

History of the Arlington Artists Alliance

The Arlington Artists Alliance was formed out of a need for places to show art work in Arlington. Jane McElvany Coonce and Cindy Gilmour started the Alliance because they felt Arlington needed something like Bethesda's Strathmore Hall or Alexandria's Torpedo Factory.

The first show was at a local Starbucks. It was highly successful in sales as well as artists coming forward and saying they wanted to join the group. The Lee Heights Shops owner contacted the Alliance and said they would like for us to do a sidewalk show. We suggested, that since they had empty storefronts, we should set up in the enclosed area. We were only open on weekends and ran the art gallery like a coop. Our exposure there brought in many new members.

When the storefront rented, the owners let us use a small space on the back side of the shops. We called this gallery, The Gallery DownUnder. Again, it was quite successful and we continued to attract members. We operated this gallery for 3 years until the owner finally rented this space. The owner of Cassatt's, a restaurant in the Lee Heights Shops offered his business as a place to show paintings and to start our art school known as The Arlington Artists Alliance Academy. We began to offer art classes to the community in the basement of Cassatt's.

The Alliance branched out and found other venues to show art. We began to show work at the County Board Offices, the Treasurer's Office, the Judicial Chambers and at Arlington's Technology Center. We displayed art work at facilities like the Arlington Free Clinic, Arlington Food Assistance Center, and the Alzheimers Family Day Care Center. We also found businesses that would show our art work. Some of the venues were Cosi in Clarendon, Scoops Beaugard in Westover, Hand in Hand Therapy in Ballston, and several doctor's offices. Little Falls Presbyterian Church offered to show our work and allowed us to meet in their facility.

Presently, we have over 100 members. Our requirement for membership is that the artist must either live or work in Arlington.