

Solstice Celebration 2025



ANNUAL REPORT

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SOLSTICE

Santa Barbara

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**MISSION STATEMENT:
BRINGING THE COMMUNITY TOGETHER THROUGH THE ARTS**

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

“The greatness and health of a culture, of a community can be found in its art, in its celebrations”
Barbara Ehrenreich, “Dancing in the Streets”

Dear Friends of Solstice,

Solstice is much more than a Parade and Festival. It’s where the power of art meets community and connection. It’s a living expression of who we are as a community — creative, inclusive, resilient, and hopeful. Our mission is “Building community through the arts.”

We believe that creativity belongs to everyone. Research confirms that when communities create together— THEY THRIVE! Arts participation strengthens local economies, increases downtown vitality, builds civic pride, and supports mental well-being. Celebration is not an “extra” — it is essential to healthy, connected communities.

Studies by the National Endowment for the Arts and Americans for the Arts show that festivals, parades, and cultural events drive local economic activity, increase foot traffic in downtown business districts, and support small businesses and local jobs. Research from the Urban Institute and the Brookings Institution demonstrates that arts participation builds social connection, civic engagement, and neighborhood pride — while contributing to safer, more vibrant public spaces. A landmark global review by the World Health Organization links creative participation to improved mental health, resilience, and overall well-being. In short, CELEBRATION.

That belief guides our growing year-round programming, from Winter Solstice “Let It Glow” to Equinox gatherings and new partnerships like the BIGGEST Little Elephant Parade® in collaboration with Elephant Parade®. Through these initiatives, Solstice continues to expand opportunities for artists, youth, businesses, and neighbors to connect through shared creativity.

Thank you for believing in art as a force that brings people together, and for helping us keep imagining what’s possible.

With gratitude,

Penny Little
Executive Director, Summer Solstice Celebration, Inc.



LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Since 1974, Santa Barbara has welcomed the longest day of the year with one of its most beloved and globally renowned traditions — a vibrant community workshop culminating in a glorious parade and festival as iconic as the sunshine itself. I am deeply moved by the boundless dedication of our board members, advisors, staff, volunteers, and supporters who breathe life into this celebration year after year.

Our 51st annual Summer Solstice Parade and Festival bloomed into a “Wild World” — a dazzling tapestry of fantastical creatures, vivid imagination, and pure joy that drew over 100,000 revelers to our streets and Alameda Park. This year also saw us deepen our roots in the broader Santa Barbara community, weaving our colorful spirit into the revitalization of State Street and nurturing year-round opportunities for connection through the arts.

And when the nights grew long, we lit them up. Our second Winter Solstice: Let It Glow event brought the streets alive with luminous costumes, glowing art bikes, and the irresistible rhythms of The Brasscals — a sparkling reminder that the Solstice spirit knows no season.

SOLSTICE SANTA BARBARA

“Everyone under the Sun”



Looking ahead, we remain passionately committed to crafting world-class spectacle from the ground up — homegrown, community-rooted, and radiantly alive.

With deep gratitude,

Justin Gunn

Board President, Solstice Santa Barbara



*Clare Carey, John Palminteri, Justin Gunn at Let It Glow: Winter Solstice on State Street (2024 & 2025)
Solstice transformed downtown through illuminated art crawls with musicians and local businesses.*



2025 THEME: WILD WORLD

WORKSHOP

The hub of our annual Parade is the Solstice Workshop. The staff of artists and production specialists mentor the public in celebration arts to produce this unique people-powered, people created Parade, largely from repurposed and recycled materials.

PARADE

Downtown Santa Barbara was again transformed into a vibrant splash of color, music and dance, floats, street performances. The Parade on Santa Barbara Street arrived at Alameda Park where the floats and other modular elements were on display, to "Solstify" the Festival.

FESTIVAL

The 3-day Festival in Alameda Park kicked off Friday night with non-stop live music, food & craft vendors, continuing through Sunday. The newly expanded Funtopia zone again featured activities for kids of all ages, and entertainment on the SB Bowl Community Stage.

CELEBRATION ARTS

Celebration arts include everything from mask, costume, prop, and construction, to production, event planning, tech and other trainings. Community art and celebration are as old as humanity and is rooted in the desire for collective joy, our creative nature expressed in costume, celebrations of feasting, dancing, festivals, and parades. In the roots of all cultures are deep origins of community revelry.



SOLSTICE

Santa Barbara

Solstice Beyond the Parade

BUILDING COMMUNITY THROUGH THE ARTS

Throughout the year, Solstice partners with artists, nonprofits, businesses, and civic spaces to bring participatory art into public life.

Our collaboration with Elephant Parade® International continued with the Elephant Equinox & Art Box Contests. 2025 winner Christopher Noxon painted a full-sized sculpture that was in the 2025 Parade and is now on display at the Ojai Valley Museum.

Solstice also created hands-on art experiences at Earth Day and provided art activities for the Michael Towbes Public Library Plaza opening. Summer Solstice highlights and elevates regional artists by offering a prominent space to display their talent through our Annual Poster Contest.

In addition to 'Let it Glow' Winter Solstice, our community collaborations have included La Bohème Mardi Gras (featuring the announcement of our poster artist with John Palminteri), the Children's Creative Project – PIECE TIME, the Santa Barbara Earthquake Centennial, and a Montecito Soirée & Art Auction demonstrating Solstice's role as a creative connector throughout the region.



Let it Glow Lighted Costume Party



Towbes Plaza Opening Reception



Christopher Noxon Elephant in Parade



Wyld Works Poster Art Reception

WHAT YOUR SUPPORT FUNDS

**COMMUNITY • CREATIVITY • CONNECTION
COMMERCE • CULTURE • JOB CREATION**

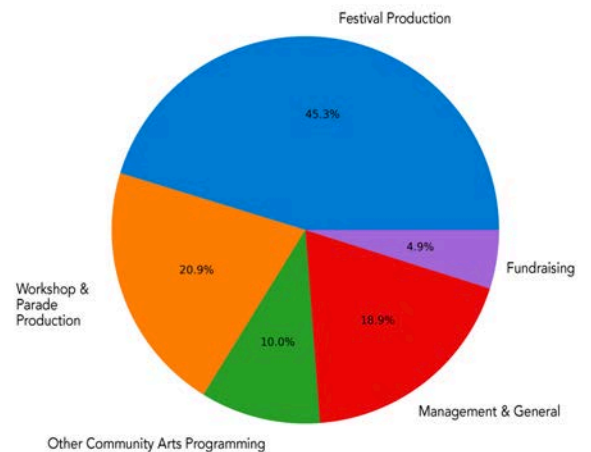
Solstice creates employment opportunities for local artists and provides a platform for musicians to showcase their talent, while fostering a creative environment that celebrates Santa Barbara's diverse cultural communities. Through its active scholarship program, Solstice empowers underprivileged youth by giving them access to the creative process. It also offers a workshop space where families can come together to celebrate life, creativity, and community.

Solstice supports the local economy by purchasing thousands of dollars in materials from nearby businesses. Our festival also creates vibrant opportunities for caterers, restaurants, artisans, craftspeople, musicians, and nonprofits to thrive, as thousands gather in Santa Barbara to celebrate.

Solstice welcomes a diverse and vibrant community—across all backgrounds and abilities—creating a space where individuality is expressed and creativity thrives. This spirit of collaboration and connection is the heart of Solstice, and your support fuels it all.



How We Invest in Program & Community Arts
Total Expenses: \$357,055



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THANK YOU! THE SOLSTICE PARADE & FESTIVAL IS YOUR CELEBRATION, AND YOU ARE PART OF THE STORY!

Lead Public Partners

- City of Santa Barbara Foundation & Grant Support
- Towbes Fund for the Performing Arts
- (a field-of-interest fund of the Santa Barbara Foundation)
- The Hutton Parker Foundation
- The Santa Barbara Foundation
- The Oshay Family Foundation
- US Bank

Corporate & Business Sponsors

- Atlantic Aviation
- 805 Beer / Firestone Walker
- JuneShine
- Sunstone
- Pascucci
- Islay Events
- Montecito Bank & Trust
- Farmacy
- Community Arts Workshop (CAW)

Media Partners

- Independent
- VOICE Magazine
- EdHat
- KEYT
- KJEE
- KCSB
- TVSB

In-Kind & Sustainability Partners

- Art From Scrap
- A Litter Free Event

In-kind Event Partners

- Roll N Rock 805
- Elemental Aerial Works
- Branches Mobile Gallery
- Wylde Works
- Longoria Wine
- Institution Ale
- Red Piano
- Downtown Organization, DSBIA
- Son & Sabor
- DJ Darla Bea
- Trader Joe's
- Bona Fide
- SolWave Water
- Culligans
- Carp Events
- Grant House Sewing
- Teccino
- Santa Barbara Historical Museum
- SantaBarbara.Com
- Jill's Place
- Tri-Co Reprographics
- The Blue Owl Restaurant
- Friends of State Street
- Brander Vineyards

