

# Cheekwood Estate & Gardens

2025 COMMUNITY IMPACT REPORT



Cheekwood  
ESTATE & GARDENS





Cheekwood is committed to ensuring everyone in our community has the opportunity to enjoy, learn, grow, and celebrate this natural haven rich with history and art and abounding in beauty.

Each year, we work diligently to increase access and expand awareness, intentional in our efforts to be welcoming to all. We are proud of what we have achieved in 2025 through innovation, collaboration, and an unwavering commitment. We are strengthening our impact and deepening our connections with those who live and visit here. Last year we welcomed 9,177 students free-of-charge from 184 schools through educational field trips, and 10,735 guests attended our four multicultural festivals, generating some of our highest-attended days of the year. Our team has worked tirelessly to impact our region through culture, education, environmental initiatives, and community outreach.

With this year's report, we celebrate our programs and achievements and will continue to advance and adapt to be an even more welcoming space by generating multiple opportunities to enrich and enlighten. We are sincerely grateful to all those who help us fulfill our mission and vision, and to all those who have and will come to Cheekwood to enjoy this incomparably beautiful estate and the soul-enriching experience it is.

## ABOUT CHEEKWOOD

Cheekwood Estate & Gardens boasts 55 acres of natural space. Its beauty and tranquility inspire a passion and determination to enhance the community around it, one that is rich with culture, natural beauty, artistic talent and educational innovation.

Cheekwood measures its impact on the greater Nashville community, not simply in numbers, but also in opportunities created and lives touched. This report is a snapshot of that impact during the twelve months of 2025.



## Mission

Celebrate and preserve Cheekwood as an historical landmark where beauty and excellence in art and horticulture nurture the spirit and serve as inspiration for a diverse and broad audience.



## Vision

Cheekwood will be a locally celebrated and nationally recognized destination renowned for its distinctive beauty, historical significance, and excellence in art and horticulture.



## Principles

### BEAUTY

that nurtures the spirit

### PRESERVATION

for future generations

### EDUCATION

that enriches and inspires

### COLLABORATION

that embraces a broad community

### FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

in stewarding our resources



# Impact in Numbers

370,000  
VISITORS

17,000  
MEMBER HOUSEHOLDS

484 50 22  
TN ZIP CODES STATES COUNTRIES

CHEEKWOOD’S ANNUAL INVESTMENT  
IN COMMUNITY OUTREACH

\$1.5M  
Salaries  
Programming  
Materials & Supplies  
Scholarships  
Translation Services  
Complimentary Admissions, Transportation, Memberships  
& More

# Community Partners

Cheekwood is proud to partner with more than 75 organizations to ensure its programs span the breadth of Nashville’s community, focus areas, priorities, abilities and more. Their resource-sharing, creativity and knowledge enrich Cheekwood’s operations, projects, programs, exhibitions and events.

- Alignment Nashville

Alliance for Young Artists & Writers

Asian Culture Center of Tennessee

Barbershop Harmony Society

Barnard-Seyfert Astronomical Society

Belmont University Spanish Department

Blackbird Academy

Cane Ridge High School

Community Achieves

Communities in School

Conexion Americas

Consulate General of Japan in Nashville

Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum

Cumberland River Compact

Daffodil Society of Nashville

Danza Azteca Guadalupeana

ECON Club

Equal Chance for Education

Fisk University

FUTURO, Inc.

Garden Club of Nashville

Governors Early Literacy Foundation

Gujarat Cultural Association of Nashville

H.G. Hill Middle School

Habitat for Humanity

Hume Fogg Sabor Latino Club

James Lawson High School

Japan-America Society of Tennessee

Jewish Federation of Nashville and Middle Tennessee

KIPP Nashville Schools

La Misión ConArte

Lane Motor Museum

Legal Aid Society of Middle Tennessee

Lincoln Heritage Funeral Advantage

Martin Luther King, Jr. Magnet High School

Master Gardeners of Davidson County

Master Gardeners of Williamson County

Metro Animal Care and Control

Metro Nashville Parks and Recreation

Metro Nashville Police Department

Metro Nashville Public Schools STEAM Expeditions
- Metro Office of Family Safety

Metro Water Services

Music for Seniors

Nashville Bonsai Society

Nashville Herb Society

Nashville Jazz Workshop

Nashville Musician's Union

Nashville Public Library

Nashville Rose Society

Nashville Shakespeare Festival

Nashville Taiko

Nashville Zoo

Nature Conservancy

Northwest Family YMCA

Paragon Mills Elementary

PENCIL Foundation

Proverbs 12:10 Rescue

Robert Churchwell Museum Magnet Elementary School

Root Nashville

Saint Joseph School

Salsa Soul Nashville

Sankofa African Drum and Dance

Schneider Electric

Sister Cities Nashville

Small World Yoga

Song Suffragettes

Southern Word

Tennessee Craft

Tennessee Language Center

Tennessee Urban Forestry Council

Turnip Green Creative Reuse

University School of Nashville

Urbaanite Nashville Lounge

Vanderbilt Blair School of Music

Vanderbilt Treatment & Research Institute for Autism-Related Disorders (TRIAD)

Vanderbilt University Center for Latin American, Caribbean, and Latinx Studies

Vanderbilt University

WNPX 91.1 FM



# Cultural Impact

## THROUGH CELEBRATION

Cheekwood is committed to embracing and celebrating cultures from around the world, especially those with a profound impact on the Middle Tennessee region. In addition to offering culturally themed activities throughout the year, Cheekwood hosts four major celebrations annually. Each festival highlights the traditions, music, dance, art and cuisine of a culture, welcoming thousands to celebrate amid the beauty and wonder of the estate and gardens.



### INDIAN ADVISORY COUNCIL

Suruchi Jaju, Music and Dance Coordinator  
Roochita Mathur, Cheekwood Volunteer  
Asha Nivison, Cumberland Trust  
Sam Patel, Cheekwood Volunteer  
Sheila Patel, Cheekwood Volunteer  
Rebecca Shah, Cheekwood Volunteer

## Holi

The Holi Festival, or festival of colors, is a Hindu celebration symbolizing a fresh start and new commitments, much like spring itself. Holi aligns perfectly with the seasonal *Cheekwood in Bloom* festival, adding even more vibrant colors to Cheekwood's spring roster. Approximately 3,343 visitors attended the fourth annual Holi at Cheekwood in 2025.

Through collaboration with its Indian Advisory Council, Cheekwood crafts an authentic festival complete with Indian food, traditional music and vendors. Choreographed dances with performers from school age to adult are interspersed with a DJ playing music for impromptu dance parties. Art activities include Holi cards made with liquid watercolor, designing a sari or kurta pajama, temporary henna tattoos, and bonfires created with construction paper.

Among Holi's highlights is the distribution of vibrant colored powder, or *gulal*, for attendees to toss in the air, on one another and on oneself. Cheekwood's Holi celebration features multiple well-attended color-throwing sessions. Each color is said to hold a different meaning, which is washed off following the festival, both literally and metaphorically.



## Black Arts Bash

Black Arts Bash has become one of the most anticipated events of *Summertime at Cheekwood*. Celebrating its fifth year, nearly 1,600 visitors attended the festival in 2025. It pays tribute to Black history's deep roots in Nashville by highlighting Black artists in the visual and performing arts. These artists are influential within our city's many spheres, including the entertainment, food and art scenes. Black Arts Bash is an opportunity to spotlight and celebrate both emerging and established artists across all mediums.

During Black Arts Bash, Cheekwood's grounds are filled with art and food, which are enriched by performances featuring Black artists, musicians, dancers and poets. The guidance and support of Cheekwood's African American Advisory Council and other partner organizations ensures that the experience is authentic, educational and inspiring.

In recent years, attendees have sampled food from Black chefs, learned about the colors and symbols in African textiles, heard from historians, authors and artists, and enjoyed spoken word poetry. They have also participated directly in the artistic endeavors by crafting their own textile design as part of a larger "community quilt" display and painting a square in a mural filled with the names of Nashville-based Black musicians. In 2025, Cheekwood hosted *Faces of the Community*, a photography exhibition created especially for Black Arts Bash by local artists DaShawn Lewis and Kimberly Manson.



### AFRICAN AMERICAN ADVISORY COUNCIL

Christiana Afotey, Threads by Dreads  
Charles Brown, Charles Lord Style  
Brenda Corbin, Cheekwood Volunteer  
Ashley Currie, Urbaanite  
DaShawn Lewis, Artist  
Kimberly Manson, Artist  
Rita Mitchell, Author and Entrepreneur  
Nekasha Pratt, Bright Advisory Group & HarperCollins  
Michelle Steele, Meharry Medical College  
LoLita Toney, Dismas House  
Destiny Whitmore, YMCA of Middle Tennessee  
XPayne, Artist





## Otsukimi

Nashville is home to over 8,000 Japanese citizens and 300 businesses, including Bridgestone-Americas and Nissan. Partnering with the Consulate General of Japan and the Japan American Society of Tennessee, Cheekwood hosts *Otsukimi*, or the Japanese Moon Viewing, each year. Completing its 11th year in 2025, Cheekwood ensures the celebration's authenticity by bringing in vendors and entertainers from the surrounding Japanese community.

*Otsukimi* features Japanese tea ceremonies, mochi pounding, a Haiku competition, a kimono fashion show, Japanese calligraphy, art activities, and bilingual lantern-lit tours of the Blevins Japanese Garden. The Nashville Bonsai Society contributes stunning bonsai, adding a layer of horticultural depth to the event. Cheekwood welcomed nearly 1,507 visitors to experience this dynamic festival in 2025.



## El Día de los Muertos

In 2025, Cheekwood celebrated 26 years of hosting El Día de los Muertos, a two-day event in which family and friends honor loved ones who have passed. This is the largest Day of the Dead celebration in Tennessee, with 4,310 attending the festival in 2025. The El Día de los Muertos Advisory Committee in collaboration with partner organizations and schools contribute to the celebration as Cheekwood's Massey Auditorium is filled with vibrant altars, one of the most important aspects of El Día de los Muertos. Across Mexico and beyond, families honor their ancestors by creating altars decorated with items that the deceased enjoyed in life.

In addition to enjoying the altars, attendees can make crafts that are essential elements of Day of the Dead celebrations, including marigold flower crowns, which symbolize the brevity of life, and sugar skulls, which represent departed loved ones. They can also shop local vendors selling art and jewelry, while viewing murals depicting Day of the Dead. Visitors can also write the name or memory of a loved one on a colorful slip of paper and add it to the memory tree. Or best of all, they can simply enjoy the traditional music, Aztec dancing and authentic food that make El Día de los Muertos such an engaging and festive event.



### EL DIA DE LOS MUERTOS ADVISORY COUNCIL

Yuri Cunza, Nashville Area Hispanic Chamber of Commerce

Maricruz Flores, Cheekwood Volunteer

David Julseth, Belmont University

Luisa Mattos da Costa, Vanderbilt University Center for Latin American, Caribbean, & Latinx Studies

Diana Rosales, Cheekwood Staff

Rachel Rodriguez, Performer and Entrepreneur

Arcelia Vasquez, University School of Nashville

Ofelia Vazquez, La Mision ConArte

Jose Vera, Artist

Suzy Vera, Cheekwood Volunteer

Tomas Yan, Conexion Americas





# Educational Impact

AN OUTDOOR CLASSROOM FOR ALL

## Destination Cheekwood

### Student Field Trips

Cheekwood offers a unique and completely free field trip program with guided and self-guided options that take advantage of Cheekwood as the best outdoor classroom in Nashville. Students can learn about pollinators and eco-systems, understand how trees communicate, explore multiculturalism in the Blevins Japanese Garden, and more.

### Family Field Trips

Families from Title I schools are invited to visit on weekends during peak festivals to enjoy a multi-generational experience at Cheekwood. In addition to complimentary admission, families receive an orientation with translation if needed, a complimentary meal or snack and a one-year family membership, encouraging return visits throughout the year.

### Agency Field Trips

As Destination Cheekwood expands, organizations serving audiences with a diverse set of needs are invited to enjoy the beauty, solace, and joy of the estate, museum, and gardens. During the summer season of 2025, Cheekwood welcomed families from the Martha O’Bryan Center, Tennessee School for the Deaf, and YWCA Nashville & Middle Tennessee to experience a magical *Enchanted Castles* playground installation. More than 100 visitors from Renewal House enjoyed the stunning displays at *Holiday LIGHTS*.



**FAMILY  
FIELD TRIPS  
IN 2025**

**941**  
STUDENTS  
AND FAMILY  
MEMBERS

**13**  
SCHOOLS &  
ORGANIZATIONS



**STUDENT  
FIELD TRIPS  
IN 2025**

**9,177**  
STUDENTS

**184**  
SCHOOLS

**25**  
METRO COUNCIL  
DISTRICTS





# Cheekwood GROWS

Cheekwood GROWS is a free, immersive, and multi-faceted program for third-grade students, designed to teach gardening, healthy eating, and cooking skills. Based in the Cheekwood GROWS kitchen and cutting garden, the program strengthens observation and critical-thinking skills, challenges students to move beyond their comfort zone, and helps them connect the seeds they plant to the food they eat.

In 2025, the Cheekwood GROWS Garden engaged 3rd graders from four MNPS schools, as well as summer campers and participants in the drop-in TOTS program. Summertime in the garden was a place of exploration for campers, who tended to the garden, cooked with fresh summer produce, and hosted a youth-run “farmer’s market.” The weekly drop-in TOTS gardening activity provided opportunities for little ones to explore compost, plant seeds, pick flowers, and taste veggies.

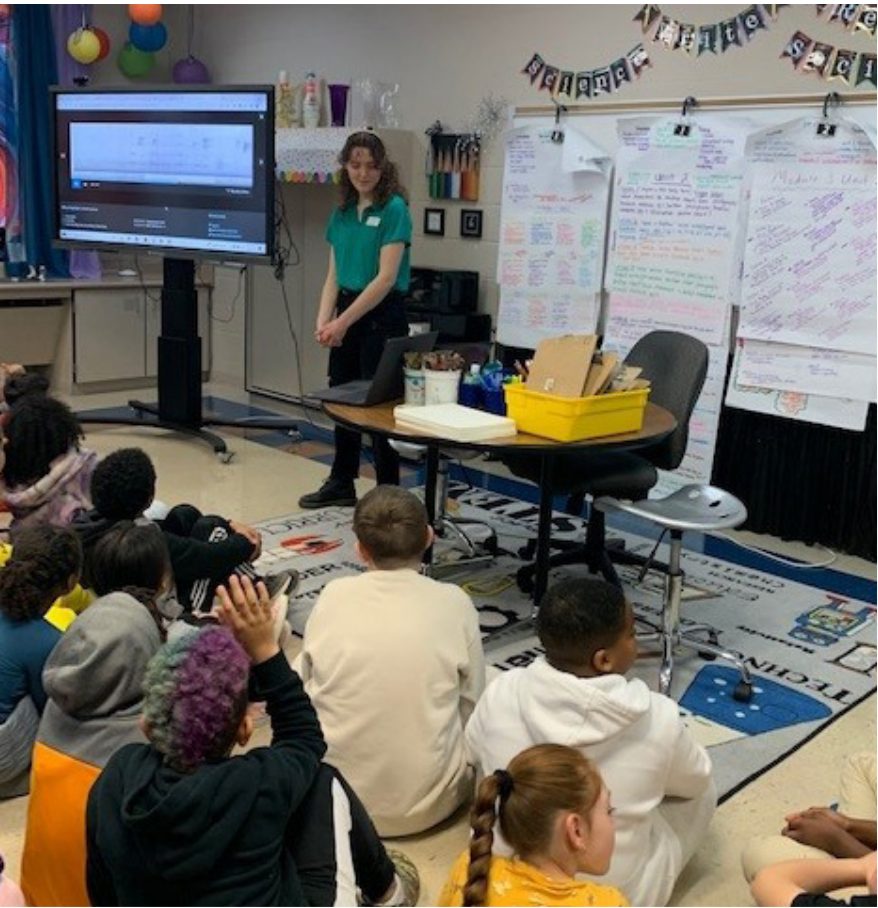


**TOTS GROWS ATTENDANCE**  
**293**  
CHILDREN

**CHEEKWOOD GROWS IN 2025**  
**363**  
STUDENTS  
**4**  
SCHOOLS



**SUMMER CAMPS**  
**4**  
WEEKS OF COOKING AND GARDENING CAMPS  
**113**  
CAMPERs  
**AGES 5-14**



**CHEEKWOOD ON THE ROAD IN 2025**  
**720**  
HEAD START PRE-SCHOOLERS  
**511**  
3<sup>RD</sup> - 5<sup>TH</sup> GRADE STUDENTS



# Cheekwood on the Road

This outbound program takes the Cheekwood experience beyond the estate to third through fifth grade students in Title I schools and to pre-kindergarten students in area Head Start programs. Elementary students explore Cheekwood’s history, art collections and seasonal garden displays through educator and artist-led stations. Head Start toddlers enjoy story time and arts and garden crafts inspired by the PNC Grow Up Great curriculum, and all books and materials remain in the classroom following the program.



# Cheekwood Community Celebration

In June, Cheekwood welcomed all to visit during the first-ever Community Celebration with half-price daytime admission and \$5 gardening classes from The Cheekwood Gardening School. Over five days, Cheekwood partnered with other Nashville cultural institutions including the **Nashville Zoo**, **Nashville Shakespeare Festival**, **Nashville Opera**, and the **Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum**.

Each day had a unique theme with engaging and fun activities for all ages, both day and night. Highlights included Zoo animal ambassadors, hands-on art projects for kids, Shakespeare classics performed among the *Enchanted Castles* summer installation, and a movie night featuring *The Princess Bride*. Musical performances added to the festivities, with Grammy Award winner **Rodney Crowell**, **Forever Abbey Road Beatles Experience**, and local kids’ bands taking the stage.



CHEEKWOOD  
COMMUNITY  
CELEBRATION  
2025

5  
DAYS

7,125  
ATTENDEES

1/2  
PRICE ADMISSION

\$5  
GARDENING CLASSES



# Middle Tennessee Scholastic Art Awards

For 34 years, Cheekwood has served as the Middle Tennessee host of this nationally recognized competition that recognizes the talent of young artists and writers. Each year, talented teens across Middle Tennessee submit over 1,700 works of art in a variety of categories to be judged by an expert panel of jurors.



## TEACHER ADVISORY COUNCIL

- Courtney Haley, Park Avenue Elementary School
- Rosilyn Harrington, Haywood Elementary School
- Jan Hatleberg, Meigs Magnet Middle School
- Doris Jones, Born Again Christian Academy and Preschool
- Janet Malone, Norman Binkley Elementary School
- Marquitta Nesmith, Thomas A. Edison Elementary School
- Joyce Platz, Sumner Academy

- DeeDee Potter, Hobgood Elementary School
- Iris Reyes, McMurray Middle School
- Shayna Snider, Hume-Fogg High School
- Vanessa Thomas, Thomas A. Edison Elementary School
- Pauli Wear, New Hope Academy
- Lina Wellborn, Episcopal School of Nashville



# Environmental Impact

## CREATING A BETTER TOMORROW, TODAY

As a botanical garden and arboretum, Cheekwood plays a critical role in conservation and environmental initiatives, both on its own grounds and throughout the region. Its Trees for Tomorrow program encompasses preservation and plantings, education and public programming to foster an appreciation and understanding of the importance of trees to our environment.



## Root Nashville

### *Partnership with Cumberland River Compact*

As a partner with Root Nashville, Cheekwood is committed to the mission to plant 500,000 trees in Nashville by 2050, serving as a communications portal to share Root Nashville's offer of free trees for Nashvillians to Cheekwood's 17,000+ membership and 200,000+ social media followers.



## If Trees Could Sing

### *Partnership with The Nature Conservancy*

Nashville's iconic musicians serve as advocates for trees in this self-guided tour through the Arboretum that celebrates and informs visitors about the musicians' favorite trees, and why trees are so important for sustainable communities.



## Tu B'Shevat

This Jewish celebration of the New Year of Trees is offered annually in January as an extension of Cheekwood's youth education programs and in collaboration with the Jewish Federation of Nashville.



## Standing Tall at Cheekwood

This free, tree-focused student field trip provides every participating student with a complimentary tree-themed book to take home, and each school with a tree sapling to plant on their campus. This program is offered in partnership with the Governor's Early Literacy Foundation.

## Arbor Day

This annual celebration helps raise awareness and appreciation for the importance of trees, highlighting their impact on the environment and the unique opportunities to learn and enjoy trees at Cheekwood.

## Emerald Ash Borer Program

Cheekwood is a leader in developing an emerald ash borer (EAB) response program to protect native ash trees, currently treating over 150 trees in Cheekwood's garden and arboretum.



# Community Impact

## ENLIGHTENING EXPERIENCES FOR ALL NASHVILLIANS

As stated in its Mission, Cheekwood seeks to inspire a “diverse and broad audience.” That inspiration is contingent upon expanding and increasing access for all populations. Cheekwood achieves this through a variety of programs to enhance the mind and body, regardless of background or circumstance.



Shawn Huckins (American, b. 1984), *Various Floral and Plaid Fabrics: Young Girl Holding a Basket of Fruit (after Drouais)*, installation view, 2023, Oil and acrylic on canvas.

### Blue Star Museum Military Access

Cheekwood offers free admission to the nation’s active-duty military personnel and their families, including National Guard and Reserve, from Armed Forces Day through Labor Day. Blue Star Museums is a partnership between the National Endowment for the Arts and Blue Star Families, in collaboration with the Department of Defense and museums across America.

### Museums for All Partnership with Vanderbilt Health

For families who participate in SNAP, WIC or TANF, Cheekwood provides admission to Gardens Only or Garden & Mansion for \$3 per person (up to four people). Through Museums for All, Cheekwood is partnering with museums across the country to make sure everyone can experience the best museums have to offer, for an affordable price. Those who have an EBT (Electronic Benefit Transfer) card can present it on arrival to receive the reduced admission.



BLUE STAR  
MUSEUM MILITARY  
ADMISSION  
IN 2025

841  
VISITORS



MUSEUMS  
FOR ALL  
IN 2025

1,754  
GUESTS

## Additionally...

**Summer Camp Scholarships** ensure all children have the opportunity to enjoy our camp program; paid internships for university students allow scholars to gain work experience across departments through its **Empower internship program**; Girl Scouts expand their nature knowledge through Cheekwood’s **Badge Basics & Beyond program**; and **Community Scarecrows Exhibition** encourages the wider community to create themed scarecrows, a popular garden feature of the annual *Cheekwood Harvest* festival.





**W**ith its intact and picturesque vistas, Cheekwood is distinguished as one of the leading Country Place Era estates in the nation. Formerly the family home of Mabel and Leslie Cheek, the 1930s estate, with its 30,000-square-foot Mansion and 55-acres of gardens, today serves the public as a botanical garden, arboretum, and art museum with furnished period rooms and galleries devoted to American art from the 18th and mid-20th centuries. The property includes 13 distinct gardens including the Blevins Japanese Garden and the Bracken Foundation Children's Garden, as well as a 1.5-mile woodland trail featuring outdoor monumental sculpture. Each year, Cheekwood hosts seasonal festivals including Cheekwood in Bloom, Summertime at Cheekwood, Cheekwood Harvest and Holiday LIGHTS. Cheekwood is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums and nationally as a Level II Arboretum. It is a three-time voted USA Today Top 10 Botanical Garden, was named the Most Beautiful Garden in Tennessee in 2025 by HGTV, in 2024 and 2025 received a Tripadvisor Travelers' Choice Award, and in 2021 was recognized by Fodors as one of the 12 Most Beautiful Gardens in the American South. Cheekwood is located eight miles southwest of downtown Nashville at 1200 Forrest Park Drive.

## Corporate support for community programs provided by

Adams & Reese  
Advance Financial Foundation  
Alliance Bernstein  
Asurion  
Bridgestone  
CoreCivic  
Cumberland Trust  
FINN Partners  
HCA Healthcare  
Mitsui  
Nissan Foundation  
Piedmont Natural Gas  
PNC Bank  
Regions Bank  
Ryman Hospitality Properties  
Tennessee Credit Union  
Tractor Supply



**Cheekwood**  
ESTATE & GARDENS