



APPLICATION FORM

All applications must include the following information. Separate applications must be submitted for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2020.** Please include this application form with electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Loudoun County

Program Title: HAPPY ACCIDENTS: AN EXHIBIT OF ORIGINAL BOB ROSS PAINTINGS

Program Category: Parks and Recreation

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Steve Torpy

Title: Director

Department: Parks, Recreation and Community Services

Telephone: 703-777-0345

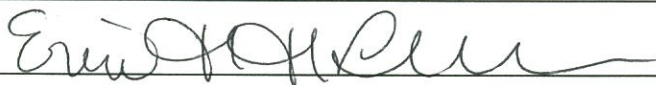
Website: <https://www.loudoun.gov/prcs>

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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Erin M. McLellan

Title: Assistant County Administrator

Signature: 

2020 Virginia Association of Counties
Achievement Award Submission

HAPPY ACCIDENTS: AN EXHIBIT OF ORIGINAL BOB ROSS PAINTINGS

Overview

In the fall of 2019, the Franklin Park Performing and Visual Arts Center curated the first solo gallery exhibit of Bob Ross paintings in partnership with Bob Ross Inc. The exhibit of 24 original paintings were from the 1993 season of “The Joy of Painting,” which aired on public television from 1982 to 1994. Dedicated fans include baby boomers, millennials and Generation Z’s who appreciate the 400 episodes of happy little trees, friendly clouds and happy accidents that can make the noise and whirlwind of everyday life a little easier to take in.

Despite the artist’s popularity, no gallery or museum has ever had a curated exhibit of his work. Not only was this an opportunity to showcase original Bob Ross paintings, it was an opportunity to showcase the Performing and Visual Arts Center and raise the profile of our gallery space. Before this exhibit, the gallery functioned mostly in the shadow of the performing arts space and the Arts Center itself was still an undiscovered gem. In fact, the Friends of Franklin Park Arts Center had dedicated \$10,000 toward a brand awareness campaign for the Arts Center, and one of their visualizations of success was “a line out the door for tickets with a parking lot full of cars from a multitude of states.”

Happy Accidents: an exhibit of original Bob Ross Paintings opened September 10, 2019 and welcomed more than 15,000 visitors from 28 states in 31 days. Approximately 85% of attendees were first-time visitors to the Arts Center, and the exhibit garnered more than 50 media stories. In addition, Bob Ross Inc. has had numerous requests from galleries and museums around the world with 2020 exhibits planned in Canada and The Netherlands.



Program Design

The Arts Center has been open for 12 years with a professional theater and gallery exhibit area. After a retreat with the Friends of Franklin Park Arts Center Board in January 2018, it was decided that the Friends would allocate \$10,000 toward a brand awareness campaign. The Arts Center had been struggling with having to spend promotional and advertising funds on building audiences while building brand recognition. Staff was working to increase the profile of the gallery and offered to host an exhibit of Bob Ross paintings to kick off the 12th season. In partnering with Bob Ross Inc., staff learned that this was the first time a full gallery exhibit of the artist's paintings had ever been presented. The event then took on an added purpose of curating an exhibit that could travel to other galleries and museums. Along with the exhibit of original artwork, staff utilized the theater to show a video documentary on Bob Ross and several episodes of "The Joy of Painting" in which Ross painted artwork that was included in the exhibit. Painting workshops were also offered by a certified Bob Ross instructor.

Members of Bob Ross Inc, the Arts Center manager and department communications team coordinated an opening reception, VIP reception and media preview event. The media preview event allowed access to the exhibit and an interview panel discussion with the president of Bob Ross Inc. and Arts Center manager. The preview helped build excitement and provided access to media outlets before the public. The opening reception



was presented in partnership with Bob Ross Inc. and was originally planned as a VIP -style event. However, with the demand for exhibit tickets so high, a public reception was held after the VIP reception and was extended for four hours to accommodate 750 attendees! Arts Center staff worked as a team with Franklin Park staff, other park managers

and technology staff to protect the exhibit was safe, ensure that the building could handle the increased demand on wireless service and provide a safe, positive visitor experience.



Tickets were free, but they had to be reserved online in order to control the number of visitors and ensure a positive experience. Since all tickets sold out within two weeks of posting, an additional 3,000 tickets were added. A third time block was subsequently added to further increase availability. No less than three Arts Center staff and volunteers were on duty every day.



The flow of traffic into the building was reversed to

avoid people standing in long lines. Instead, visitors entered the theater doors, where they were checked in and could watch the video presentations. Visitor flow into the gallery was monitored to provide a positive viewing experience. During the entire



exhibit, there were no negative experiences reported, except for those who were unable to get tickets to the exhibit!



A pop-up gift shop was created to round out the Bob Ross experience. Staff worked with licensed Bob Ross vendors to create two exhibit specific items – a tote bag and an apron – that are now a model for future exhibits. Overall gift shop figures were shared with Bob Ross Inc. as guidance for future exhibit locations. The gift shop was also run by staff from the Arts Center and other team members with the Parks & Recreation department.

Results

During the 31 days of the exhibit, there were over 15,000 visitors from 28 different states and several countries. More than 30 groups attended as well, including independent art classes, students and all of the art teachers from Loudoun County Public Schools. Approximately 85% of the attendees were first-time visitors to the Arts Center. At 9 a.m. on the first day of registration for the Bob Ross art workshops, the classes were full with 90 people on the waitlist. Six additional painting workshops were added and classes have been running every quarter since September 2019.

The pop-up gift shop generated over \$70,000 in sales. The catalog and poster for the exhibit were created by staff with the idea that future exhibits could use them as a template. Total cost for creating and printing these items was \$1,938 and sales equaled \$7,355. The aprons and tote bag were created for this exhibit using Bob Ross licensed vendors and these are now a staple item for exhibits in 2020. In addition, Bob Ross Inc. and its licensed vendors used the dates from our gift shop sales to plan inventory for future exhibits.

Happy Accidents was featured in more than 50 media stories including print (*Washingtonian Magazine*, *Washington Post*, *Garden & Gun Magazine*), radio (*BBC Radio 5*, *NPR All Things Considered*, *WMAL*, *Canadian Radio*), television (*CBS*, *ABC*, *NBC & Fox local affiliates*, *NBC's The Today Show*, *South Korea TV*,

Turkish Public TV) and online (Forbes, CNN London, Bored Panda, Current.org, Frieze Magazine, Hudson). The value of The Today Show feature alone is a Nielsen Audience of 3,265,697, a calculated publicity value of \$1,623,180 and a 30-second ad equivalency of \$65,188.



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The Franklin Park Arts Center was honored to host Annette and Walt Kowalski to the exhibit. The Kowalskis



were business partners with Bob Ross and their daughter, Joan Kowalski, is President of Bob Ross Inc. Their comment after visiting: *“Bob would have loved this!”* The Loudoun County Board of Supervisors presented the Arts Center with a resolution of excellence in November 2019. Social media

posts and emails from visitors were also extremely positive.

Sampling of social media posts using our #BobRossExhibit

“I’m having a moment of pure, unadulterated JOY!! I’m at the [#BobRossExhibit](#) in Purcellville, VA. Yep, THE Bob Ross! Biggest showing of his work ever on the East Coast. My waitlist ticket paid off and I’m having a blast.”

This young lady dressed in costume, as did many visitors!





*“The Bob Ross Exhibit at the [Franklin Park Arts Center](#) is really cool. A big thank you to everyone that called the WINC Wake-Up Show, emailed or via FB offered recommendations for where to eat. I had a great day in Purcellville! -Robert
[#BobRossExhibit](#) [#WINCOUTANDABOUT](#)”*

We worked with VisitLoudoun and with the Town of Purcellville to promote local restaurants and places of lodging for out-of-town visitors.

“Today was an AMAZING experience. First of all let me just say that the Franklin Arts Center and that whole huge park is GORGEOUS. This was so great seeing his ACTUAL paintings. You could still feel his energy in them. What an amazing man. It was so inspiring looking at these and being like wow I'm actually getting close to doing things like this because of him and wow. Seeing all the detail in person just blew my mind. Things that even the TV couldn't have picked up. You can feel his soul in each one and it's like he painted his life on those canvases. What an amazing man. I love him and I hope he is in peaceful heaven watching his legacy grow”



“The Bob Ross exhibit was amazing. As soon as I saw the first painting my stomach went crazy and I had to fight back the tears.”



“Happy little trees 🌲! Just got out of the “Happy Accidents” Bob Ross exhibit at Franklin Park Center and it was packed! They told me 1,200 people had come through today alone. It closes this Tuesday. Had a blast and found several pieces that were much more lovely in person than I had imagined. Really glad went!”



Our first visitor, with one of our volunteers.



Our last visitors, who share a birthday with Bob Ross!



link to The Today Show segment

<https://www.today.com/video/fans-line-up-for-bob-ross-art-exhibit-70842949889>

Link to NPR segment on line and 8-minute segment on *All Things Considered*

<https://www.npr.org/2019/10/06/765716441/the-lasting-legacy-of-bob-ross-and-his-colorful-world-of-happy-accidents>



Media Stories

International media:

SBS – South Korea TV

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kfib6X8mFkE&t=25s>

National media

Hyperallergic

<https://hyperallergic.com/510669/the-charming-landscapes-of-bob-ross-get-a-solo-exhibition/>

CNN

<https://edition.cnn.com/style/article/bob-ross-tv-painter-exhibition/index.html>

Current.org

<https://current.org/2019/10/fans-of-bob-ross-flock-to-rare-exhibit-of-his-paintings/>

National Public Radio

<https://www.npr.org/2019/10/06/765716441/the-lasting-legacy-of-bob-ross-and-his-colorful-world-of-happy-accidents>

Bored Panda

<https://www.boredpanda.com/bob-ross-art-museum-captions/>

Huck Magazine

<https://www.huckmag.com/art-and-culture/art-2/happy-accidents-revisiting-the-magical-diy-world-of-bob-ross/>

Forbes Magazine

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/jonathonkeats/2019/09/09/bob-ross/#6e54e9c52c25>

Local/Regional media

Washington CBS affiliate

[The largest Bob Ross exhibit on the East Coast is opening in Loudoun County](#)

Washingtonian Magazine

<https://www.washingtonian.com/2019/07/18/a-big-bob-ross-exhibit-will-open-in-september/>

<https://www.washingtonian.com/2019/09/09/things-to-do-in-dc-this-week-september-9-11-bob-ross-theatre-week-neil-patrick-harris/>

Loudoun Times Mirror

https://www.loudountimes.com/entertainment/massive-bob-ross-exhibit-coming-to-purcellville-s-franklin-park/article_23e48c04-b873-11e9-9c21-3b59533ea124.html

Washington Post

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/express/2019/09/04/how-bob-ross-paintings-came-out-hiding-wound-up-display-virginia/>

Loudoun Now

<https://loudounnow.com/2019/09/12/happy-accidents-how-franklin-park-scored-the-art-show-of-the-season/>

WMAL Radio

<https://omny.fm/shows/mornings-on-the-mall/wmal-interview-elizabeth-bracey-09-12-19>

The Tommy Show (internet Radio) and Washington region NBC affiliate segment

<https://www.facebook.com/tommymcfly/videos/morning-fam-tommy-unveils-his-the-joy-of-painting-with-bob-ross-masterpiece-from/686977128489152/>

https://www.nbcwashington.com/entertainment/the-scene/Explaining-Bob-Ross-Resurgence-Popularity_Washington-DC-560609962.html

Washington region ABC affiliate

<https://wjla.com/news/local/bob-ross-exhibit-paintings-virginia>

https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?id=441648002587693&story_fbid=2349004131852061

Supervisors Celebrate Popular Bob Ross Painting Exhibit

BY RENSS GREENE

County supervisors officially recognized an exhibit that put the Franklin Park Arts Center in Purcellville in headlines across the nation and packed the center with visitors for the first-ever public exhibition of the original works of iconic painter Bob Ross.

On Nov. 7, the county board adopted a resolution honoring Elizabeth Bracey, managing director of the Franklin Park Performing and Visual Arts Center, the center's staff, and Joan Kowalski, the president and co-founder of Bob Ross Inc. in Sterling. Kowalski was Ross's longtime business partner and instrumental in bringing the iconic painter and host of "The Joy of Painting" to television, and served on the county's Arts Advisory Committee.

According to the resolution, during the approximately monthlong exhibition, more than 15,000 people visited the center—about half of the total number that usually visit in an entire year. The exhibit also brought in \$70,000 in merchandise revenue at a Bob Ross gift shop at the arts center.

Kowalski gave Bracey much of the credit for the exhibit and its success.

"She just completely boosted Loudoun County as like the place to be during a two-month period, and people all over the world were talking about it," Kowalski said. "I watched one news program in Turkey—you couldn't understand a word except for

Warm Winter

"All you need is a little imagination, practice a little bit, and allow this to take you anywhere that you want to be. Anywhere. You can do this."

—Bob Ross, 1993

Renss Greene/Loudoun Now

Bob Ross's original paintings were coupled with quotes from his longtime television program, "Joy of Painting," at an exhibit at Franklin Park Arts Center in Purcellville.

"Elizabeth Bracey. She did a great job, and we're so proud."

"It's an international phenomenon and the county should be proud, as I am," said Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Service Director Steve Torpy.

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