The Workhouse Arts Center, known for its exhibitions and artist talks, Second Saturday Artwalks, live performances and classes in everything from painting and ceramics to cooking and yoga, has created a virtual campus.

With the campus closed due to COVID-19 restrictions, the Workhouse, like many nonprofits and small businesses, has quickly pivoted into the online offerings, according to a news release.

"The current pandemic affecting our country and the world has turned upside down what has been traditionally a highly interactive and hands-on delivery of content business," said Dale Marhanka, Glass and Ceramics Program Director at the Workhouse. "Expedience in creating and promoting our online courses and virtual tours of gallery exhibits … will allow for us to remain relevant and to continue to keep dialogue and engagement with our community at the forefront of our success as an arts organization."

The Workhouse, to date, has created multiple virtual gallery exhibitions that include artist talks, virtual surviving arts cabarets and interviews, a virtual tour of the recently opened Lucy Burns Museum, a virtual Second Saturday Artwalk with another scheduled for May 9, virtual live stream and recorded Art of Movement classes in yoga, pilates and more, and now live stream and recorded visual arts, music and performing arts classes.

"It's no secret right now that the world is facing unprecedented and unpredictable times but during this time of quarantine there is one thing that continues to unite us all — our need for the arts," said Debra Balestreri, Director of Education at the Workhouse. "Whether you're watching a film from the comfort of your couch, cooking a meal with your loved ones, listening and dancing to a song in your pajamas on a Sunday afternoon or teaching your children how to draw, the arts are there as a resource and a way of making connections."

A core purpose of the Workhouse is to foster and grow that connection through the arts, Balestreri said. "So, rather than sitting back and waiting for this whole crazy scenario to blow over, we have seized this opportunity to bring arts education and resources to you and your family through the safety and security of online experiences," she said.

"These circumstances are unprecedented and our small but dedicated staff has been the crucial link in keeping alive our mission of growing and supporting a vibrant arts center that offers engaging opportunities and inspiring experiences in visual arts, performing arts, history and education," said Kevin Greenlief, chairman of the board of directors. "Simple boredom during times of isolation can present a mental health challenge, and we believe these virtual initiatives are a means of providing the community with greater diversity and enrichment at a time most needed.

While we look forward to reopening when possible, we are proud to be able to engage with our community during this time."

Artist liaison Sharon Moores said the Workhouse strongly believes in the healing power of art. "We've created these virtual classes, performances and exhibits to lift your spirits, to give you something to look forward to on the hard days, to expand your life beyond the walls trapping you in," she said. "And by participating, you're also helping us. Doing this makes us feel better, too, and keeps the Workhouse and its artists going. Because we're all in this together."

All of the Workhouse Arts Center online offerings can be found at workhousearts.org/virtual-workhouse.

Live stream class registration is currently open offering classes in Visual Arts, Art of Movement, Performing Arts and Private Music Lessons. Online recorded class registration is open, with classes in Visual Arts beginning the week of May 11.

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