

Applications being accepted for DeMars Love of Art Fund

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Grant applications are now being accepted for the Louise Lauretano DeMars Love of Art Fund. The late DeMars is pictured above.

FILE

BRISTOL — The Main Street Community Foundation is accepting grant applications for the “Louise Lauretano DeMars Love of Art Fund,” created in memory of a late former director of The Carousel Museum and intended to support local artists.

Samantha Rajotte, scholarship and program officer with the Main Street Community Foundation, said local artists are invited to apply for the grants through Halloween, Oct. 31 at 4 p.m. Grants awarded will range from \$1,000 to \$5,000. The proposals will be limited to fine arts and graphic arts.

“Grants will be awarded to individual artists residing in the towns of Bristol, Burlington, Plainville, Plymouth, Southington and Wolcott who wish to further their creativity, explore their talent or expand their learning,” she said.

Grant recipients must have lived in those towns for a minimum of two years, Rajotte clarified.

The Louise Lauretano DeMars Love of Art Fund was established through a bequest by DeMars’ estate after her death on Jan. 9, 2023. The purpose of the fund was to “continue her joy and passion for art while inspiring other artists.”

“Louise’s contributions to the museum industry as well as the arts and culture community were expansive,” Rajotte said. “Most notably in the greater Bristol community, her 28-year tenure as the executive director of The Carousel Museum established the museum as a national tourist destination. Louise was a valued member of many organizations and associations over the course of her career. This fund continues her legacy, joy and passion for the arts while inspiring future artists.”

DeMars was on the original board of directors formed in 1990 to start The Carousel Museum at 95 Riverside Ave. as a nonprofit educational organization. DeMars became the first museum director in 1991 and served in this role until 2019, when she stepped down.

“It’s not a retirement party,” DeMars said at the time. “It’s an accomplishment party.”

Originally, The Carousel Museum had just one carousel horse. Now, the museum has hundreds. The museum educates visitors on the history of the art form and explains to them the process of how carousel animals are made during tours. There is also a restoration department on the upper floor.

DeMars led the Exhibits Department at the Yale Peabody Museum before coming to The Carousel Museum in 1991. She celebrated local artists each year during her tenure as director with an annual ACE Awards gala. She was also a leader at AAM (American Association of Museum’s) and a founding member of NAME (National Association for Museum Exhibitions) as well as leading the development of the MAP (Museum Assessment Program) program, which helped new museums through self-guided strategic planning. She was also a member of the NCA (National Carousel Association) and NEMA (New England Museum Association).

Last year, Rajotte said, local artists Marlo Marrero and Nigel Wynter were each awarded \$5,000 to further their artistic growth.

“Marrero is a trained artist in multiple mediums and is the co-owner of Creative Jam Art Co. in Bristol,” Rajotte said. “She used the grant funds to improve her water marbling technique through participation in workshops. Wynter is an artist dedicated to fine art and illustration who used the awarded funds to study with and receive mentorship from like-minded professionals through the Created to Thrive Mentoring program.”

To learn more about the application process, or for guidelines and eligibility criteria, visit mainstreetfoundation.org/apply-for-grant or email Kate Kerchaert, director of grants & programs, at kate@mainstreetfoundation.org. People can also call Kerchaert at 860-583-6363.

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