

# ZU ARTS INITIATIVE

## THE CULTURAL COMMONS OF MONTEZUMA COUNTY

### MISSION

ZU Arts Initiative builds sustainable cultural infrastructure in Montezuma County by providing free and radically affordable community programming, ensuring fair compensation for all artists, keeping creative dollars circulating locally, and centering radical inclusivity through community ownership.

*We believe: Culture isn't a luxury—it's infrastructure. It's what makes us human.*

### AT A GLANCE

**700+**

EVENTS  
SINCE 2021

**95%**

FREE TO  
PUBLIC

**100%**

ARTISTS  
PAID

### KEY PROGRAMS

→ **Musicians Mutual Aid Fund:** \$200/month pensions for seasoned artists + emergency grants

→ **Individual Artist Grants:** \$500-\$2,000 no-strings-attached support

→ **Young Emerging Artists (YEA!):** Youth programming, mentorship, paid gigs

→ **Free Community Programming:** Live music, exhibitions, workshops, clubs

→ **The Failure Fund:** \$5,000 annual budget for beautiful experiments

→ **Three Currencies Membership:** Pay with money, time, or gifts

### BACKGROUND

Founded in 2026 as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, fiscally sponsored by Onward Foundation. Built on the proven track record of ZU Gallery, which has hosted 400+ events since September 2021.

**Geographic Scope:** Rooted in Montezuma County with potential expansion to Southwest Colorado's Four Corners region.

### CORE VALUES

- Radical Inclusivity
- Fair Compensation
- Community First
- Local Investment
- Collaboration
- Excellence

### LEADERSHIP

**Dana Willard, Board President**

Artist, former small business owner

**Katie Burnham, Treasurer**

Data analyst, financial accountability

**Jodi Jahrling, Executive Director**

Founder of ZU Gallery, volunteer ED

### GOVERNANCE MODEL

- Democratic member voting (one share = one vote)
- Rotating member-elected board seats
- Full financial transparency
- Artist-led program committees
- Quarterly shareholder assemblies

### VISION

Cultural thriving in rural Southwest Colorado where artists earn fair wages, community members have free access to professional-quality programming, young people see creative careers as viable paths, and Montezuma County is known as a cultural destination that inspires similar work in rural communities nationwide.