

# Take-home lessons



CHRISTOPHER DOLAN /  
STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

**Dr. Catherine Richmond-Cullen, left, and Liz Faist are leaders of the Arts in Education program through NEIU 19.**

## NEIU offering virtual arts programs for all ages

**BY CAITLIN HEANEY WEST**

STAFF WRITER

**E**ven though galleries and theaters remain closed and most students will learn from home this fall, the arts endure in Northeast Pennsylvania.

And this academic year, schools, youth and senior citizens can learn more about the arts and develop their own skills thanks to virtual programs from Arts in Education Northeast PA at Northeastern Educational Intermediate Unit.

“When everything shut down in mid to late March, we knew right away that ... it was going to be a very long time before we could re-enter as guests either in senior homes, senior centers or in our schools,” said Dr. Catherine Richmond-Cullen, director of aieNEPA at NEIU. “Because these are very sensitive populations, you don’t want to be around children, and you don’t want to bring any germs in to the elderly.”

And so Richmond-Cullen went forward with developing a format to deliver arts lessons online and then taught the artists running the lessons how to use that framework. While other organizations around the area have started offering online arts courses, Richmond-Cullen pointed out how her instructors have been trained on using various kinds of classroom technology and how students also will learn history and context in their lessons.

“We have Pennsylvania Council on the Arts-vetted artists who have received ... professional development on a virtual framework that is based on brain research,” Richmond-Cullen said. “We’re not just getting on and they’re singing and dancing. These artists are developing lessons that address the academic standards. ... It’s very in depth, not just a cutesy lesson, and that is for our little ones as well.”

Two entities — aieNEPA at NEIU and Wellness by Design — will offer the virtual programs. The aieNEPA online activities during the 2020-21 academic year include:

■ **Arts for Life:** This free program connects senior citizens with professional artists to create their own artwork, and they also get free Broadway Theatre League show tickets thanks to grants from the Scranton Area Foundation and the Willary Foundation. Additionally, funding from the Lackawanna County Area Agency on Aging supports art programs for caregivers and care recipients.

■ **Enhancing Educator Creativity:** The NEIU has partnered with Broadway Theatre League of Northeastern Pennsylvania to offer this program that gives teachers a chance to not only study the arts with professionals working in musical theater but also earn

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Act 48 continuing education credits. Participating teachers also will get free tickets for league shows.

■ **instaARTS: Delivering Artists to YOU:** Thirty professional teaching artists who have been vetted by the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts and trained in “a research-based framework for virtual instruction and assessment” will instruct students in two grade clusters, two to five and six to 12. aieNEPA has partnered with the Philadelphia Arts in Education Partnership for the program, which will include an academic standards-based arts curriculum. The NEIU has received grant money to help it team up with school districts in NEPA and Southeastern Pennsylvania, but parents also can buy the program to teach their kids at home.

■ **instaARTS: Full STEAM Ahead:** Thanks to a grant from the Scranton Area Foundation to develop a STEAM program, the NEIU can offer these lessons developed by professional teachers, museum educators and artists. Professional teaching artists will handle the instruction, with students in grades three to five learning about math and science through the arts. The program is available to school districts and parents.

■ **The Northeastern Pennsylvania Conservatory for the Performing Arts:** Another partnership with Broadway Theatre League, this eight-week Saturday master class program (three semesters will be offered) is open to students in grades three to five and six to 12. They will learn from artists of all kinds located around the country and receive free tickets to Broadway Theatre League’s spring season at Scranton Cultural Center at The Masonic Temple.



FILE PHOTO

**Gilert McFarland, 75, of Taylor, works on his drawing during an Arts for Life program at Taylor Community Center.**

### More information

For details about the virtual programs, visit [aienepa.org](http://aienepa.org); contact Dr. Catherine Richmond-Cullen, director of aieNEPA at NEIU, at [catcullen627@gmail.com](mailto:catcullen627@gmail.com); or contact Liz Faist, assistant director of aieNEPA, at [lfaist@iu19.org](mailto:lfaist@iu19.org) or 570-876-9253.

■ The Northeastern Pennsylvania Visual Arts Academy is a partnership with the Everhart Museum offering Saturday classes for grades seven to 12. Professional working artists from a variety of mediums will teach classes inspired by the Everhart’s collections. In addition to learning about art history, the students “will be encouraged to develop artworks that can be submitted to the national art competition, Scholastics,” which the Everhart manages locally, according to the NEIU.

Wellness by Design, meanwhile, offers what the NEIU calls “social emotional learning through the arts” for students in every grade. Developed by the Creative Life Alliance, the lessons are open to school districts and involve a licensed psychologist and professional artists teaching kids social emotional skills.

The InstaARTS and Saturday programs will happen live through the agency’s website, [aienepa.org](http://aienepa.org).

“We’ll make the schedule

so that if the school wants every third-grader to have arts programming, we’ll work with them so their schedule fits ours,” Richmond-Cullen said.

She expects the programs to start in mid-October, which will give the schools time to get back into the swing of things. They want to give as many programs as they can at a reduced cost.

Residents of senior living communities located anywhere are great candidates for Arts for Life, which started last fall with in-person lessons in genres such as poetry, painting, theater and music, Richmond-Cullen noted. They just need internet access and a tablet or computer to participate in the lessons, which happen on Zoom. (Programs for caregivers are open only to people from Lackawanna County.)

“The artists are wonderful,” Richmond-Cullen said.

The various programs not only provide arts instruction accessible to anyone with technology but



FILE PHOTO

**Earl Lehman helps Ann Marie Haiker with her painting during a prior Arts for Life program at Taylor Community Center.**



FILE PHOTO

**Arts for Life is a program that exposes senior citizens, care recipients and caregivers to a wide range of arts. This year it will be conducted online.**

also give artists employment, Richmond-Cullen said.

“These artists are working, and so many people aren’t .... and it’s work they

love,” she said. “They’re not taking side jobs that they don’t really want to do. They’re working as artists and I’m thrilled that we’re able to support the economy

and support our artists regionally.”

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