



ARTSQUEST™
imagine that

History of ArtsQuest¹



1984 – Musikfest is Born

Musikfest is launched by ArtsQuest founder Jeff Parks.

1989 – Bethlehem Musikfest Association (BMA) Formed

The nonprofit behind Musikfest is officially formed to organize the festival and promote arts in the city.

1993 – First Christkindlmarkt Held

Inspired by traditional German holiday markets, Christkindlmarkt Bethlehem debuts.

1998 – Banana Factory Opens

The BMA opens the Banana Factory, a former banana warehouse converted into an arts center with galleries, studios, and classes.



2000s – Expanded Cultural Programming

BMA offers year-round events in visual arts, education, and cinema.

2004 – Organization Becomes “ArtsQuest”

The BMA officially rebrands as ArtsQuest.

2011 – SteelStacks Campus Opens

The ArtsQuest Center at SteelStacks opens on the historic Bethlehem Steel site.

2014 – Musikfest Celebrates 30 Years

Musikfest hits a major milestone, continuing to grow with new stages and national headliners.

2020 – Pandemic Innovation

ArtsQuest pivots to virtual programming, including a digital Musikfest, supporting artists and staying connected to the community.

2023 – Musikfest Turns 40

ArtsQuest celebrates 40 years of Musikfest, continuing economic and cultural impact.



Our Mission²

ArtsQuest will provide access to arts, culture and educational programs for the diverse residents of the Lehigh Valley and others who seek access in our community by:

- Using arts and culture as key elements of economic development for our urban communities.
- Providing quality cultural experiences for individuals, families, youth, children at risk, senior citizens and individuals with special needs.
- Partnering with business organizations, educational institutions, government agencies and other nonprofit organizations.
- Maintaining a strong, clear communication network for all stakeholders, including volunteers, donors, staff, vendors and community.
- Empowering volunteers to govern the organization, and to develop and produce cultural programs that meet community needs.
- Developing a staff that demonstrates the excellence of the organization and works in harmony with each other and the volunteer corps.
- Providing education in the creative arts in areas not well represented by traditional educational institutions in the community and becoming a resource for arts education and arts-in-education for the region.



Our Leadership³



Kassie Hilgert

President & CEO

"There is no telling how far you can go if you don't care who gets the credit."

I'm most proud of the colleagues and volunteers I have the honor of working with everyday and our efforts to make Bethlehem and the Lehigh Valley a better place through the arts.



Curt Mosel

Chief Operating Officer

"You don't have to run faster than the bear to get away. You just have to run faster than the guy next to you." – Jim Butcher

I'm most proud of the growth of ArtsQuest since 2010 when we were a staff of 30. We have grown by 250% since then, and have become known as a regional destination for a wide variety of programs.



Selena Lavonier

**Executive Director, ArtsQuest Foundation and
Sr. Director of Advancement, ArtsQuest**

"You can't use up creativity. The more you use, the more you have"
– Maya Angelou

I'm most proud of the tremendous impact ArtsQuest has on our community through many people working together.

Fun Facts



In **1937**, Bethlehem was proclaimed “Christmas City, USA“, having been founded on Christmas Eve **1741**.⁴

At its height, Bethlehem Steel was the second-largest steel producer in the United States and one of the largest shipbuilding companies in the world.⁵

ArtsQuest offers multi-disciplinary programs for students, including after-school and summer enrichment courses in visual arts, ceramics, painting, photography, and more.⁶

Throughout **2024**, we offered more than **4,500** events, festivals, classes, performances and workshops, of which nearly **40%** were free for the community to attend.⁷

The Turn & Grind Shop, a **150**-year-old building apart of the Bethlehem Steel Corporation, will undergo renovations prior to its expected grand opening in **2027**.⁸

About

Kassie Hilgert⁹ is the President and Chief Executive Officer at ArtsQuest, A nonprofit organization dedicated to offering art, culture, and educational programs to the diverse residents of the Lehigh Valley and others who wish to engage with the community. She works closely with her colleagues and volunteers to enrich Bethlehem, and the Lehigh Valley through the arts.¹⁰



Hilgert joined ArtsQuest in 2008, starting as Vice President of Advancement. In 2010, she was promoted to Senior Vice President of Marketing and Advancement, where she supervised ArtsQuest's sponsorship, marketing, development, ticketing, public relations and volunteer departments. In July 2014, the Board of Trustees unanimously selected Hilgert to be ArtsQuest's second President and CEO. Today, she remains committed to guiding ArtsQuest toward an even greater future.¹¹



Hilgert brings her expertise in management, communication, and marketing from previous organizations. She was the Manager of Community Relations and Philanthropy at Air Products from 2005 to 2008. She previously held the position of Senior Communications Specialist at Air Products from 2003 to 2005. She started her career at Good Shepherd Rehabilitation Network as the Director of Marketing in 1998.¹²

Hilgert holds a degree in Communications from Penn State University. She serves on many nonprofit boards and committees including Discover Lehigh Valley Executive Board of Directors, the PNC Bank Regional Advisory Board and the Lehigh Valley Partnership Board of Directors. She earned the Non-profit Management Certificate at Georgetown's Public Policy Institute in 2014 and the Association of Performing Arts Presenters Emerging Leaders Certificate in 2013.

Her most recent award is the Bethlehem Chamber of Commerce Priscilla Payne Hurd Award, which recognized Hilgert for her impact and influence in the Bethlehem community through the arts, education and health care. Her other awards include City and State PA's "Above & Beyond" Women Award, the Athena Leadership Award and the Girl Scouts Take the Lead Award.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Darius Rucker to Headline Musikfest 2025¹³

BETHLEHEM, Pa. (May 2, 2025) — Country music star Darius Rucker will take the stage as the headliner for Musikfest 2025 on Sunday, Aug. 8, at the Wind Creek Steel Stage.

Now in its 42nd year, Musikfest, hosted by the nonprofit ArtsQuest, features more than 500 performances across multiple stages, with select ticketed events bringing major national acts to the Wind Creek Steel Stage. Rucker's headlining performance is expected to be one of the festival's highlights, offering fans an opportunity to experience his signature blend of country and rock in an intimate, high-energy setting.

Rucker, a three-time Grammy Award winner, first rose to fame as the lead singer of Hootie & the Blowfish before launching a solo country music career that has produced chart-topping hits such as "Wagon Wheel," "Come Back Song," and "If I Told You." Beyond his music, Rucker is a dedicated philanthropist, supporting causes such as St. Jude Children's Research Hospital and educational initiatives through the Hootie & the Blowfish Foundation.

Tickets for Rucker's performance are available at Musikfest.org. Seating options include general admission and exclusive packages such as The Steel Terrace, which offers premium seating and hospitality for groups.

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About Musikfest

Founded in 1984 and presented by the nonprofit ArtsQuest, Musikfest is the largest free music festival in the United States, attracting more than a million attendees annually to Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Spanning 10 days each August, Musikfest showcases a diverse lineup of artists across all genres, along with food vendors, artisans, and family-friendly entertainment. For more information, visit Musikfest.org.

About ArtsQuest

ArtsQuest is a nonprofit organization that provides access to arts, culture, and educational experiences in the Lehigh Valley and beyond. Through its flagship programs, including Musikfest, Christkindlmarkt, and the Banana Factory Arts Center, ArtsQuest supports local and national artists while enriching the community through music, film, visual arts, and arts education. Proceeds from its events and initiatives help fund free and low-cost arts programming year-round. For more information, visit ArtsQuest.org.

Endnotes

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- 2 “Our Mission.” ArtsQuest, www.artsquest.org/who-we-are/our-mission/.
- 3 “Staff List.” ArtsQuest, www.artsquest.org/connect/staff-list/.
- 4 “Our Story.” ArtsQuest, www.artsquest.org/who-we-are/our-story/.
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- 6 “Programs for Students.” ArtsQuest, www.artsquest.org/what-we-do/education/programs-for-students/.
- 7 “2024 Annual Report to the Community.” ArtsQuest, www.artsquest.org/2024-annual-report-to-the-community/.
- 8 “2024 Annual Report to the Community.” ArtsQuest, www.artsquest.org/2024-annual-report-to-the-community/.
- 9 Kassie Hilgert – President & CEO – Artsquest | LinkedIn, www.linkedin.com/in/kassie-hilgert-28499722.
- 10 “Kassie Hilgert.” Kassie Hilgert – Lehigh Valley, PA – Lehigh Valley Economic Development | Allentown, Bethlehem, Easton, Pennsylvania, www.lehighvalley.org/staff-directory/board-of-directors/kassie-hilgert/.
- 11 “ArtsQuest President and CEO Kassie Hilgert Awarded the Priscilla Payne Hurd Award.” ArtsQuest, www.artsquest.org/artsquest-president-and-ceo-kassie-hilgert-awarded-the-priscilla-payne-hurd-award/.
- 12 Press, The. “ArtsQuest’s Hilgert Chosen Nonprofit’s President-CEO: Lehigh Valley Press.” ArtsQuest’s Hilgert Chosen Nonprofit’s President-CEO – Lehigh Valley Press, www.lvpnews.com/20140723/artsquests-hilgert-chosen-nonprofits-president-ceo-6/.
- 13 “Darius Rucker – Event – Musikfest.” Musikest, 9 Aug. 1970, www.musikfest.org/event/16829/darius-rucker/.

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6. “Curt Mosel – Artsquest.” LinkedIn, www.linkedin.com/in/curtmosel/.
7. “Staff List.” ArtsQuest, www.artsquest.org/connect/staff-list/.
8. “Pictures: ArtsQuest Names Kassie Hilgert New President.” The Morning Call, The Morning Call, 28 Dec. 2018, www.mcall.com/2014/07/15/pictures-artsquest-names-kassie-hilgert-new-president/.
9. WDIY | By Bill Dautremont-Smith. “My 3 Songs: Artsquest President and CEO Kassie Hilgert.” WDIY, WDIY, 9 May 2024, www.wdiy.org/wdiy-headlines/2024-05-08/my-3-songs-artsquest-president-and-ceo-kassie-hilgert.