



359 South Kalamazoo Mall - Suite 203
Kalamazoo, Michigan 49007
P 269.342.5059
F 269.342.6531
kalamazooarts.org

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Contact: Ty Hicks, Director of Marketing | 269.342.5059
thicks@kalamazooarts.org | www.kalamazooarts.org

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ACGK Announces 2021 Community Arts Awards Recipients

KALAMAZOO, Mich.—The Arts Council of Greater Kalamazoo (ACGK) announces the recipients of the 2021 Community Arts Awards. Since 1985, the ACGK has honored local artists, arts organizations, and supporters through the Community Arts Awards.

The 2021 Community Arts Awards presentation will be held Tuesday, Dec. 7, 2021, at 5:30 p.m. at the Shaw Theatre on the campus of Western Michigan University.

Community Medal of Arts Award

Bryan Zocher

Zocher has been a tremendous influence on Arts Education in the Kalamazoo County school system. His leadership as a teacher and administrator in the Lincoln Center Education for the Arts (EFA) program with KRESA has been exemplary. Benefiting from Bryan's expertise and enthusiasm, the EFA programs have grown and developed partnerships within our regional school system by implementing many programs and enriching the arts in our community and beyond.

In addition to his work as an arts educator, Zochoer has worked at several influential arts and culture organizations including the Irving S. Gilmore Foundation, United Arts Council of Battle Creek, Kellogg Community College, W.K. Kellogg Foundations' Youthworks!, Mad Hatter Educational Theatre, Actors & Playwrights' Initiative Theatre, New Dramatists (NYC) and Bloomsburg Theatre Ensemble (Pennsylvania).

Zocher is also an esteemed member of several arts and culture boards and leadership councils. Nationally, Bryan is a member of the Americans for the Arts—State Arts Education Public Policy Program and the National Association of Aesthetic Education Institutes. Statewide, his associations include the Council of Michigan Foundations' Arts Funder Affinity Group, Michigan Youth Arts Association, Creative Many Michigan, and Michigan Association of Community Arts Agencies. Locally, Bryan is a member of the Western Michigan University Theatre Guild, Kalamazoo Cultural Center, Arts Council of Greater Kalamazoo, and Tuned In. Bryan is also a grant panelist of many arts and culture organizations including Arts & Science Council: Charlotte, N.C.; Kresge Foundation, Michigan Council of Arts & Cultural Affairs, Greg Jennings Foundation, and Arts Council of Greater Kalamazoo.

Lastly, Bryan is a professional theatre artist and educator who has written over 40 plays, musicals, radio shows and children's productions that have been produced in New York City, Los Angeles, Seattle, Chicago, and numerous theatres in Michigan and Kalamazoo. He was a resident playwright for Actors & Playwrights' Initiative Theatre. His play "Joe Hill" produced by Kalamazoo College was selected for presentation at Midwest region of the American College Theatre Festival. Furthermore, Bryan wrote scripts and toured the nation with the Mad Hatters Educational Theatre—promoting positive attitudes towards people with disabilities. He has professionally directed or acted in over 50 productions in New York City, Seattle, Chicago, and throughout Michigan and Kalamazoo.

Cara Lieurance

2022 will mark 30 years of Cara Lieurance's tenure at WMUK. Over these years, Lieurance has elevated the landscape of music and arts in Southwest Michigan through her career as a musician and in her role as program host and announcer at

WMUK Public Radio.

In 2000-01, WMUK launched Lieurance's show "Let's Hear It," to feature local musicians, concerts, and other performances. The show's interview style was modeled loosely on PRI's "From The Top" and NPR's "Fresh Air." Lieurance's effulgent presence balanced the show's accessibility for novice listeners with burgeoning inspiration for even the most seasoned professional in search of fresh ideas.

Over the last 20 years, Lieurance has welcomed thousands of guests to the studio. In 2004, Lieurance collaborated with fellow traditional musician Dave Marlatt to launch the Celtic Music show "The Pure Drop" on WMUK. Following the success of "The Pure Drop" on the radio, Lieurance and Marlatt launched "The Pure Drop Concert Series," bringing world-class traditional players to the region for 3-4 live music performances each year at the Richland Community Hall. More recently, Cara has been tapped to host the NPR flagship show, "All Things Considered," on WMUK. She is live on air for two hours each weekday, providing up-to-the-minute local news headlines as well as traffic and weather alerts. This is a prestigious role, sitting alongside NPR's most senior hosts from our local member station. In this role, Lieurance brings her signature warmth to the news airwaves.

Outside of the broadcast studio, Lieurance has an expansive career as a music performer. She was asked to join the Blue Dahlia music group in 2001 to help prepare their score to "The General." Although this group has since dissolved, it was recognized across the region for its exciting sound. The independent, alternative band was described by the *Detroit Free Press* as "more adventurous than anyone else dares to be." The group accompanied the Wellspring Dance Company and performed a live soundtrack for more than a dozen silent films at the Kalamazoo State Theatre.

Lieurance is still performing Irish music in more intimate venues with "Whiskey Before Breakfast" music sessions, and is an active member of the traditional/acoustic music group "An Dro." Furthermore, Lieurance contributes behind the scenes with the Civic Theatre, WMU Theatre Department, Farmers Alley, and other theatre pit orchestras. She is an occasional guest with the Kalamazoo Philharmonia and has served as a concert announcer for dozens of performances, including the Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra, Gilmore Festival, and Fontana Chamber Arts performances.

Lori Moore

For more than 40 years Lori Moore has proven herself to be a talented performer and tireless advocate for the arts in Kalamazoo. She is a gifted actress and singer, having performed leading roles in community and professional theatres in town. In addition to her work at the Kalamazoo Civic Theatre, she has also been featured in productions at Western Michigan University, Farmers Alley Theatre, and the Barn Theatre in Augusta, Mich. Moore has lent her considerable talents to the Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra, providing narration for "The Night Before Christmas" and Ballet Arts Ensemble where she played the part of the Queen in "Cinderella." Regardless of the venue, Moore has received rave reviews for her work and hundreds of audience members have made it clear that she is the reason they came to see the production; she is that well known and respected.

As a radio and television host for over three decades, Moore's communication skills as a broadcaster are known and respected by her listeners and viewers. Moore not only used her gift as a communicator but also chose to engage her audiences in community issues, advocating for the arts and human service organizations. She urged those listening to and watching her to attend arts and community events by scheduling knowledgeable guests on her shows, putting them at ease and asking them relevant questions about their events and organizations. Her infectious sense of humor was an added benefit for her guests and her audience.

Steve Trivers, former President of Fairfield Broadcasting stated, "In over 50 years of broadcasting, I have never worked with anyone more prepared, professional, or passionate about their job than Lori Moore."

Adam F. Carter Young Artist Award

Morgan Brown

Morgan Brown has danced and trained with the Rootead Youth Dance Company since she was in the seventh grade. She uses dance as a tool to heal internally and express herself. Because of her focus, integrity, and dependable and nurturing character, Brown was chosen to step into many leadership roles. She was responsible for communicating all reminders of performances and rehearsals to the team. She became a Rootead Facilitator instructing Rootead in Youth, which involved creating 6-week lesson plans and teaching the Rootead 2–13-year-olds.

Brown has used the tools that Rootead taught her to heal through arts and is now using the same methods to offer other youth in the BIPOC (Black, Indigenous People of Color) community the same opportunities at low to no cost. She has held fundraisers every year to help raise money for youth to travel to Chicago to take master classes, see professional dance companies, and be inspired to travel outside of Michigan. Brown is now a freshman in college at Howard University aspiring to become a dancer and study business.

Business Arts Award

Bell's Brewery

Bell's Brewery has been a generous supporter of Wellspring/Cori Terry & Dancers and many other art institutions for many, many years. Beyond their financial support of Wellspring and others, Bell's has worked creatively to connect their products with the arts and share that message with their large network of supporters.

Bell's has made it a priority to invest in their community. Even during the COVID-19 pandemic, their support has not wavered. They see the importance of art for the health of a community. They also encourage their employees to engage with the arts in the community, which only strengthens this connection. Bell's support artists philanthropically and physically with their back room and outdoor venue, providing opportunities for artists to perform for our community.

Epic Award

Kalamazoo Institute of Arts

The Kalamazoo Institute of Arts (KIA) has had a resolute commitment to serve this community's residents, businesses, and visitors for over 96 years. Their dedication to the artistic integrity of the museum, its collection, exhibitions, and programming is only enhanced by their mission that “art is for everyone.” This has been made even more evident over the past few years in their unwavering dedication to transform, inspire, and fulfill through the arts.

Historically, the KIA has provided versatile and engaging programming for all ages and their outreach is unmatched. They strive to be the leading educational partner for parents and families outside of schools, serving 1,500 families annually through recurring programs for children and youth, of which most are free.

Even though recent pandemic limitations “paused” their free K-12 tours serving more than 15,000 students annually, they have been working diligently to provide teacher resources and online accessibility to stay connected. The Kirk Newman Art School (KNAS) enrolls nearly 3,000 students annually and provides 300 scholarships, most of which enable children and youth to participate for free. KNAS was also able to pivot this year creating many classes online and virtual one-to-one sessions with instructors.

KIA has risen to the challenge of this past year to meet people where they are most comfortable. KIA has been providing a Spanish version of Art Detectives in partnership with El Concilio and works closely with community groups to identify and respond to community needs.

Gayle Hoogstraten Arts Leadership Award - Educator

Mandy Clearwaters

Mandy Clearwaters is the conduit between Kalamazoo Public School's 13,000 students, the community, and the greater art world. Clearwaters coordinates with local art organizations and community organizations to showcase KPS students' art and helps students participate in art installments throughout the city. The partnerships to showcase student art involve upwards of 1,200 KPS student pieces per year to the wider community.

The community art showcases include the Bronson Park Art Show, WMU Social Justice Art Competition, Bronson Health Foundation, Young Artist of Promise show at Bronson Methodist Hospital, Young Artist of Kalamazoo shows at the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, and Installments at the KPS Administration building that is part of Art Hop.

In addition to the art shows, Clearwaters coordinates several community projects. These include collaborations with the Kalamazoo Parks and Recreation Department to have students design artwork for Bronson Park, a project with the Kalamazoo Farmers Market to provide painted sculptures, and a soon-to-be installed mural on the Kalamazoo Mall in partnership with the Discover Kalamazoo Artists of Color. Clearwaters is currently working with State Representative Julie Rogers to display KPS student art in her office at the Michigan State Capitol in Lansing.

Aubrey Jewel Rogers

Rogers is an instructor at Kalamazoo Valley Community College Center for New Media. While teaching her own classes and helping her students reach the deadline for assignments and projects, she also helps students outside her own classes deal with the stress of deadlines. Rogers has assisted students to show off their work to the public's eye. Although Rogers is an animation and arts instructor, she also mentors students outside of that field in areas such as video, multimedia, and graphic design.

Rogers' dedication to her job as an instructor, her work as an artist, as well as to her students' work in their field of interest is more than just admirable; it is inspirational. Rogers constantly looks to help others out as much as she can, not only as a teacher, but also as a friend.

Gayle Hoogstraten Arts Leadership Award - Administrator

Kerry Hagy

Kerry Hagy is the Executive Director of the South Haven Center for the Arts (SHCA) and is a leader who makes decisions affecting the organization based on the mission at all times. Hagy has created an opportunity for Michigan artists to collaborate with the Downtown Development Authority and the South Haven Visitor's Bureau to submit proposals for painted mural bike racks to be installed throughout downtown South Haven.

Through Hagy's leadership, SHCA has been able to maintain the organization in a positive way throughout the pandemic. Although their building was closed to the public from February 2020 through April 2021, staff members were able to keep their contracted hours and work from home without having any lapse in employment. Hagy guided the organization through the pandemic while keeping board members involved in important decision making and transitions. As an organization, they had no prior experience in work-from-home duties, but Hagy was able to guide the staff to stay busy and focused on their mission all while the building was closed to the public. SHCA switched to online programming, workshops, exhibitions, and gallery openings through Zoom and changed scheduled exhibitions from in-person to online with a positive response.

During the transition as an organization to opening the art center to the public again, Hagy was able to create a full schedule of programming and events on short notice all while keeping in mind the safety of the staff, members, volunteers, and visitors. Indoor children's art classes were changed to outdoor art classes in a beautiful garden on the Liberty Hyde Bailey Museum's grounds in South Haven.

Hagy also generously offers her time and skill set to help other organizations apply for grants in the area. She has helped arts organizations in the Berrien County area apply for funding for a mural project, the South Haven Public Schools apply for an arts-related grant and has offered her grant writing advice and skills to countless other individuals and organizations, including the South Haven Scott Club. Hagy's guidance and leadership is one to be modeled by many and is inspiring to work with, filled with creativity and inclusive ideas always focusing on the SHCA mission.

Theodore C. Cooper Award for Distinguished Volunteer Service

Judah Gesmundo

Judah Gesmundo is Wellspring/Cori Terry & Dancers' longest-standing board member serving actively on the board for over 20 years. Her excellent leadership has helped Wellspring weather many storms and has brought the organization to the incredible moment of celebrating 40 years of moving the community this year.

Gesmundo has stepped up into board leadership roles on many occasions to ensure the health and vitality of the organization. She has led the organization through many critical moments with poise and great care. Gesmundo has now handed the torch to new leadership, whom she has recruited and been mentoring, and is beginning her transition out of a formal role with the organization. Her service is to be commended.

Gesmundo has dedicated more time, talent, and treasure to Wellspring/Cori Terry & Dancers than any other individual and we wish to honor her contributions with the entire arts community. Gesmundo earned her Bachelor of Arts at Western Michigan University in dance and theater and then moved to New York City to study dance with Erick Hawkins. Gesmundo met Cori Terry in 1974 while studying with Erick at the Wolf Trap National Park for the Performing Arts in Virginia. Gesmundo became a dance instructor at the Hawkins studio in 1976.

Gesmundo is committed to life-long learning, is a student and practitioner of Yoga and Ayurveda, and enjoys walking, swimming, and biking. She also sits on the board of Speak it Forward, Inc., serving as board secretary.

About the Awards

Community Medal of Arts Award

The CMA recognizes an artist who is a leader in their field, has a significant body of creative activity, has received local and/or national acclaim, and has impacted on our community through art. This award encompasses all art forms, including but not limited to visual, musical, theatrical, literary, performing, multi-media, architecture, or design.

Adam F. Carter Young Artist Award

The Adam F. Carter Young Artist Award is designed to recognize and encourage the next generation of artists in our community. The winner is a student who has had an impact both in their field of study and in our community and is nominated by their arts teacher, director, or a community member. This award is generously supported by the Mary and Brooks Godfrey Family.

Business Arts Award

The Business Arts Award is presented to honor businesses in Kalamazoo County for their leadership commitment and vision in developing exemplary alliances with the arts and arts organizations. The award recognizes a business for creating outstanding initiatives with the arts and arts organization, furthering the educational development of youth, enhancing the economic vitality of the community, and enriching the quality of life in our community.

Patron Award

The Patron Award acknowledges an individual or couple who have significantly contributed to the arts as patrons. Through their patronage, they have made a sustained and/or transformational impact in this community through their support of the arts.

Epic Award

The Epic Award recognizes a nonprofit organization or program within Kalamazoo County that is of high artistic quality and serves to enhance life in our community through the arts. The award pays special attention to both long-standing programs and organizations that have played a consistent role in the community and new organizations and programs that meet a previously unmet community need or focus area.

Gayle Hoogstraten Arts Leadership Award

The Arts Leader is an arts educator or arts administrator. The nominee is a recognized leader in the arts and/or the education community with an impact beyond his/her job description, a strong impact on the community through art, and positive and productive relationships in the community outside of his/her institution.

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Editor's note: A headshot of each of the CAA recipients as well as the CAA logo are attached.