

Proclaiming May 8, 2024 as “Employee Wellness Through the Arts Day”

In a special collaboration, the Departments of Human Resources (DHR), Arts and Culture, and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), are delighted to present the inaugural Employee Wellness, Arts, and Culture Festival on May 8, 2024. The festival was inspired and created by christy roberts berkowitz, the Department of Arts and Culture’s Creative Strategist Artist-in-Residence, with DHR as part of her residency. Arts and Culture’s Creative Strategist-Artist in Residence is an innovative program, which places artists in County departments to work alongside staff to develop, promote, and implement artist-driven solutions to complex social challenges. The Creative Strategist program emerged as a recommendation from the LA County Cultural Equity and Inclusion Initiative, and supports the implementation of the [Countywide Cultural Policy](#), and its three main goals: to invest in cultural infrastructure and access to arts and culture; advance arts and culture in every sector of civic life; and promote cultural equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging.

Artist christy roberts berkowitz (who presents her name in lowercase, honoring the late writer bell hooks) began her Creative Strategist Residency with DHR in July 2023, with a focus on developing new approaches to employee well-being that use the arts to

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embrace creative expression and contribute to a more cohesive, productive, engaged, and resilient workforce.

Research has shown engaging in arts and cultural activities contributes to social cohesion, intercultural understanding, civic engagement, positive health outcomes, connection to place, and a sense of belonging, as well as providing opportunities for joy and learning. The link between creative and artistic expression and wellness has been well established. By participating in art and finding ways to explore creative expression, we can relieve anxiety, stress, anger, and can even improve the function of our immune system. The Journal of Positive Psychology states that “spending time on creative goals during the day is associated with higher activated positive affect” – essentially, engaging in creative and artistic expression generates joy and happiness, and can even improve our outlook on life. The World Health Organization (WHO) also acknowledges that “art can help us to emotionally navigate the journey of battling an illness or injury, to process difficult emotions in times of emergency and challenging events,” adding that “enjoyment of the arts helps to promote holistic wellness and can be a motivating factor in recovery.”

County employees have been especially challenged over the last few years, facing the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic not only in their personal lives, but also as public servants. In the wake of the pandemic, communities are struggling with loneliness and isolation, and suicide continues to be a threat to our society as many individuals struggle with the day-to-day challenges of life and can also be grappling with mental health issues.

The first-ever Employee Wellness, Arts, and Culture Festival will take place at LACMA, on Wednesday, May 8, 2024, from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. This event represents a unique opportunity for individual growth – through the arts. The day will feature free

admission to LACMA, which will be open exclusively for County employees. The day's special program will include:

- A curated exhibition of artworks created by County employees to be displayed on digital screens on LACMA's Smidt Welcome Plaza.
- Self-guided tours of [LACMA exhibitions](#) for County employees to explore and reflect on our world, history, culture, and diverse communities through the arts. Exhibitions on view will include *Painting in the River of Angels: Judy Baca and the Great Wall*, *Vincent Valdez and Ry Cooder: El Chavez Ravine*, *ED RUSCHA / NOW THEN*, *Dining with the Sultan: The Fine Art of Feasting*, and *Korean Treasures from the Chester and Cameron Chang Collection*, among others.
- Art and wellness activities, including sound baths, movement, meditation, artmaking activities, and more.

Support in encouraging and enabling the participation of our employees – both as artists and as participants across the County - is pivotal to demonstrating the County's commitment to employee well-being. It also supports interdepartmental collaboration and demonstrates an innovative understanding of arts as a strategy for employee engagement and wellness.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the County of Los Angeles:

1. Proclaim May 8, 2024, Employee Wellness Through the Arts Day.
2. Direct County departments to encourage employees to attend the inaugural Employee Wellness, Arts, and Culture Festival at LACMA on May 8, 2024, from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

3. Direct County departments to share information about the Employee Wellness, Arts, and Culture Festival with their employees in partnership with DHR, Arts and Culture, and LACMA.

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