and experiment with new outreach programs. The unwavering support from board chair **Jason Moran**, founder **Mike Schroeder**, and treasurer **Ana Cude** allowed us to witness progress on our campus construction. All of us together learned about non-profit union relations while coordinating a national search for SAY Sí’s new permanent executive director. We collectively stabilized the organization and never lost focus of our student successes.

Our advancement never pauses – please join me in celebrating SAY Sí successes. Read about our progress in this report – Mark your calendars for a Community Open House and the End-of-Year Student Showcase – **Donate to our vibrant future.** *Connect with SAY Sí!*

Kathy Armstrong Interim Executive Director

STAFF

Kathy Armstrong
Interim Executive Director

Jessica Beall
Communications and Marketing Associate

Lindsay Byrne
Operations Manager

Michael Foerster
Visual Arts Teaching Artist

Solstiz Ibarra-Campos,
Theatre Studio Assistant

Ashley Lopez
Media Arts Teaching Artist

Jackson Lundquist
Media Arts Studio Assistant

Ned Meneses
New Media Teaching Artist

Amalia Ortiz
Theatre Studio Director

Ashley Perez
Visual Arts Studio Director

Alex Ramirez
Media Arts Studio Director

Denise Thieme
Development Manager

Lilith Tijerina
Theatre Arts Teaching Artist

Stevan Živadinović
New Media Arts Studio Director

BOARD

Mike Schroeder
Founder

Jason Moran
President

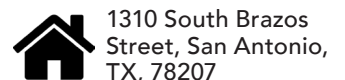
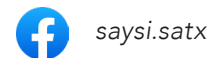
Ana Cude
Treasurer

Guillermina Zabala Suarez

Mario Moreno

Jim Mendiola

Léo Lee



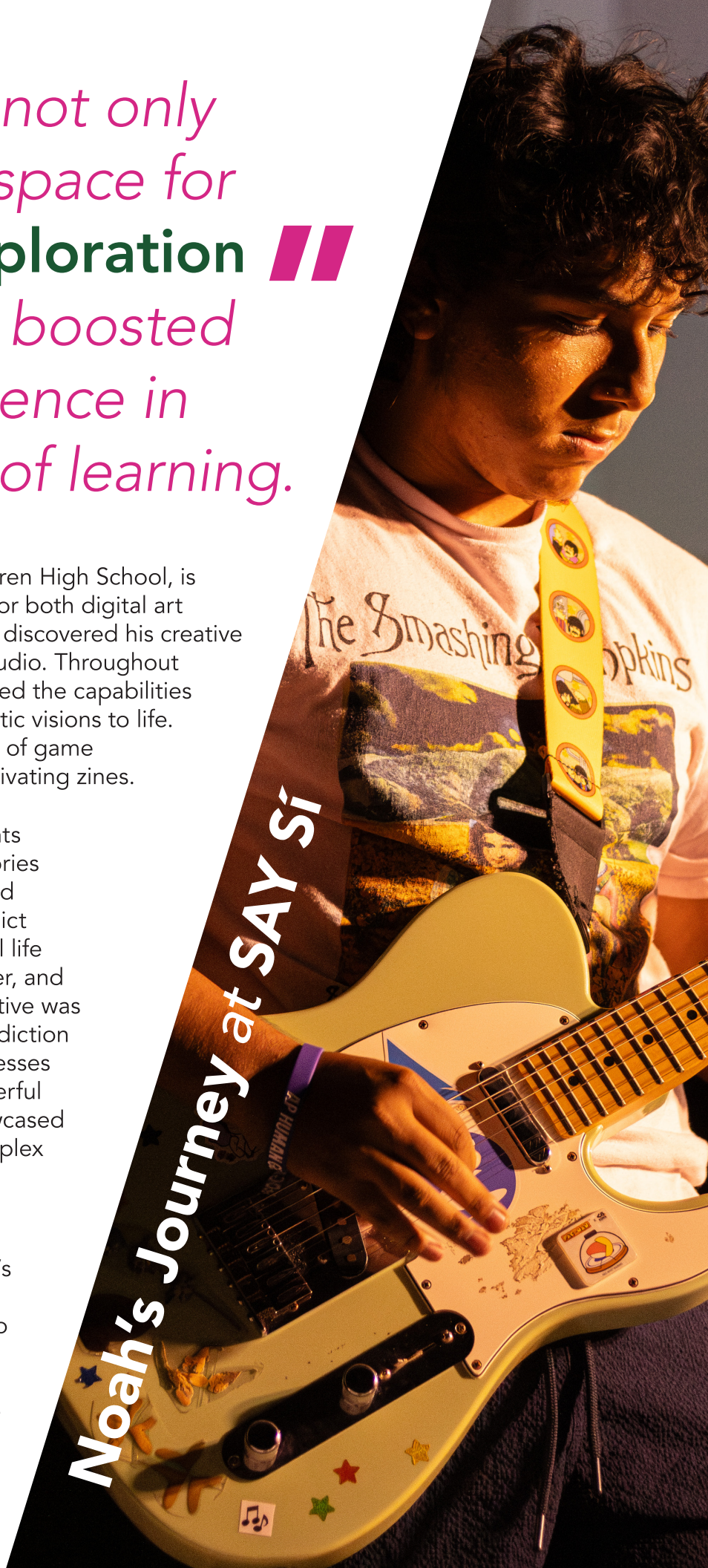
*The studio not only
provides a space for*
// creative exploration //
*but it's also boosted
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various areas of learning.*

Noah, a 16-year-old sophomore at Warren High School, is a gifted artist driven by a deep passion for both digital art and computer programming. In 2018, he discovered his creative sanctuary within the HIVE New Media Studio. Throughout his 5-year tenure, he has adeptly harnessed the capabilities of computers to bring his distinctive artistic visions to life. Noah has delved headfirst into the world of game development and the art of crafting captivating zines.

One of Noah's proudest accomplishments at SAY Sí was his participation in the "Stories Seldom Told" exhibit, for which he crafted the story-based game "San Antonio Addict Simulator." This game generated a virtual life for its players, complete with race, gender, and neighborhood characteristics. The objective was to emphasize the non-linear nature of addiction and recovery, illustrating that these processes look different for everyone. It was a powerful and thought-provoking project that showcased the potential of digital art to convey complex messages and promote understanding.

What Noah particularly cherishes about SAY Sí is the collaborative community he's found. "The studio not only provides a space for creative exploration but it's also boosted my confidence in various areas of learning." Our studio's nurturing and inspiring environment plays a pivotal role in his artistic and personal growth.

Noah's Journey at SAY Sí





HIVE New Media Arts Students working with visiting artist Tyler Chen

Our Commitment to Artists

SAY Sí believes in the expertise of practicing artists and is dedicated to providing the best experiences for our students. With these ideals in mind, we boosted our Visiting Artist Program with both short-term and long-term teaching opportunities.

The ALAS Theatre Studio hosted musicians [Jules Vaquera](#) and alumnus [Elias Flores](#) for a workshop on music theory and music creation software for a musical theatre project. Local movement specialist [Stephan Gaeth](#) facilitated ensemble building between new and veteran students, and makeup artist [Stephanie Trevino](#) provided a zombie makeup tutorial. Another SAY Sí alumnus, [Nat Lopez Romero](#), also returned to discuss their writing beyond SAY Sí.

The HIVE New Media Studio Director, [Stevan Živadinović](#), invited Korean video artist [SangHwa Park](#) who answered student questions about how to install technical art pieces for exhibition. [Pamela Martinez](#) of Teletextile was on campus for a summer session on electronic music composition and performance, and notable writer and storyboard artist [Tyler Chen](#) taught a 3-week-long workshop on making pitch bibles and storyboards.

Media Arts high school students made a day trip to Austin to visit the [Austin Film Society](#), [Texas Archive of the Moving Image \(TAMI\)](#), and [The Press Room's](#) collection of vintage movie letterpress plates. Students also collaborated with TAMI to create collage video projects for their End-of-Year Showcase opening December 1; toured [Digital Pro Lab](#), one of San Antonio's last full-service photography labs; and received a generous donation of Spurs jerseys and memorabilia from [Vanessa Macias](#) and [Tim Duncan](#) for a short narratives film project.

During the summer, **Visual Arts Studio Director [Ashley Perez](#)** led students on a captivating exploration of labor rights, activists, and movements within the United States through the expressive medium of screen printing. Teacher and skilled screen printer [Lenard Brown](#) helped students hone their skills to produce striking posters depicting pivotal moments and influential figures in labor rights history. Additionally, prominent activist [Sharyll Teneyuca](#) shared first-hand accounts and images of her aunt and civil rights icon, Emma Teneyuca. [MOVE Texas](#), a youth focused civic education organization, also shared their mission to mobilize, organize, and empower communities while recounting their journey of unionization. **▀**



Jackson Lundquist with Summer Saturday Attendees

A Year of Growth in our WAM Program

Our creative community has been buzzing with energy, and at the heart of it all was the Working Artist and Mentors (WAM) Program. We kicked off the academic year with **43** middle school students joining this young artist initiative. These talented individuals represent the future of the art world and bring fresh perspectives to our community. We also promoted six high school students to the role of WAM mentors. Leveraging their prior studio experience, these young mentors stepped up to guide and inspire fellow art students in this exciting peer-to-peer initiative.

In the Media Arts Studio, the mentor team grew by two members for the first time since 2019. In addition, **Jackson Lundquist**, a former WAM Mentor, transitioned into the role of Studio Assistant. Jackson's journey serves as a shining example of the professional development nurtured within our organization and to the transformative power of the WAM program.

The ALAS Theatre Studio had an exciting year with two WAM performances during our annual student-driven social justice exhibition "Stories Seldom Told." ALAS also hosted open mic events, field trips, visiting artist workshops,

and a memorable WAM puppet show featuring over 15 student-made puppets.

SAY Sí's Working Artist and Mentors program is fundamental to shaping the futures of emerging artists, fostering their creativity, and promoting the spirit of peer-to-peer collaboration. ▮



Sua Arroyo performing in "Family Dinner"





Spotlight *on* Student Achievements *in* Media Arts

SAY SÍ's MEDIA ARTS STUDIO is a haven for budding photographers and filmmakers, and we celebrate our students' remarkable achievements this year!

Unlocking the World of Cinema

Sophomore **Estevan Garcia** fueled his passion for storytelling by attending the Do It Your Damn Self!! National Youth Film Festival in Boston. Estevan's participated in the screening of his original film "Better Late Than Never" during his Q&A session at the longest running youth-produced festival in the country.

Youth Film Excellence

Graduate **Bella Tealey's** film "Spiral" won both the Audience Award and the Jury Award at Austin's Cine Las Americas International Film Festival. The film was also named Best Youth Film at this year's Contemporary Arts Month Student Film Festival.

Recognizing Exceptional Talent

Senior **Bjorgvin Arnarson** received the CineYouth Film Festival's Experimental award for his horror-tinged docufiction piece "Towerfall." CineYouth is an international film festival for filmmakers 22-years-old and younger produced by Cinema/Chicago, home to the longest running competitive film festival in North America.

Offical Selections

Other MAS projects were official selections at such prestigious festivals as the Mill Valley Film Festival, produced by the California Film Institute, and the Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center's CineFestival.

Fostering Growth *and* Professional Development at SAY Sí

SAY Sí's commitment to professional development and growth isn't limited to our students; it extends to our dedicated staff who work tirelessly to nurture young artists. We are proud to announce exciting additions to the team, a few studio transitions, and recent initiatives that have contributed to staff development and well-being.

We expanded our pool of talent by welcoming new ALAS team members **Lilith Tijerina** and **Solstíz Ibarra-Campos**. Lilith is a devoted alumna who has joined as a Teaching Artist, and Sol became a Studio Assistant. Both are adding fresh perspectives and energy to the ALAS Studio.

The Media Arts Studio was fortunate to have Teaching Artist **Alex Ramirez** move up into the role of Studio Director and to engage photographer **Ashley Lopez** as a new Teaching Artist.

The safety and well-being of students and staff are paramount at SAY Sí. Following a training on neurodivergence, Studio Directors introduced "chill" zones, dedicated safe spaces

where students can unwind and relax. Staff members also attended first aid and CPR training, keeping them ready to respond effectively in emergency situations.

ALAS Studio Director Amalia Ortiz attended the National Association of Latino Arts and Cultures' Advocacy Leadership Institute in Washington, DC. This training equipped her with the skills to advocate for arts funding and policy. Visual Arts Teaching Artist **Michael Foerster** embarked on an inspiring journey as an Artist in Residence at Maine's Watershed Center for the Ceramic Arts. This experience allowed Michael to create 400 miniature sculptures for an upcoming exhibition at The Contemporary at Blue Star.

SAY Sí continues to be a place where growth and professional development are celebrated and encouraged, not only for its students but also for its dedicated staff. SAY Sí's staff members are not just educators; they are lifelong learners, advocates, and artists in their own right, ensuring that they can provide the best possible experience for the young artists they mentor. ▀

Media Arts Studio Chill Spot





SAY Sí staff at The Botanical Gardens in November



Denise Thieme and CAM's Nina Hassele working Small Scale

Welcoming New Faces *and* Achieving Milestones

SAY Sí has been a hive of activity in its administrative offices. Led by Interim Executive Director **Kathy Armstrong**, the team has seen significant growth and progress, including welcoming new team members whose fresh perspectives have set the stage for innovation and advancement.

Operations Manager **Lindsay Byrne** spearheaded impactful improvements like streamlining accounting procedures, revitalizing the internship program, modernizing the student database, and exploring options for staff IRA plans and organizational insurance. Additionally, she sourced a more cost-effective Internet system and had new office phones installed. She has also been instrumental in reinstating our building rental program, with four rentals scheduled for this fall.

Since alumna **Jessica Beall** was promoted to Communications & Marketing Associate, our social media engagement has significantly increased, with Instagram's outreach tripling since 2022. Jessica's regularly scheduled distribution of **192,955** captivating emails marked an **81%** increase in engagement, nearly doubling the previous level of activity. Her newsletter consistency also contributed to an **11%** increase in the email open rate.

Denise Thieme, newly appointed Development Manager, joined SAY Sí shortly before the Small Scale event. With the Small Scale and Big Give events taking place concurrently, Denise was responsible for managing an influx of \$35,000.

Funding sources included Insite Architects, HEB and Alamo Colleges. Denise is actively pursuing grant opportunities, aiming to secure funding in 2024 by submitting 17 grant applications.

Holly Holbrook is helping SAY Sí as Grants & Operations Consultant. She has provided support in creating the annual budget and managing financials and currently manages four government grants – two with the City of San Antonio's Department of Arts & Culture and two from the Texas Commission on the Arts. We anxiously await word on a proposal she submitted to the National Endowment for the Arts this summer.

Our administrative team's commitment to streamlining operations, expanding our reach, and securing funding is fundamental to SAY Sí achieving its mission of empowering youth through the arts. ▀



Theatre Arts Studio Director Amalia Ortiz in Washington D.C.



A mother and daughter at our Summer Saturday event



Christopher Rubio at the Texas Civil Rights Project Dia De Muertos event

Outreach and Collaboration

Throughout the year, reached out to our community to foster meaningful relationships with local residents and area organizations. Our mission to provide a welcoming environment for people of all ages to come together through the arts has seen remarkable success.

Our Summer Studio Sessions were a highlight of the year, with each Saturday dedicated to a specific studio. This initiative not only brought 300 visitors to our campus but also paved the way for stronger connections with our neighbors on the Westside.

Our ALAS Theatre Studio made an impressive debut with a Haunted House that drew over 100 community members, including local families from the neighborhood. This event demonstrated the power of student art to bring people together and create memorable experiences.

Freshman ALAS student **Christopher Rubio** performed a bilingual poetry reading in honor of his departed cousin on the South Steps of the Texas Capitol during the Texas Civil Rights Project's Día de los Muertos event. Christopher's journey with SAY Sí has given him motivation and purpose to pursue his artistic aspirations. He views SAY Sí as a safe space of inclusivity that has bolstered his confidence and fostered a sense of freedom.

SAY Sí has had the privilege of collaborating with various organizations throughout the year, building a strong network of partners, extending the reach of our impact, and enhancing the experience for our students and the community.

- Our student's well-being is our priority, that's why we're excited to announce an upcoming partnership with the **Food Bank** to provide healthy snacks for our students.
- In the spirit of community health and well-being, we are working closely with **Metro Health** to offer vaccines to our community.
- To support the diverse needs of our students, we've partnered with **Planned Parenthood South Texas**, who generously stock our bathrooms with essential period products.
- **Leadership San Antonio** is enriching our environment by providing a Banned Book library, expanding our literary resources and promoting intellectual freedom.

Additionally, we had the privilege of collaborating with various organizations throughout the year, including:

Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center

Rinconcito de Esperanza Peace and Justice Center

San Anto Cultural Arts

The Historic Pearl

Carver Community Cultural Center

Contemporary at Blue Star

Artpace San Antonio

American Indians in Texas at the Spanish Colonial Missions

1906 Art Complex

Good Samaritan Community Services

San Antonio LGBT Chamber of Commerce

Texas Public Radio

Masters Leadership Program of Greater San Antonio

Thrive Youth Center

Wells Fargo

Chase Bank

San Antonio Botanical Garden

Rise Recovery

Girls Inc.

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN UPDATE

AS OF DECEMBER 28, 2022,

Capital Campaign Director, **Jon Hinojosa**, achieved a significant milestone with the successful acquisition of **New Market Tax Credits (NMTC)**. This federal financing required SAY Sí to create **Vamos Abrazos** to manage the funds and has empowered SAY Sí to not only retire our mortgage on the Brazos property but also provided us with a substantial reimbursement of **\$2.5 million**, covering the initial expenses associated with **Phase 1** – the development of temporary program spaces.

The NMTC are also facilitating the completion of **Phase 2**, which encompasses extensive exterior enhancements to our campus, including a new roof, parking, landscaping, utilities, and a formal entrance to our facility. We anticipate the conclusion of Phase 2 by the end of February 2024.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our esteemed national supporters, including the **U.S. Treasury, Accion Opportunity Fund, PNC Financial Institution, and Blue Hub.**

We also remain indebted to our major local benefactors, **Bexar County, the City of San Antonio, the Kronkosky Foundation, the Greehey Family Foundation, the Pryor Charitable Trust, the Charles Butt Foundation, the HEB Family Foundation,** as well as the countless individual contributors who have generously invested in our mission.

In 2024, we eagerly anticipate the expansion of our creative placemaking endeavors, where we seek to amalgamate the realms of arts, culture, and design to fortify San Antonio's Westside. Thank you for your patience during our campus improvements! ▀

WORKING TOGETHER

In 2021, SAY Sí staff began to explore forming a union to protect workers' rights, which aligns with the pillar in our mission statement, to empower marginalized communities. As a leading creative youth development organization, SAY Sí is committed to nurturing creativity, leadership, equity, and community through our programs and policies.

During the pandemic recovery years, there was much activity and news coverage of the struggle to align our board, staff, and management. In summer 2022, the board offered voluntary recognition for most eligible staff positions, yet this was declined. In fall 2022, staff petitioned the **National Labor Relations Board (NLRB)** to recognize all existing eligible staff positions for inclusion in the union, and the parties went to hearings with the NLRB.

On March 5, 2023, the full petition for all staff positions was recognized by the NLRB. Within days, the union was formally recognized by the board of directors. SAY Sí now has a voluntary recognition agreement in place with the **United Professional Organizers (UPO)**, our union representation.

Over the summer, all parties began negotiations using the **Interest-Based Bargaining (IBB)** method – a process in which parties discuss needs and work together to mutually solve issues rather than adversarial bargaining. SAY Sí sought assistance from the **Federal Mediation & Conciliation Service**, and our ground rules were established in September. Regular meetings are now in place, and we have high expectations for our future through tough, honest, and collaborative work to continue our mission-based work with integrity. ▀

CORAZÓN DONORS

Karen Esteves
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Winnona Carter
Michael Shroeder

Sylvia Armendariz
Sandra Ragan
Denise Thieme
Edith Frost



BECOME A
CORAZON DONOR
TODAY!

WISHLIST

While external renovations are in progress, we remain focused on updates needed inside our building to improve experiences and build capacity for everyone who walks through our doors.

THEATRE ARTS

Dressing room with mirrors
Extend black wall paint
(including lift rental)
Lighting for wood shop

NEW MEDIA ARTS

New computers
Hydraulic Paper
Cutter **(\$2,000)**
Manual paper
Cutter **(\$200)**

MEDIA ARTS

Increased professional
development opportunities
for WAM mentors
Heavy-duty
tripod **(\$1,000)**
Blackmagic Ursa Mini
Pro 12K Camera **(\$6,500)**
Light stand set **(\$1,000)**
Kino Flo Diva-Lite 401 Two
Light Kit with Flight Case
at 120 VAC **(\$3,000)**

VISUAL ARTS

Sink **(\$10,000)**
Shelving **(\$800)**
Smart screen **(\$5,000)**
Acoustic treatments
(up to \$20,000)
Kiln plug
(up to \$4,000)

ADMINISTRATION

Updated laptops
(\$5,000)
Welcoming and
comfortable parent
lounge **(\$4,000)**
Private conference
room **(\$6,000)**
New air conditioning
unit for tech closet

FUNDING PARTNERS

Miguel Gutierrez, Penny Weiderhold, Michael Schroeder, Thomas Ybarra, Joan Cheever, Edith Frost, Penny Wiederhold, Kathy Armstrong, AB Bernstein, Cheryl Armstrong Renmert, Carl Robin Teague, Ross Ambrose, Renaissance Charitable Foundation, Texas Cavaliers Charitable Foundation, Junior League Of San Antonio, Rabke Wyatt Family Foundation, Capitol Group, Terry & Regina Armstrong Family Charitable Foundation

A Portion of SAY Sí's Operations are Funded By

San Antonio Area Foundation, Texas Commission on the Arts, City of San Antonio Arts and Culture, and the National Endowment for the Arts



ARTS &
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