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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Arts Council of Greater Kalamazoo Re-visions Community Arts Awards

Kalamazoo, June 11, 2013: the Arts Council of Greater Kalamazoo today announced that it will seek input from individual artists, arts organizations, past honorees and the community at large regarding the sustainability of the Community Arts Awards.

D. Neil Bremer, Executive Director, Arts Council of Greater Kalamazoo stated, "While we won't be presenting the Community Arts Awards in 2013 as we have done in the past, the organization will be seeking conversations and collaborations with community arts groups and arts leaders on the questions of appropriate and sustainable future recognition for outstanding contributions to the Arts in Kalamazoo"

The Arts Council will embark upon a plan in early Fall to begin work with arts organizations and past Community Arts Award honorees to find new methods to honor and recognize those individuals, arts organizations and businesses who contribute and support a thriving arts and creative community in Kalamazoo. Adds Jim Hopfensperger, President of the Arts Council's Board of Directors, "The Arts Council is fully committed to its vision of enhancing the community through programs that serve individual artists, arts groups and the Kalamazoo region. We hope that by engaging in these discussions the Community Arts Awards will be enhanced and will have long term sustainability."

The Community Arts Awards began in 1985 as a way to celebrate and recognize those individuals who contribute to the vitality of Kalamazoo's arts community. The Arts Council has historically sponsored the Community Arts Awards.

"Kalamazoo's rich tradition of arts and culture has been celebrated, in part, through these Community Arts Awards", said Bremer. "While looking forward to recognizing the arts and creative output in Kalamazoo for

the next decades, we must do so in a way that continues to honor the leaders already identified with an award in past years. This was a serious annual discussion among the board and staff of the Arts Council...How do we help arts groups think about their sustainability when, at the same time, we are acutely aware of the dwindling resources to produce the Community Arts Awards? It's called the *Community Arts Awards* for a reason and I am excited to have conversations with the leaders of other community arts groups to see how we celebrate the next three decades."

The Community Medal of Arts (CMA), the most distinguished award, celebrates those who live or work in Kalamazoo County and are actively engaged in promoting and supporting the Arts. Presented annually, it honors those who have made a long term commitment of personal time and energy to the Arts. The first Community Medal of Arts was presented in Nelda Balch and since that time seventy- seven community recipients have been honored. In addition to the Medal of Art, beginning in 1993, the Community Arts Awards have presented the Theodore C. Cooper Award for Distinguished Volunteer Service, Business Arts Award and Youth Arts Award. In 2010, the Arts Council added the Patron Award, Epic Award and Arts Leadership Award to recognize those individuals and organizations that serve the Arts but do not fall into the abovementioned award categories.

Chris Shook, President of the Board of Directors of the Epic Center, says, "I've attended many Community Arts Awards over the years and enjoyed the celebrations. I have also served on the boards of many small and mid-sized arts groups in this city and I applaud the Arts Council's efforts to provide tangible services. I've worked with Neil Bremer and the Arts Council. Successful organizations set priorities and this is no different."

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