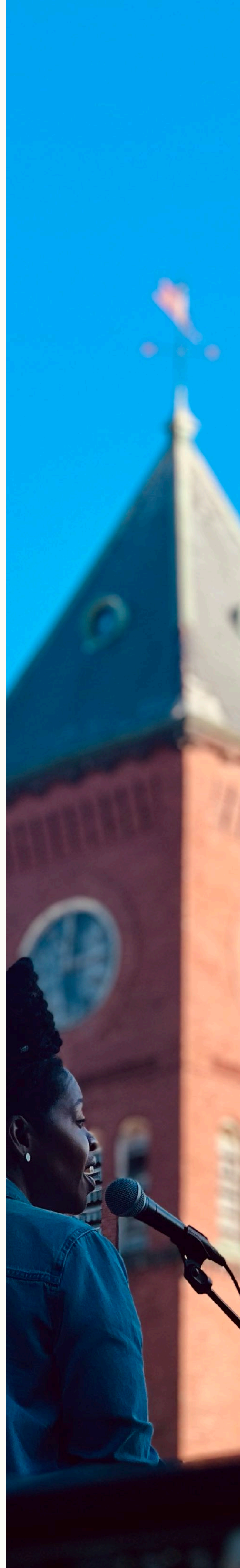


Bellforge Arts Center

# Annual Report 2024



Where community and creativity come together





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Dear Friends,

I'm delighted to share this year's milestones and the progress we've made as we continue to build momentum toward fully realizing our vision for Bellforge. I'm thrilled to announce that we've received a \$1M matching grant that – when paired with additional donations – will significantly advance our efforts to build your arts center. While we still have a considerable amount to raise before the project is fully funded, this brings us one step closer to expanding cultural opportunities and community-building experiences in MetroWest. We wouldn't be here without your partnership and support.

As I reflect on the past three years of programs at Bellforge, I'm fulfilled by the shared smiles and collective joy. The arts are especially powerful when seen, heard, and felt communally. From our earliest days, we've fostered dynamic engagement and ignited a creative spark that has illuminated the special magic of the arts when experienced together. This is why our events feel like home – whether you come alone, with a friend, or with family, you leave with new connections and memories. I know this is true for me, and I'm grateful to you for creating this community.

As we embrace a future with more arts and cultural experiences for all, let's deepen this bond. Join us on this journey full of music, art, food, and community, as we take bold steps to craft a destination setting enlivened by a distinct, diverse sense of place. Our exciting path forward will provide an arc of support on a continuum from arts learner to professional, opening a complete spectrum of possibility and progression between the campus's education center and performance venue. We're building a world at Bellforge where art, artists, and audiences intersect with nature, history, and healing. A world powered by the music-making and storytelling that connects us all. Thank you for being a vital part of it.

With gratitude,



**Jean R. Mineo**

Executive Director



# About the Bellforge Arts Center

Bellforge Arts Center – a regional multi-arts complex being built on the grounds of the former Medfield State Hospital – offers concerts, festivals, and community events, plus access to more than 200 miles of nature trails and outdoor recreation space. It’s rare to find a place in our state with this magnificent array of features that can deliver truly transformational community benefits.

Currently, most of our programming takes place outdoors. However, once our buildings are renovated for the first phase of our development, the center will feature a 300-seat, flexible-use performance venue, 16 classrooms for visual and performing arts education, rehearsal space, and artist studios. A multi-phase approach to building will ultimately grow the center to include facilities and programming to support culinary arts, sustainable farming, artist housing, and more.



Where community and creativity come together



# Our mission, vision, and values

Rooted in nature and a legacy of healing, the Bellforge Arts Center nurtures community, creativity, and self-expression through the arts. Our multi-arts and outdoor recreation destination:

- Strengthens access to the arts and arts education in our community
- Encourages health and wellness through creative exploration and connection to the land
- Fosters a strong sense of collaboration, community, and inclusion for families who are currently underserved in MetroWest





# Our Board of Directors

- Patrick Casey
- Peter Dolan
- Gary Dunning
- Jacqueline Evans
- Andrew Flynn
- Brian Grimm *(Vice President)*
- Brian McCormick
- Jennifer (Jen) Paxton
- Kirsten Poler
- Jerry Potts
- Randy Rogers *(Treasurer)*
- Aaron Rosenberg
- David Scott Sloan
- Jessica Thompson Somol *(President)*
- Mark Swirbalus
- Bob Tormey
- Khushbu Webber
- Dave Yuknat *(Clerk)*



# Our valued partners

- Boston Center for the Arts (BCA)
- City of Boston
- David Bieber Archives
- Green Team Junk Removal
- MASARY Studios
- Mayor’s Office of Arts and Culture
- Medfield Together
- New Life Furniture Bank
- ONCE Somerville
- Soles of Medfield
- The Garden Continuum
- TrillFit
- Women in Music







# Financials

The following information provides an overview of the Bellforge Arts Center’s finances for the 2024 fiscal year (7/1/23-6/30/24) and comparative totals from the 2023 fiscal year. Please note that our financials reflect revenue and expenses associated with our capital fundraising campaign. As we introduce more ticketed events and tuition-based programs, our revenue mix will reflect a sustainable balance of earned and contributed revenue.

Complete, fully audited financials are available upon request.

	2024	2023
Income:	Total	Total
Contributions and grants	\$945,994	\$4,070,225
Government grants	200,000	651,463
Sponsorship	6,425	7,955
Program service	93,251	58,684
In-kind donations	358,740	358,560
Net investment income	22,486	6,109
Net assets released from restrictions	-	-
Total support and revenue	1,626,896	5,152,996
Expenses:		
Program service	\$810,086	\$760,540
General and administrative	135,304	150,176
Fundraising	391,137	413,921
Total expenses	1,336,527	1,324,637
Change in net assets	290,369	3,828,359
Net assets, beginning	\$5,406,191	\$1,577,832
Net assets, ending	\$5,696,560	\$5,406,191



# Building community through community buildings

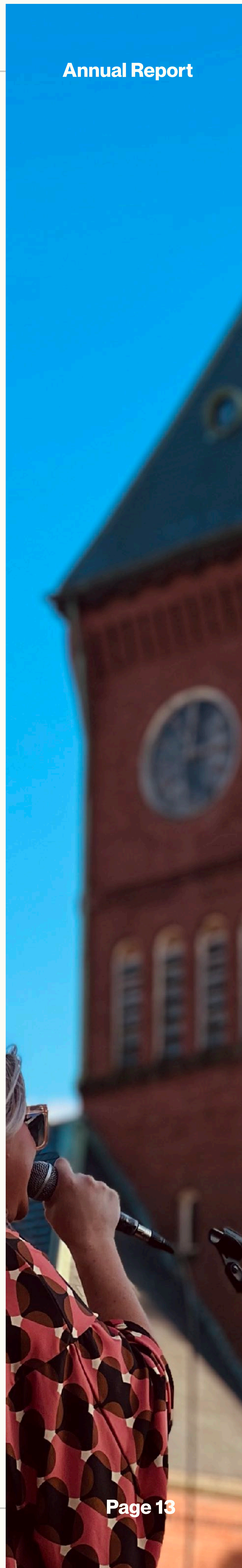
Ten years ago, the seeds of the Bellforge were planted when the town of Medfield purchased the Medfield State Hospital property. A dream was born to create a vibrant new regional arts center in the Chapel and Infirmary buildings. Much has happened since, and today we're on the verge of initiating the critical infrastructure work that will revive these unique, historic structures.



# Much more than bricks and mortar

As we continue executing our strategy for revitalizing these buildings, we remember they must:

- **Serve as inclusive gathering places:**  
Through our programming and facilities, Bellforge is a welcoming place for all. (As New Englanders, we're also acutely aware of the need for flexible spaces that support programming in any conditions.)
- **Facilitate the creation and sharing of art:**  
Artists and guests will rely on us as their concert hall, gallery, studio, classroom, kitchen, and more.





# A blueprint for success

We eagerly anticipate the day we throw our doors open as a fully operational multi-arts center. But we're also committed to moving at a thoughtful pace and doing things the right way by:

- **Consulting the experts:** We constantly solicit input from artists, guests, and communities from across our region, and we're several years into a planning process with the expert partners who will help us execute our construction efforts.
- **Honoring the past:** Time and the elements have taken a toll on portions of the buildings, but we are rebuilding. We're also mindful of our broader surroundings. For decades, Medfield State Hospital's innovative "Cottage Plan" layout was renowned for how it facilitated community, efficiency, and well-being – all of which remain important to us today.

- **Modernizing experiences:** Whether it's fine-tuning acoustics, adding technology and infrastructure, or improving access and flexibility, we're committed to delivering exciting, entertaining, and comfortable experiences.
- **Building connections:** Bellforge unites people ... and buildings. Our plans include a new lobby to join the Chapel and Infirmary buildings, seamlessly integrated with the existing architecture. The lobby will be a meeting place and a literal connection between practice and performance spaces.
- **Controlling costs:** As a small but growing nonprofit, we're deeply committed to fiscal responsibility and deploying our resources in the right ways at the right times.





# Our growing reach, influence, and support

The center features artists from the “Bellforge Triangle” of Boston, Worcester, and Providence. While our region enjoys an abundance of first-rate artists and artist-teachers, it lacks sufficient creative space to work, rehearse, show, and perform. Bellforge provides vital settings and resources to showcase well-known artists and amplify marginalized voices.

The Bellforge's family of supporters continues to grow with new individual, foundation, and corporate donors each year. Institutional donors from this year included the Barr Foundation, Community Foundation for MetroWest, Ramsey McCluskey Family Foundation, and The Savage Family Foundation, among many others. The Bellforge Arts Center was also the recipient of a competitive grant from the Massachusetts Historic Preservation Program, administered by Preservation Massachusetts in partnership with The 1772 Foundation. Out of the 75 applications this year, the Bellforge was among just 16 finalists approved for funding.





# Programming overview

From **April to October 2023**, Bellforge Arts Center showcased an impressive range of performances and community events:

- We hosted over **100 performers** across various events, including concerts, comedy shows, community festivals, plays, dance showcases, and children’s programming.
- Notable headliners included Buffalo Tom, who performed their first-ever hometown show in Medfield to a sold-out audience of **1,000 attendees**.
- Bellforge’s programming drew significant attention from regional media, with **The Boston Globe** featuring an in-depth story on our journey and future plans.
- Attendance reached close to **7,000 guests**.
- Artists of color comprised **30%** of our performers.
- BIPOC-owned businesses represented **30%** of our food vendors.
- We welcomed guests from **25** states and **381** unique zip codes.



# The Boston Globe

INSIDE  
TV Listings G7  
Comics G8  
Weather G9

## Weekend

G

THE BOSTON GLOBE, FRIDAY, APRIL 21, 2023 | BOSTONGLOBE.COM/ARTS



PHOTOS BY JOHN TILMACK/GLOBE STAFF; RENDERING FROM DBWV ARCHITECTS  
Bellforge Arts Center executive director Jean Mineo stands inside the Lee Chapel on the campus of the former Medfield State Hospital. The arts center plans to convert the building into a concert venue that can hold 325 people. Below: An exterior view of the chapel and an artist's rendering of the future Bellforge Arts Center.



MUSIC

### IN MEDFIELD, MUSIC WILL FILL THIS EMPTY SPACE

An arts center is taking shape on the grounds of a former state psychiatric hospital, with outdoor concerts in store until those plans reach fruition

BY JAMES SULLIVAN  
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

MEDFIELD — In the fall of 2020, at the height of the pandemic, the Coolidge Corner Theatre hosted a special drive-in screening of “Shutter Island” in this Norfolk County town. The location was apt: Martin Scorsese’s 2010 thriller, which starred Leonardo DiCaprio, was filmed in part on the abandoned grounds of the former Medfield State Hospital.

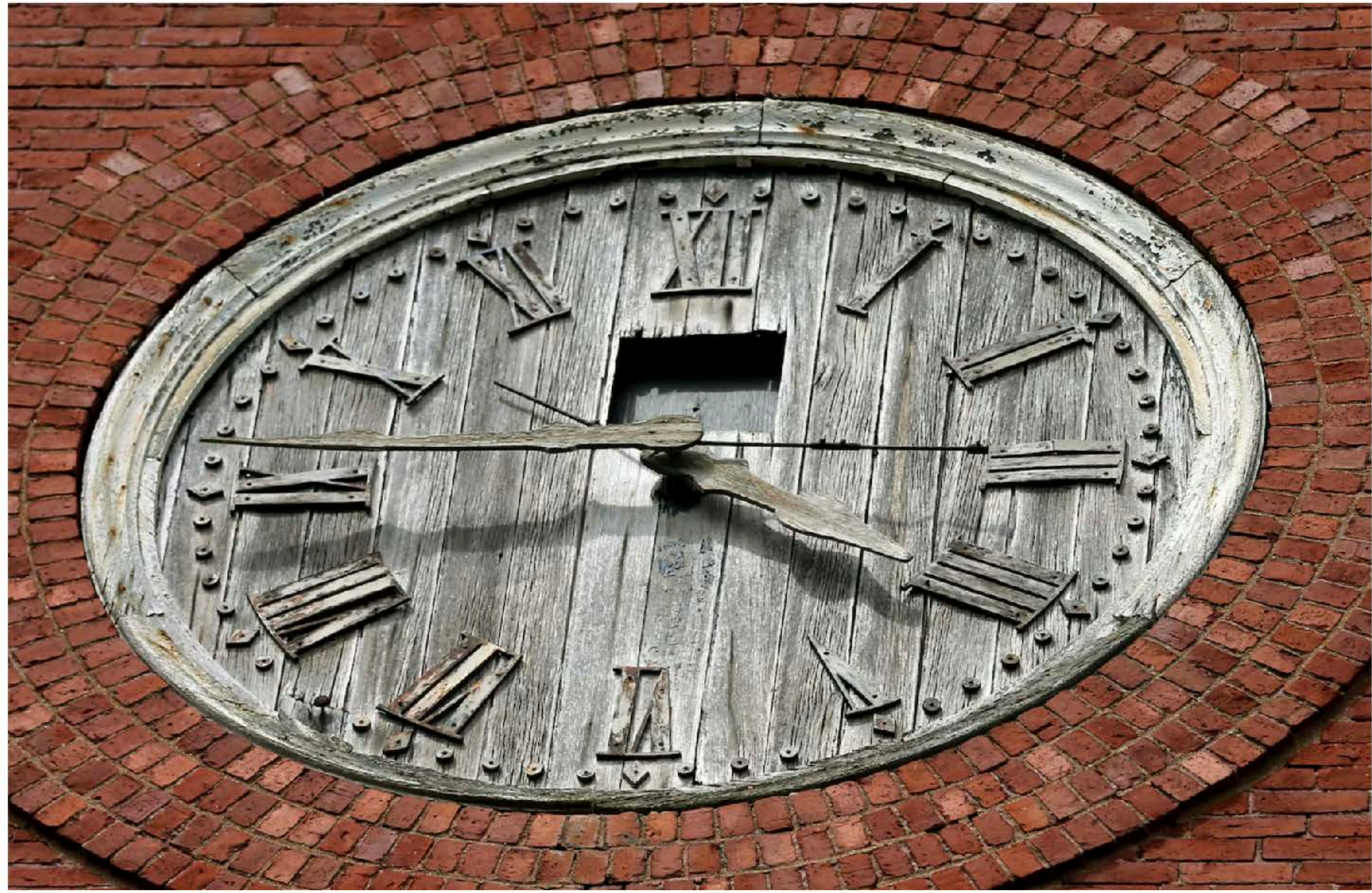
With more than two dozen buildings on 87 acres, the hospital campus had approximately 2,300 patients at the height of its occupancy. By the time it closed in 2003, just 200 remained. In recent years, the only people making use of the space, about a 40-minute drive outside Boston, have been dog owners and power walkers.

Last summer, however, more than 10,000 people visited the vacant, boarded-up campus. They gathered on the lawn next to Lee Chapel, the centerpiece of the former psychiatric hospital, to hear live local music.

Those shows drew their audiences by little more than word of mouth. This summer, though, the team that has come together to establish the Bellforge Arts Center expects to produce a full slate of concerts, including bookings already confirmed with Buffalo Tom, the exuberant saxophonist Grace Kelly, and a first-of-its-kind festival curated by Boston rapper Cousin Stizz. All events, including upcoming Pride and Juneteenth celebrations, can be found on the Bellforge website.

They’re also gutting and refurbishing the chapel and the nearby infirmary. Within a couple of years, the chapel will become a live music venue with a capacity of 325. The infr-

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Where community and creativity come together



# Artists, partners, and guests love Bellforge

Our programming, venue, supporters, and partners all work in concert to provide artists with unique, inclusive opportunities to share their passions and talents.

100%

of artists surveyed say they would return to perform at the Bellforge again and would recommend the Bellforge to friends and other artists.

100%

of guests surveyed say Bellforge positively impacts the region.



What artists, partners, and supporters say about the Bellforge

“There are very few venues in the Boston area where we have experienced such excellent sound quality, clear communication, fair performance compensation, and outstanding hospitality as we have at Bellforge. Additionally, the opportunity to use the chapel space for video shoots and other creative projects is invaluable to the DIY art scene in Boston and is unmatched by any other venue in the area.”

**Cody Von Lehmden, Little Fuss band member**

“The Community Foundation for MetroWest is grateful to have Bellforge Arts Center as a partner in creating a more vibrant and equitable MetroWest. Under the leadership of Jean Mineo, Bellforge has made remarkable strides in developing and expanding accessible arts and culture opportunities for all our MetroWest neighbors. We are proud to partner with and support them and look forward to their continued success and growth as a destination for the arts in the region.”

**Jay Kim, Executive Director of Community Foundation for MetroWest**

"Preserving the green open spaces and ensuring the property remains accessible to the community is at the heart of why we support the Bellforge Arts Center. We're excited that the Bellforge will activate the campus once again and bring people together to enjoy performances and programs of all types, indoors and outdoors!"

**Dana and Carolyn Pope, Bellforge Arts Center Supporters**



# A canvas for creative place-making

Bellforge's creative place-making leverages our unique assets to develop a destination setting where people and art belong. A vibrant cultural hub, Bellforge is a welcoming space that prioritizes community. Access to art is a pillar of our mission, central to our foundation and strength.

Our programming promotes inclusivity and collective experiences, fostering social and artistic connections through live music, theater, dance, wellness initiatives, and children's activities that celebrate both legendary acts and new voices. Bellforge Arts Center is writing a unique story that harnesses dual powers of preservation and modernization, providing opportunities that bridge the past, present, and future in exciting ways.

- **Distinctive, out-of-the-box programming is a hallmark of Bellforge concert and festival presentations.** Our signature 2024 events included The Rat Reunion, celebrating the 50th anniversary of the opening of The Rathskeller, Boston's iconic punk rock club that attracted major bands like The Police, The Ramones, and Talking Heads in its heyday. The Rat Reunion built on the success of our Great Scott pop-up – which honored another legendary Beantown music venue – and a special homecoming show by Buffalo Tom, one of the most beloved and enduring alternative rock bands to come out of Boston.
- **Bellforge supports independent artists and elevates emerging talent.** Our weekly Summer Sounds series provides live performances that cultivate community spirit and reinforce Bellforge's role as a gathering place for artists and audiences. Our FieldFest event also amplifies our dynamic local music scene, showcasing artists from the Bellforge Triangle of Boston, Worcester, and Providence.

- **Bellforge children's events have become community-favorite traditions, with a focus on imaginative self-expression** through music, magic, and more. From the annual Fairy Walk to Fun at the 'Forge, these family-friendly programs create an enchanting sense of wonder that captivates all ages.
- **A celebratory Locally Grown summer concert series and day-long festival highlight the finest in locally sourced food, drink, and music, while offering a glimpse into Bellforge's future ambitions.** Our multi-phase approach to the development of Bellforge buildings and programming ultimately aims to encompass a culinary arts center and revitalized agricultural fields.
- **Bellforge fosters understanding and empathy through creative collaborations that promote community engagement and acceptance.** In partnership with Medfield Together, the annual CultureFest celebration joyfully honors our area's rich diversity of traditions, artwork, music, and food. This season, Bellforge also partnered with Women in Music Boston – an organization dedicated to promoting industry equality – to present singer-songwriter Liz Longley. Annual Bellforge Pride and Juneteenth celebrations help us deliver on our commitment to inclusion and representation through the arts.



# A natural community

The 87-acre campus overlooks the Charles River and features open fields, mature trees, rolling hills, and beautiful vistas. Guests experience the arts and nature while enjoying the grounds, walking paths, and access to the “outer Emerald Necklace” of Eastern Massachusetts’s 230-mile Bay Circuit Trail. In this multi-sensory setting, the center invites exploration and discovery and forges connections with each other and the land. The Bellforge also adds vital programming and rehearsal space to the region’s cultural landscape.

- The Garden Continuum designed beautiful flower boxes near the outdoor stage, and volunteers planted 6,500 daffodils.
- Medfield Foundation youth leaders painted benches surrounding the concert and festival seating, while other placemaking enhancements included an Eagle Scout-created labyrinth, planters, and seating.
- Bellforge collaborated with the Medfield Public Library on a campus art installation that features original poems by community members.
- Plans include the restoration of 10 acres of agricultural land for food production, with a healing garden that acknowledges the ancestral land of the indigenous Nipmuc and Massachusetts tribes.



# Join us on this journey

More than any other human enterprise, art opens dialogues and bridges divides, promoting equity, access, diversity, and inclusion. Time is of the essence as we emerge from economic and public health crises and confront ongoing issues including racial injustice and social isolation. Music and poetry, dance and drama, drawing and film – all are powerful sources of identity, inspiration, and enjoyment. They’re pathways to discovering the creativity, common ground, and community that are so vital in this moment.

Our community is critical to the success of our artists and our vision. Any support you can provide is most welcome.



# Get involved

To **volunteer**, go to [bellforge.org/volunteer](https://bellforge.org/volunteer).  
To **donate**, go to [bellforge.org/give](https://bellforge.org/give) or scan the QR code below.  
To discover **partnership opportunities**, email [info@bellforge.org](mailto:info@bellforge.org).

## Bellforge.org

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[instagram.com/bellforgearts](https://instagram.com/bellforgearts)  
[linkedin.com/company/bellforge](https://linkedin.com/company/bellforge)

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(508) 350-7801











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