



GEORGE FAMILY CENTER
FOR HEALING ARTS



ARTS in HEALTH

MAY 27, 2026

11:30 AM – 5 PM

ROWAN UNIVERSITY | BUSINESS HALL

PROGRAM BOOKLET

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ABOUT THE CONFERENCE

Welcome to Arts in Health!

The first-ever Arts in Health Conference hosted by the **George Family Center for Healing Arts**.

This dynamic half-day event brings together artists, healthcare professionals, educators, students, community leaders, and more. We will explore the growing field of arts in health and the powerful role creativity plays in health and wellbeing.

The conference will feature **keynote speaker Melanie Cohn**, along with a **panel of regional leaders** discussing innovative collaborations between the arts and healthcare. Attendees will also take part in **interactive creative experiences** including dancing, painting, and music, and will enjoy a musical performance at the end of the conference.

Community resource tables will showcase local organizations and programs, giving attendees the opportunity to network, build partnerships, and explore arts and wellness resources available right in their own community.

Designed to inspire connection and collaboration, the conference offers opportunities to engage with professionals and advocates shaping the future of arts in health across South Jersey and **beyond**.

SCHEDULE

11:30 – 12:30 | Arrival, Lunch, Networking, Community Resource Fair

12:30 – 1:00 | Welcome and Opening Remarks

1:00 – 1:45 | Keynote Address

Speaker **Melanie Cohn** will share insights on the impact of arts in health, highlighting innovative programs and research in the field.

1:45 – 2:30 | **ArtWiseRx: Healing Arts Experiences**

Choose one of three hands-on arts workshops led by South Jersey teaching artists:

Music with Regional Samaúma

Move, clap, and sing while exploring rhythm through body percussion, call-and-response songs, and collective music-making inspired by Brazilian traditions.

Line Dancing with Rasheed Bellamy

Learn easy, energetic line dances that encourage movement, connection, and fun in a welcoming group environment.

Painting with Nancy Sophy and Rowan Students

Contribute to a collaborative painting led by muralist and Rowan professor Nancy Sophy, exploring creativity and shared expression.

2:30 – 2:45 | **Break & Refreshments**

2:45 – 4:00 | **Panel Discussion: Arts in Health in South Jersey**

Leaders from healthcare and arts organizations will discuss how arts in health programs are supporting communities across the region.

4:00 – 4:30 | **Closing Remarks**

4:30 – 5 | **Musical Performance from Regional Samaúma & Continued Tabling**

KEYNOTE SPEAKER



MELANIE COHN

Executive Director, Visual Arts Center of New Jersey

Melanie Franklin Cohn is an artist, arts administrator, and advocate for the power of art to support healing, connection, and human dignity. She serves as Executive Director of the Visual Arts Center of New Jersey and recently served as President of the National Organization for Arts in Health (NOAH), where she helped champion the growing field of arts in health on a national level.

Melanie's work sits at the intersection of art, community, and care. Over the course of her career, she has built programs that expand access to creative expression and support people across a range of life experiences, including veterans, justice-impacted individuals, and cultural heritage communities. Her professional background includes leadership roles at the New Museum, Staten Island Arts, and the Visual Arts Center of New Jersey. She holds a MFA from the School of Visual Arts, a BFA from Missouri State University, and is a certified yoga teacher.

ARTS IN HEALTH PANEL

What Happens When Creativity Meets Care?

MEET THE MODERATOR

Andrew Binger | New Jersey State Council on the Arts

Andrew Binger is Program Officer for Community Partnerships at the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, managing the \$6 million Local Arts Program and co-leading statewide arts and health initiatives. He works with county arts agencies and cross-sector partners to expand access to arts funding, community development, and cultural engagement across New Jersey. Andrew has earned a Master of Social Justice from Union Theological Seminary, championing equity, inclusion, and community engagement through the arts.

MEET THE PANELISTS

Dr. Faith Young | Cooper University Hospital Center

A lifelong musician, Dr. Young is an Oncologist, Palliative Care and Addiction Medicine specialist at Cooper Medical School of Rowan University. She leads the Viner Center for Humanism initiative supporting expressive arts activities for medical students. These critical activities serve to buffer the intense academic focus that blunts our self-awareness and communication skills, and can overwhelm attention to humanistic practices needed to enrich spaces of illness and of healing.

Pam Weichmann | WheatonArts and Cultural Center

Pamela Weichmann is Director of Education and Artist Services at WheatonArts, where she leads Visual Art for Military Wellness, an arts-and-health program for veterans and active duty military. The program uses cohort-based, hands-on artmaking to support reflection, connection, and well-being through creative practice across multiple visual art forms.

Dr. Andi Hunt | Rowan University

Andrea Hunt is director of the Music Therapy program at Rowan University. Her clinical experience includes adult mental health and addiction, with current clinical research on the effects of music-based interventions on chronic pain, elucidating the psychological and neurological mechanisms of music-based interventions by integrating patient narratives with physiological data.

Swati Chaturvedi | Community Bollywood Dance Project

Swati Chaturvedi is a teaching artist and dance educator specializing in Bollywood and Indian folk dance. Founder of Community Bollywood Dance Project, she creates inclusive, experiential programs that foster culture, connection, and wellbeing. Her community centered work invites all ages and abilities to move, learn, build confidence, and experience joy.

Kahra Buss | Perkins Center for the Arts

Kahra F. Buss is Executive Director of Perkins Center for the Arts, where she has expanded programming by 500% and advanced Arts in Healing initiatives. Her work emphasizes creative practice, arts access, community health, resilience, and connection. A Bucknell graduate, she also serves as President of the South Jersey Cultural Alliance.

Dr. Alexander King | Rowan-Virtua School of Osteopathic Medicine

Alexander King, DO, FNAOME is the Interim Chair of the Osteopathic Manipulative Medicine (OMM) Department, an Associate Professor of OMM, and Residency Director of OMM at Rowan-Virtua School of Osteopathic Medicine (SOM). As a physician, artist, and educator, his clinical work explores how creative expression in osteopathic treatments & acupuncture can enhance patient healing, wellbeing, and deepen empathy in healthcare settings to support more human-centered models of care.

ArtWise Rx

HEALING ARTS EXPERIENCES

Experience your own arts prescription today at the Arts in Health Conference!

MUSIC

HOSTED BY: Regional Samaúma

LOCATED AT: Room 101

Join Regional Samaúma, featuring Fernanda Silveira, Fabio Oliveira, and Fernanda Rowlands Bravo, for an interactive music experience inspired by Brazilian traditions. Explore rhythm, culture, and connection through movement, clapping, singing, and body percussion. Regional Samaúma will close the conference with a performance accompanied by a pianist Rob Curto.

LINE DANCING

HOSTED BY: Rasheed Bellamy

LOCATED AT: Back Patio Entrance

Join Rasheed Bellamy, creator of the “Can You Kick It? Yes You Can!” workshops, for an upbeat line dancing session. Learn simple routines that encourage movement, confidence, connection, and community through shared rhythm.

PAINTING

HOSTED BY: Nancy Sophy (Matthew Owens, & Marissa Favreau)

LOCATED AT: Saxbys Cafe Area

Join Nancy Sophy, Rowan University Fine Arts professor, alongside Rowan students Matthew Owens and Marissa Favreau for a collaborative painting experience. Contribute to a shared artwork while exploring creativity, color, and expression through collective art-making.

WHAT'S ARTS IN HEALTH?

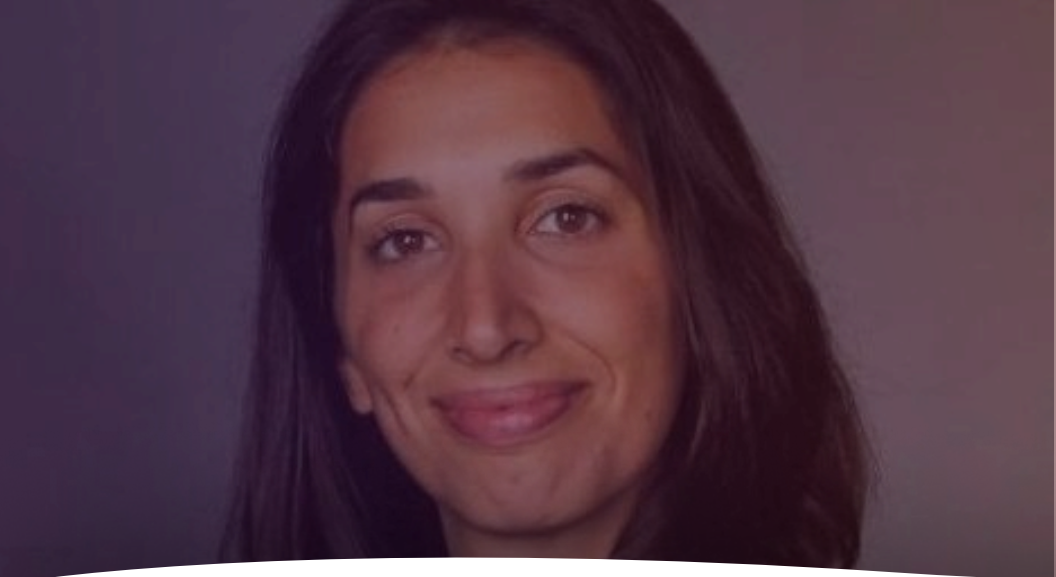
Arts in health is a growing field that brings all types of art forms into healthcare and community settings to support health and healing. The National Organization for Arts in Health (NOAH) defines it as the field “dedicated to using the power of the arts to enhance health and well-being in diverse institutional and community contexts.”

ABOUT THE CENTER

The George Family Center for Healing Arts advances health and well-being through the transformative power of the arts by integrating creative expression into clinical care, education, community engagement, and research. Rooted in the growing field of arts in health, the Center brings creative experiences into spaces such as healthcare settings, classrooms, and community programs to support the physical, emotional, and mental well-being of the community.

MEET OUR MC

Emily J. Balog is an occupational therapist, translational health scientist, educator, artist, and U.S. Air Force veteran. She is an Associate Professor at Rowan-Virtua School of Osteopathic Medicine whose work bridges health, community, and creativity through her research in aging, interprofessional education, disaster preparedness, and community-based art initiatives that promote participation, connection, and wellbeing across the lifespan.



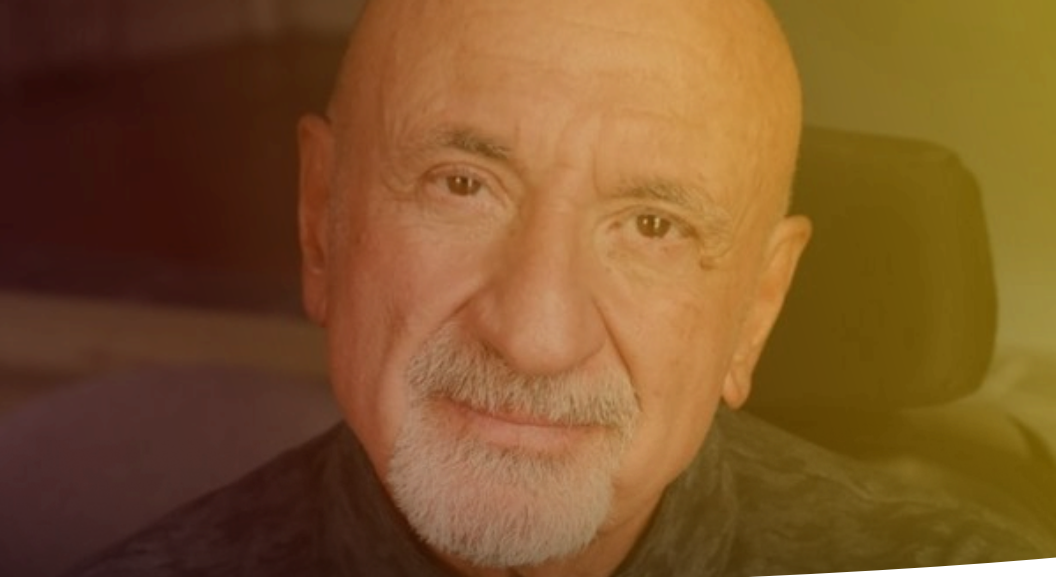
MORGAN YACOE

Our Director

Morgan Yacoe is the Inaugural Director of the George Family Center for Healing Arts at Rowan University. A sculptor by training, she earned her BFA from Virginia Commonwealth University and her MFA from the University of Florida.

Yacoe is an interdisciplinary artist, researcher, and educator who blends art and health to foster learning and improve healthcare.

With 15 years of experience, Yacoe is an interdisciplinary artist who develops innovative medical training tools and collaborative art projects designed to enhance wellness, health, empathy, enhance observation, and strengthen cultural competency in healthcare. She has presented nationally, published in peer reviewed medical journals, and secured competitive funding, including the NIH Behavioral Research Prize and multiple foundation grants supporting community-based and veteran mental health initiatives.



DR. JAMES GEORGE

Our Founder

Dr. James George has dedicated nearly 50 years to emergency medicine. He earned his MD and JD concurrently from the University of Louisville while serving as a captain in the U.S. Army Reserves Medical Corps. An early adopter of emergency medicine, he served on the Board of the American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP) and authored several books. A co-founding member of TeamHealth and the law firm George & Korin, he specialized in defending healthcare providers.

In 2016, an injury led him to the healing power of art. He is a prolific abstract painter. His artwork is now displayed at Magee Rehabilitation Hospital in Philadelphia, PA, and other healthcare facilities across the region. He received the Adam Taliaferro Foundation Award and continues to paint and spend time with loved ones.

CENTER PROGRAMS

ArtWise Rx

ArtWise Rx is our arts prescribing initiative that connects community members with creative experiences designed to support mental health and overall well-being. Through partnerships with cultural organizations and art centers across the region—including the Perkins Center for the Arts, WheatonArts, and the Rowan University Museum of Contemporary Art, among others—participants receive “art prescriptions” that provide access to a variety of artist-led experiences and programs. ArtWise Rx is currently active at the Rowan-Virtua NeuroMusculoskeletal Institute (NMI), Inspira Primary Care Millville, and Rowan University. The program at NMI is funded by the South Jersey Institute for Population Health, while the program at Inspira Health is supported by the Inspira Health Foundation.

Visual Arts for Military Wellness

In partnership with WheatonArts and Rowan College of South Jersey, this program provides free glass art and visual arts workshops for veterans and active-duty military members to promote creative expression, connection, and emotional wellness. The Visual Art for Military Wellness program is supported by the Horizon Foundation for New Jersey.

Creative Connections: A Creative Aging Series

Our Creative Aging program is a free arts program for adults 55+ featuring workshops in paper making, dance, music, abstract painting, sculpture, and more. Led by professional teaching artists, the program supports creativity, social connection, and cognitive wellbeing. Developed in partnership with the Rowan-Virtua New Jersey Institute for Successful Aging and funded by the New Jersey State Council on the Arts.

Artist in Residence Programs

The Center partners with artists and healthcare organizations to bring creative programming into healthcare and educational settings. In collaboration with Rowan-Virtua CARES (Child Abuse Research Education and Service Institute) and Rowan-Virtua RISN (Regional Integrated Special Needs Center), selected artists promote connection and wellbeing through workshops for patients and healthcare workers. This program is funded by the New Jersey Health Foundation.

Education

We integrate healing arts into education to help shape compassionate healthcare professionals and future arts in health practitioners. Through partnerships with Rowan-Virtua School of Osteopathic Medicine, Cooper Medical School of Rowan University, Inspira Health, and the Rowan Department of Art, our programs use the arts to strengthen empathy, wellbeing, communication, and human connection.

Healing Arts Research Lab

We explore how the arts can improve health, learning, and care through research focused on mental wellness, pain management, medical education, and creative engagement. Together with students, faculty, and clinical partners, we are building evidence that demonstrates the impact of the arts in healthcare and community wellbeing.

LEARN MORE ABOUT ARTS IN HEALTH

Thank you for being part of today's conference and helping advance the growing field of arts in health. There are many ways to get involved!

One of the best places to explore additional information is the **National Organization for Arts in Health (NOAH)**.

NOAH is a leading national organization dedicated to advancing arts in health through education, research, advocacy, and professional development.

Their resource pages include:

- Arts in health research and publications
- Career and professional development opportunities
- Conferences, webinars, and networking events
- Program models and case studies
- Resources for healthcare systems, universities, and communities
- Information for artists working in healthcare settings



**SCAN THE QR CODE TO VISIT
NOAH'S OFFICIAL WEBSITE!**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to everyone that made the Arts in Health conference possible!

SPECIAL THANKS TO

Dr. James George

Founder of The George Family Center for Healing Arts

Dr. Richards Dammers

Dean of the College of the Arts at Rowan University

Jennie Quinn

Director of Academic Presenting and Operations

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Assistant Director of Marketing & Communications for the College of the Arts

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OUR HEALING ARTS RESEARCH LAB MEMBERS

OUR SPONSORS



THANKS TO ALL OF OUR...

PRESENTERS & PANELISTS

TEACHING ARTISTS

RESOURCE PARTNERS

CONFERENCE DONORS

CONFERENCE VOLUNTEERS

Lucas Laboy

Sophia Tran

Allison Sexton

Ishika Sheladia

Emily Feltes

Charlotte Crutchlow

STAY CONNECTED



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Our Website
<https://go.rowan.edu/healingarts>

ARTS in **HEALTH**

Hosted by the George Family Center for Healing Arts at Rowan University

Conference made possible by the
New Jersey State Council on the Arts and Inspira Health.