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## Love of Art Fund awards grants to city artists

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The late Louise Lauretano DeMars.

FILE

BRISTOL — The Louise Lauretano DeMars Love of Art Fund at the Main Street Community Foundation has awarded three grants for more than \$13,000 to support local artists.

Samantha Rajotte, scholarship and program officer with the Main Street Community Foundation, said a total of \$13,025 was awarded to three Bristol-based artists through the fund's second grant cycle. The purpose of the grants is to help local artists further their artistic growth.

“These grants will honor Louise’s legacy of supporting local artists while improving the community,” she said. “Lisa Corson, a mixed-media fiber artist, was awarded a grant of \$2,025 to support her artistic expansion into pottery by attending workshops. Tina Fusco, is an acrylic painter who was awarded \$1,000 to purchase supplies as she transitions her business to be inventory-based. Lastly, Josh Therriault is a filmmaker from Bristol who shoots and produces short narrative films, stop motion animations, documentaries and music videos. He was awarded a \$10,000 grant to support film festival submission costs and marketing materials of his first feature-length documentary film, “In Hines Sight,” about a Waterbury-based artist named Francis Hines whose work was found in a dumpster and reclaimed.”

The Louise Lauretano DeMars Love of Art Fund was established through a bequest by DeMars’ estate after her death on Jan. 9, 2023. The Fund supports Bristol-area artists through stipends to help further their creativity, explore their talent or expand their learning. To date, the Main Street Community Foundation has awarded \$23,025 from the Fund to five local artists.

Rajotte said DeMars was a “valued member of many organizations and associations over the course of her career in the museum industry and arts community.”

“This Fund continues her joy and passion for art while inspiring and supporting established artists,” she said.

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)

The next grant cycle for the Louise Lauretano DeMars Love of Art Fund will open in fall 2026. Requests will be considered from established artists who reside in Bristol, Burlington, Plainville, Plymouth, Southington and Wolcott.

To learn more about the application process, guidelines, and eligibility criteria, visit [mainstreetfoundation.org/apply-for-grant](http://mainstreetfoundation.org/apply-for-grant) or email Whitney Shufelt, director of grants & programs, at [whitney@mainstreetfoundation.org](mailto:whitney@mainstreetfoundation.org) or email her at 860-583-6363, ext. 152.

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