QUEEN ANNE'S COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
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*****NEWS RELEASE*****

April 20, 2026

4th ANNUAL EASTERN SHORE ARTS FESTIVAL CELEBRATES STUDENT ARTISTS, DANCE, & COMMUNITY AT CHESAPEAKE COLLEGE

WYE MILLS, MD - The Todd Performing Arts Center at Chesapeake College came alive with energy, creativity, and celebration during the **4th Annual Eastern Shore Arts Festival** and **3rd Annual Senior Show**, held on Saturday, April 11, 2026.

- **Watch Festival Highlights (Full Video)**
- **Watch 15-Second Highlight Short**

At the center of the visual arts celebration, the **3rd Annual Senior Show** highlighted outstanding work from graduating high school artists. In partnership with Chesapeake College, Dr. Thompson and the college team selected six award-winning works representing excellence in both two-dimensional and three-dimensional art. Michael Bell presented these awards to students in attendance. Students were recognized for their creativity, technical skill, and ability to communicate powerful ideas through their work, reflecting the strength and direction of visual arts education across the region.

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QACPS Senior Show Award Recipients:

- **Mallory Norfolk (QACHS)** – *"Scout"*
- **Hunter Johnson (KIHS)** – *"Beacon of the Broken"*
- **Iaera Kelley (QACHS)** – *"A Sense of Self"*
- **Braelyn Boyle (KIHS)** – *"Yum Yum Snail"*
- **Lillian Clark (KIHS)** – *"My Soul"*
- **Grace Hartlove (KIHS)** – *"Beast of Torpor"*

Lillian Clark

Grace Hartlove

Bringing together student artists, dancers, educators, and community members from across the region, the festival showcased the depth of artistic talent on Maryland's Eastern Shore through a full day of performances, exhibitions, and recognition, anchored by a growing partnership between **Dr. Rob Thompson**, Director of the Todd Performing Arts Center at Chesapeake College, **Peter Pucci**, Executive Director of the Carole Cascio Fund for Mind Movement Dance Connections (CCF), and **Michael Bell**, QACPS Supervisor of Visual and Performing Arts.

The performing arts portion of the festival delivered a dynamic and memorable experience throughout the day. **CCF Associate Teaching Artist Gabby Pfeifer** performed a powerful solo originally choreographed and performed by internationally renowned dancer **Peter Pucci**, bringing both history and emotional depth to the stage.

Featured guest artist **Yoav Kaddar**, Israeli dancer and Director of Dance at West Virginia University, captivated audiences from start to finish. Kaddar led a morning modern technique masterclass intensive, delivered a compelling solo performance during the showcase, and concluded the day by bringing the entire community together through an energetic and inclusive Israeli Folk Dance class.

The Carole Cascio Fund played a central role in shaping this full day of dance, continuing its mission to connect professional artists with students and the broader community. This festival builds on a growing series of impactful experiences, including a Paul Taylor Dance Intensive in March led by Paul Taylor Dance Company alumni Amy Young Kleinendorst and Rob

Kleinendorst, and a February Family Dance Night in partnership with the Queen Anne's County Family YMCA featuring Ballet Hispánico 2 from New York City—both events marked by high levels of artistry, participation, and community engagement.

Beyond performances, the CCF continues to expand arts access directly into schools, bringing Sylvia Soumah's West African drumming experiences to Grasonville Elementary, Kent Island High School, and Queen Anne's County High School, while Gabby Pfeifer recently led movement-based learning experiences with students at Kennard Elementary.

Throughout the day, the festival was also documented live through **ArtScene | The Podcast**, hosted by Michael Bell. Interviews with student artists, performers, and guest professionals will be featured in a special episode releasing May 1, 2026, just ahead of another highly anticipated CCF-supported performance at the CCBC Essex Campus on May 2, 2026, and a **World Day of Dance** at Chesapeake College on Sunday, May 3, 2026. Sunday features a free West African dance class for students ages 12 and up and performances featuring the work of **Natyabhoomi School of Dance, RoseQi Dance Arts,** and **Coyaba Dance Theater** under the direction of **Deepti Mukund, Rose Xinran Qi,** and **Sylvia Soumah** at TPAC.

Yoav Kaddar & Michael Bell

"This work is about opening doors," said Peter Pucci, founder of the Carole Cascio Fund. "When you bring professional artists into communities like this and give students real access to the creative process, you're not just teaching dance, you're building confidence, connection, and a sense of possibility that stays with them."

From the gallery to the stage, the Eastern Shore Arts Festival continues to grow as a regional centerpiece, one that not only celebrates student achievement but actively builds a pipeline of artistic opportunity through meaningful partnerships.

“This day is about creativity in its truest form, taking risks, trying something new, and having the courage to put your voice out into the world,” said Michael Bell. “What we saw from these artists was all about expression, growth, and the willingness to step forward and create something meaningful. It was especially powerful to see returning student dancers reconnect, build new relationships, and continue growing together through this work.”

The Eastern Shore Arts Festival is made possible through the collaboration of Dr. Rob Thompson and Chesapeake College, the Carole Cascio Fund, Queen Anne’s County Public Schools, and dedicated arts educators and community partners across the region. The day also featured contributions from Suzanne Stoltenberg of the Working Artists Forum in Talbot County, who shared an inspiring community-based quilt project.

Together, these experiences continue to position the Eastern Shore Arts Festival as more than a single event, but a growing movement, one that connects students, artists, and the broader community through meaningful, transformative arts experiences.