

December 20, 2013

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Arts Council of Greater Kalamazoo announces 2014 Art Hop partnership
with Downtown Kalamazoo Incorporated**

The Arts Council of Greater Kalamazoo and Downtown Kalamazoo Incorporated (DKI) announced today partnership plans for the 2014 Art Hops. Art Hop is a program of the Arts Council of Greater Kalamazoo and it is held on the first Friday of every month. Four times annually, it partners with Downtown Kalamazoo Incorporated at which time the downtown retail and business community participates to host and “expand” the number of featured artists and locations. DKI has been a partner with the Arts Council for the “expanded” Art Hops called *Art Hop & More* since 1999.

“Due to recent financial challenges for Downtown Kalamazoo Incorporated, we are unable to continue the partnership to the same financial level as in previous years. However, DKI is very committed to the success of Art Hop and has allocated \$10,000 in 2014 for the transition of Art Hop back solely to the Arts Council,” states Steve Deisler, President of Downtown Kalamazoo Incorporated. “This is a fraction of what DKI previously committed to Art Hop. Our past investment in Art Hop support was close to \$50,000 annually in promotions and coordination through our contract with The Event Company.”

Adds Deisler, “The Event Company and its principle, Deb Droppers, helped to build the four larger Art Hops by encouraging the downtown retailers to participate. The event has so much momentum that we see great growth potential in Art Hop every first Friday.”

Art Hop is the signature program of the Arts Council. Art Hop began in 1995 as a quarterly event and by 1997 was held monthly. In 2004 the State of Michigan “Cool Cities” initiative featured Art Hop as a best practice case study. Annually Art hop brings over 70,000 people into Downtown Kalamazoo from the greater Kalamazoo area, West Michigan and Northern Indiana generating an economic impact of over \$1.5 million.

D. Neil Bremer, Executive Director of the Arts Council says, “The Arts Council values the partnership with Downtown Kalamazoo Incorporated for Art Hop. We are pleased that it will continue during this transition year and we expect to continue this long-time relationship for years to come.” Stating that DKI’s financial contribution acknowledges the value Art Hop has to the retail and business community, Bremer added, “Study after study is showing that arts participation is changing very quickly in our society and more people than ever expect to participate actively rather than invest their time in a passive cultural experience. Art Hop is exactly that active, inclusive experience people seek.”

Arts Council staff have been working with DKI and the downtown business community on this transition since last July. Beginning in January downtown businesses will pay a small fee of \$50 each month they participate in Art Hop where previously their participation in “Art Hop & More” was covered through DKI. “Our goal is to have a seamless transition for the businesses, artists and the community. We have opened Art Hop up to the businesses to participate as many times a year as they would like and we are reinvigorating the marketing and programming for 2014,” says Beth McCann, Deputy Director for Programs & external Communication for the Arts Council and coordinator for Art Hop. “The response from all involved has been very positive. We anticipate many businesses will add 1-2 more Art Hops to the 4 they were doing already. It’s a win-win for the locations as well as the artists who have another opportunity to show their work.”

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