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2nd All-Heart sculpture celebrated with ribbon cutting on Federal Hill Green

by David Fortier
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A second All-Heart sculpture is celebrated with a ribbon cutting Monday afternoon at the Federal Hill Green. | David Fortier

The artist, one of the funders and members of the City Arts & Culture Commission were on hand Monday afternoon for the official ribbon cutting of the latest All-Heart sculpture on the Federal Hill Green.

“No great society has ever existed without the incorporation of arts, culture and recreation into their social programs and public spaces,” said Kevin Prior, who is with the Broad View Fund that purchased the heart shaped sculpture that features the artwork of Amanda Mendoza.

“Right now, we all stand on the Federal Hill Green where so much of Bristol’s history has unfolded, including the medical tents during the first pandemic, the Spanish Flu,” Prior said.

“Look around and in recent decades this location has also included arts, cultural, recreational and religious events. We are a great society. We are Bristol All Hearts.”



Artist Amanda Mendoza, who created the mural for the All-Heart sculpture, discusses her work behind the scenes while City Arts & Culture Chair Walt Lewandoski looks on. | David Fortier

Among the benefactors of the fund’s Cocktails@Eight and other fundraisers over 20 years are 20 non-profits, including its second most successful event in 2019 when the event raised $20,000 for Bristol Parks Recreation Youth and Community Services Pop-Up Parks initiative, Prior said.

He commended Mendoza for incorporating many of the city’s iconic landmarks and events into the design.

“They are a snapshot of so much of our greatness,” Prior said. “Let us all take a ‘Broad View’ of the many great things about our Bristol Community and discover other locations at which other art installations can and should be supported.”

Prior indicated that the Broad View Fund would be more than willing to support other similar efforts.

Mendoza, the artist, said that she consulted with City Arts & Culture chair Walt Lewandoski as as to what the commission felt was important to incorporate into the mural that covered the heart-shaped sculpture.



Posing after the ribbon cutting are from left, Broad View Fund member Kevin Prior, City Arts & Culture member Maria Salice, City Arts & Cultural chair Walt Lewandoski, City Arts & Culture member Andrea Adams, two unidentified attendees and, on the right, artist Amanda Mendoza. | David Fortier

“So I actually started on the back side of this part first, where it says Bristol. What you might not see at first glance is that the white lines are actually a map of the streets,” she said, and that the heart artwork is placed on the front side exactly where the sculpture is situated on Federal Hill Green.

The churches on opposite sides of the green, St. Joseph Church and First Congregational Church, are also incorporated as well as a pocket watch referring to the city’s clock making history, as well as mums, which are

also part of the history.

“Some fun research was needed for this mural,” she added. “I was informed that there used to be trolleys that were in the town here. I was trying to do my researching, and the thing is there are so many different types of models, street cars, that I wanted to find one that looked exactly how they looked here in Bristol.”

She reached out to the CT Trolley Museum.

“Hey,” she recalled saying, “I’m working on this really cool project and I was wondering if you could help me out.”

She was invited into the private library area where she was presented with a bunch of photos that are not part of their public exhibit, Mendoza said.

“So this street car that is on this mural is actually from the 1800s and it is what they would have looked like in Bristol as well as Plainville,” she said, pointing out the street cars on the mural as she addressed attendees.

“It was really fun to tie together the history part riding around the heart,” she said.

The image of the gears from a clock, she said, she pulled from the City of Bristol logo.

“I just wanted all those pieces to feel similar or if it’s not familiar to some people,” she said, “that they can kind of tie these things together and learn something new.”

Walt Lewandoski, chair of the City Arts & Culture Commission, said after the ceremony, “We’re really proud of the effort, really happy with it, and most importantly, we want to look at it as a kickstarter for multiple hearts to be around the city.”

Among the locations that have been scouted are the Board of Education and Memorial Boulevard, he said.

Lewandoski, who spearheaded the effort, said the idea behind the multiple locations mimics one in Framingham, Mass., where 20 sculptures have been placed around that city.

“They actually have a trail you can follow,” Lewandoski said, an option which Bristol might pursue.

City Arts and Culture Supervisor Arianna Therriault said, “I think we try and see how many of these hearts we can get around Bristol. More sculptures for the city and more beautification just makes it feel more community-oriented, and I hope that for us.”

In addition to Mendoza, Lewandoski and Therriault, staff from BPRYCS, Main Street Community Foundation, City Councilor Steve Seymour and State Rep. Mary Fortier attended the ribbon cutting.

In comments after the ceremony, Lewandoski expanded on his remarks, kicking off the ceremony.

“Today, if you don’t text, if you don’t tweet, if you don’t post on Facebook, if you don’t have content, that’s where everything goes,” he said.

How the second sculpture came to be, he added, “This was a chance meeting, face to face at another meeting.”

He said he met Prior and Bob Boudreau, a second member of the Broad View Fund, at the ribbon cutting of the first All-Heart Sculpture at E.G. Stocks Playground on Middle Street.

“I got the sense that (Broad View Fund) wanted to do something for art, had appreciation for art, and asked what they could do. And I said, ‘Well, I have this initiative I want to start with the heart of Bristol and do these polyester hearts and put them all over the city.'”

Lewandoski recalled that he (Prior) said, “Oh, that sounds pretty interesting.”

Lewandoski said, “So I brought it up, I got him the info. He was on board, and little by little (the project) evolved into ‘Yeah, we’ll get the money’ and found the artist and you know now it’s there.”

A similar connection occurred with the initial All-Heart sculpture which involved John Cunningham, a metal sculptor working metal production with Farmington Metals.

Cunningham, Lewandoski said, wanted to donate something to the city.

“That came out of many conversations because it turned out, … his shop is in my wife’s father’s building…. So we had a connection. I spent many, many days there.”

As for the design for that original All-Heart Sculpture, “Cunningham had the idea for a lock heart, a heart where people can put their locks on,” Lewandoski said.

“He actually did a little prototype,” Lewandoski said about Cunningham’s contribution. The prototype has been donated to Southside School.

“It’s in their garden now,” Lewandoski added.

The choice of location was pure serendipity.

“So we were looking for a location,” Lewandoski said, “to me, … looking at the locks, locks rhymes with stocks. It sounded good and everybody bought into it.”

That All-Heart sculpture is, of course, at E.G. Stocks Playground.

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