



2026 Oklahoma Arts and Health Summit



OKLAHOMA
Arts



Special thanks to Erin Bailey and Brittany Dray with OU Children's Hospital for their generous collaboration in programming and outreach, to The University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center for serving as a generous host, and to the team at Nicholson Conference Center for their gracious hospitality.



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Welcome from the Executive Director

On behalf of the Oklahoma Arts Council, the official state agency and leader for the arts in our state, welcome to the 2026 Oklahoma Arts and Health Summit. We are pleased to gather with you for this first-of-its-kind convening of practitioners, partners, and leaders who are advancing work at the intersection of creativity and wellbeing.



Over the past decade, across Oklahoma, through our Arts and the Military Initiative and Creative Aging Initiative, we have led the sector in the promising area of arts and health, evolving it in meaningful and measurable ways and growing the number of programs taking place. These experiences have deepened our understanding of how the arts can serve as a powerful tool for improving health outcomes by promoting mental and physical wellbeing, supporting physical rehabilitation and mobility, reducing isolation, and fostering connection in both clinical and community settings.

From our vantage point as a state arts agency, the impact is clear. At the same time, we recognize that this work is led and shaped by you, the practitioners. As this field continues to grow, we are committed to learning alongside you to better understand how we can support and strengthen these efforts across our state.

This summit offers an opportunity to share knowledge, build partnerships, and advance the role of the arts in health. Thank you for being part of this important work. We are glad you are here.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amber Sharples".

Amber Sharples, Executive Director

Agenda

9:00 a.m. – 9:15 a.m. | Opening Remarks

Location: Gandy Auditorium

- Welcome – Amber Sharples, Oklahoma Arts Council Executive Director
- Welcome – Lance Thomas, Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust Interim Executive Director
- Review of Agenda – Erika Wilhite, Oklahoma Arts Council Arts Learning in Communities Director

9:15 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. | Keynote by Dr. Tasha Golden

Location: Gandy Auditorium

10:30 a.m. – 11:45 a.m. | Plenary Session

Location: Gandy Auditorium

The State of Arts in Health: Trends, Data, and What's Ahead

12:00 p.m. | Lunch Session

Location: Room A

1:00 – 2:00 p.m. | Plenary Session

Location: Gandy Auditorium

Plenary Session: The Science of Music and Brain Health

2:15 p.m. – 3:15 p.m. | Concurrent Break Out Sessions

Location: Gandy Auditorium

The Arts as Support for Mental Health: Clinical and Community Pathways

Location: Conference Room C

Art as a Tool for Aging Health

3:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. | Plenary Session

Location: Conference Room A

Weaving It Together: A Collective Debrief and Next Steps

Keynote by Dr. Tasha Golden

9:15 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. | Location: Gandy Auditorium

Dr. Tasha Golden, behavioral scientist and former professional musician, explores the power of creativity to enhance health and wellbeing. Drawing on research and real-world examples, she will show how the arts can strengthen mental health, build community resilience, and inspire collaborations between artists, healthcare providers, and organizations.

What did you hear in the keynote that connects to your work or community?

The State of Arts in Health: Trends, Data, and What's Ahead

10:30 a.m. – 11:45 a.m. | Location: Gandy Auditorium

Following the keynote, this plenary brings together national and local leaders to explore the current state of the arts in health field. Panelists will share data, program models, and firsthand experiences that illustrate how creative practices are being embraced as powerful tools for health and wellbeing. From research-backed national trends to local hospital-based residencies, the discussion will highlight what's working, what's emerging, and where the field is headed.

Panel: Erin Bailey, Dr. Jenny Lee, Adrienne Hundley, Michael Rohd, Naj Wikoff

Moderator: Erika Wilhite

What did you hear that feels most important for Oklahoma?

What condition or partnership feels most needed?

Where might you fit in this work?

The Science of Music and Brain Health

1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. | Location: Gandy Auditorium

In this plenary session, Dr. Conecetta Tomaino will share the neuroscience behind music and brain health, highlighting research that demonstrates how music supports memory, movement, mood, and overall cognitive function. Grounded in clinical evidence and real-world practice, this presentation will inspire healthcare providers and arts organizations to integrate music-based programs into their services to improve health outcomes and quality of life.

Presenter: Dr. Conecetta Tomaino

Moderator: Bryon Chambers

What resonates?

What surprises?

What opportunities exist in your community?

The Arts as Support for Mental Health: Clinical and Community Pathways

2:15 p.m. – 3:15 p.m. | Location: Gandy Auditorium

This session explores how the arts are advancing mental health in both clinical and community settings. From tribal recovery programs to museum-based healing arts, improv for wellness, and music interventions for veterans, panelists will share models and best practices for integrating creativity into behavioral health care.

Panel: Vanessa Larwig, Rebecca McCoy, Shailah Red Elk-Ramos, Michael Rohd, Naj Wikoff

Moderator: Jennifer Easley

What resonates?

What surprises?

What opportunities exist in your community?

Art as a Tool for Aging Health

2:15 p.m. – 3:15 p.m. | Location: Conference Room C

This panel explores how the arts support healthy aging by strengthening cognitive function, physical health, social connection, and emotional wellbeing. Experts and practitioners will share research-backed strategies and real-world programs demonstrating measurable, positive health outcomes for older adults.

Panel: Dr. Keeli Duncan, Dr. Germaine Odenheimer, Erica Portell

Moderator: Dani Kiel

What resonates?

What surprises?

What opportunities exist your my community?

Weaving It Together: A Collective Debrief and Next Steps

3:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. | Location: Conference Room A

After a full day of learning and engagement, this session invites all attendees to pause, reflect, and connect. Guided by nationally recognized artist and facilitator Michael Rohd, participants will engage in a structured debrief that helps surface key takeaways, highlights areas of convergence across the day's sessions, and identifies concrete next steps for individuals and the field of arts and health in Oklahoma.

Facilitator: Michael Rohd

What is one idea, feeling, or connection you want to carry forward from today?

Bios (in order of appearance)

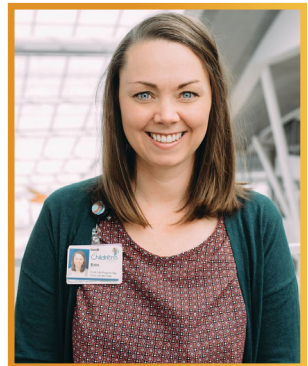
Dr. Tasha Golden is a behavioral scientist, former singer-songwriter, and leading expert on the impacts of creativity, design, and culture on wellbeing, innovation, and change. Golden was the first Director of Research for the International Arts + Mind Lab at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, is adjunct faculty in the University of Florida's Center for Arts in Medicine, and is lead author of *Arts on Prescription: A Field Guide for US Communities*. Named one of Fierce Pharma's "Fierce 50" for innovative work integrating arts and health, she publishes extensively on the intersections of arts, creativity, behavioral science, and flourishing.



Golden's areas of expertise include individual and organizational wellbeing, arts and health integration, creativity and behavioral science, culture change, and the role of narrative in shaping behaviors, systems, and flourishing. Her work is informed by her early experience as a career artist and entrepreneur, including her time as singer-songwriter for the band Ellery and as founder of Project Uncaged, a trauma-informed creative writing program for incarcerated girls.

Golden will share insight into the connections among science, creativity, wellbeing, and systems change, along with practical frameworks for reimagining work, communities, and possibilities.

Erin Bailey is Director of Child Life, Integrative and Creative Care at Oklahoma Children's OU Health. With more than 20 years in healthcare leadership and practice, she oversees programs supporting patients and families across 11 service areas, including Child Life, expressive therapies, school and STEM services, volunteer services, and therapy dogs. Bailey has helped expand music, art, and dance/movement therapy in pediatric care and advances collaborative, family-centered approaches to healing through arts integration in healthcare settings.





Adrienne Hundley is Head of Community Strategy and a founding team member at SocialRx, where she develops scalable models integrating arts and culture into healthcare and community systems. Her work focuses on arts-in-health program design, community engagement, and creative referral pathways. With a background in theatre and global development, Hundley has led workshops and training programs nationally and internationally,

using storytelling and performance to support mental health, social connection, and community well-being.



Dr. Jenny Baxley Lee is director of UF Health Shands Arts in Medicine, senior faculty at the UF Center for Arts in Medicine, and affiliated faculty with the School of Theatre and Dance. With 25 years of experience in arts in health and dance/movement therapy, her work focuses on professional practice, participant-led engagement, and community wellbeing. Lee has authored and co-authored influential publications in the field and co-founded the UF Center

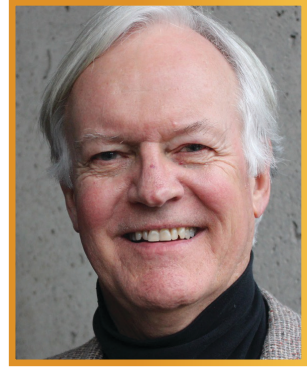
for Arts in Medicine master's degree program.



Michael Rohd is a theatre maker, process designer, and facilitator whose work connects theatre, civic practice, and public engagement. He co-founded Sojourn Theatre and served as artistic director for 23 years, co-creating more than 30 original productions. Rohd also co-founded the Center for Performance and Civic Practice and directs the Co-Lab for Civic Imagination at the University of Montana. His work focuses on participatory design, dialogue facilitation,

and arts-based approaches to civic and community wellbeing.

Naj Wikoff is Marketing Director for Aesthetics, Inc., a Fulbright Senior Specialist in Global Health, and cofounder and Vice President Emeritus of the National Organization for Arts in Health. An expert in integrating the arts into healthcare and public health settings, Wikoff has developed programs, trained artists for clinical and community work, and written extensively on the field's history and practice. His work emphasizes the role of the arts in healing, health, and community wellbeing.



Dr. Concetta Tomaino is Executive Director and co-founder, with Oliver Sacks, of the Institute for Music and Neurologic Function. A board-certified music therapist with 47 years of experience, Tomaino is internationally recognized for her research on music in neurologic rehabilitation and healthy aging. Her work focuses on music therapy, music and the brain, and evidence-based approaches that support rehabilitation, senior wellness, and quality of life in healthcare settings.



Vanessa Larwig is Outreach Coordinator for the Oklahoma City Museum of Art, where she develops and facilitates gallery and studio experiences for patients in behavioral health settings. With more than 20 years of experience in art education, Larwig specializes in studio-based teaching, painting, mixed media, and participant-centered instruction. Her work connects participants with museum collections while supporting creative expression, coping skills, and wellbeing across children, adult, and geriatric populations.





Rebecca McCoy is a music therapist at the Oklahoma City VA Medical Center, where she provides music-based interventions in inpatient and outpatient care. Her clinical work focuses on mental health support, emotional regulation, coping skills, and recovery for veterans through evidence-based music therapy practice. McCoy is board certified and state licensed, and her work highlights the role of music in supporting

wellbeing in veteran healthcare settings.



Shailah Red Elk-Ramos is a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) Candidate serving Native communities through the Southwest Oklahoma Federal Indian Hospital Behavioral Health Clinic. A citizen of the Comanche Nation and descendant of the Kiowa and Cherokee nations, she integrates creative expression into her work in mental health, wellness, and community healing. Red Elk-Ramos provides community-based behavioral health support across tribal nations,

schools, nonprofits, and shelters, with a focus on arts-centered approaches that strengthen connection, resilience, and wellbeing.



Jenn Easley is an Oklahoma City-based arts and wellness practitioner and advocate focused on integrative arts approaches to mental health, community connection, and quality of life. She works with Redeem Studio and co-founded The Siatha Project, which provides arts-based programming for veterans, families, and communities. Easley's work centers on the intersection of arts, wellness, and community care, supporting resilience, reflection, and emotional wellbeing

through creative practice.

Dr. Keeli Duncan is Chief Executive Officer of Cherokee Elder Care. A healthcare executive with more than a decade of leadership in Cherokee Nation Health Services, she previously served as Chief Experience Officer and Senior Director of Clinic Administration for the largest tribally operated outpatient health center in the United States. Duncan's work focuses on culturally responsive, elder-centered care, interdisciplinary collaboration, and system improvement. Her leadership emphasizes relationship-centered practice and community wellbeing in supporting aging populations.



Germaine Odenheimer is a geriatric neurologist and Professor Emeritus at the University of Oklahoma College of Medicine, and an advocate for older adults and people living with dementia. Trained in neurology and geriatrics at the University of Florida, she has held faculty appointments at several major medical schools and helped develop geriatric medical education at OU. Her work has focused on dementia care, aging policy, caregiver support, and driving safety in older adults, alongside continued involvement in Alzheimer's initiatives and brain health advocacy in Oklahoma.



Erica Portell is Director of Community Engagement at Oklahoma City Ballet, where she leads inclusive dance programs connecting professional ballet with diverse communities across the Oklahoma City metro. With more than 13 years at the organization, she has worked with students, youth organizations, older adults, and Dance for Parkinson's participants. A former performer, Portell focuses on equitable access to dance and inclusive movement education, with expertise in intergenerational programming and community engagement that supports wellness, mobility, and connection.





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