

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Winners selected for 2020 Artists on Main Street grant program; New creative placemaking projects will benefit downtown Northfield



Northfield, MN, 8/3/20—Amidst a global pandemic, the importance of community and place is more important than ever. Thanks to the Artists on Main Street program—organized locally by the Northfield Downtown Development Corporation (NDDC) and the City of Northfield’s Arts and Culture Commission (ACC)—two significant projects have been chosen that will help tell Northfield’s story and bring us together through the arts and creative placemaking.

These projects, described below, will comprise the second year of the Artists on Main Street program, a three-year community development initiative offered through Rethos: Places Reimagined and Springboard for the Arts, with funding from the Bush Foundation. The projects were selected through the ACC’s Public Art Review Committee process, as outlined in the City of Northfield’s recently adopted ‘Art in Public Places’ policy.

“We are thrilled with this year’s projects, and we want to thank everyone who took time to apply. The quality of this year’s submissions made the final decision very difficult,” said Greg Siems, NDDC Executive Director.

THE FIRST PROJECT—entitled “[Spreading the Love / Finding the Heart of Northfield](#),” was submitted by local glass artist Geralyn Thelen, with the assistance of metal artist Dale Lewis. Their vision is to create a 6-foot tall metal tree with leaves of fused glass. “The tree is a symbol of life,” said Thelen in her application, and “the leaves will be heart shaped to represent love.” More importantly, she added, the leaves will be multicolored to demonstrate that “all are welcome in our community.” Once complete, the sculpture will be placed in a prominent location outside of the Armory building near the corner of Division and 6th Streets.

In addition to the sculpture itself, Thelen will create a corresponding 6-inch heart for every interested downtown business, creating a scavenger hunt and encouraging participants to “find the heart” of Northfield while learning more about the wide variety of businesses that make downtown Northfield so vibrant.

THE SECOND PROJECT—entitled “[Musical Portraits of Northfield](#),” was submitted by Louis Epstein and Daniel Groll, who make up Northfield’s family music duo, Louis and Dan and the Invisible Band. The duo plans to create a series of songs describing the sights and sounds of downtown Northfield, which will “complement the visual delights of the district and strengthen the notion of Northfield as a musical city,” as Epstein and Groll described in their application. The topics and destinations for these musical portraits will be crowdsourced from community members, with a focus on children and families, to identify the businesses, buildings, public spaces, and other downtown sites they love most. In response to their ideas, a song will be composed for each place followed by a live, public, on-site performance of each song. Each performance will be filmed and serve as the basis for a music video, allowing each song to live on long past the premieres. Northfield residents and visitors will be able to access the music videos for free via QR code or online links posted on small signs or in storefront windows.

For more information about the Artists on Main Street program, please see page 2, and contact Greg Siems ([greg@nddc.org](mailto:greg@nddc.org)) with any questions or requests for additional information.

***The NDDC—a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization—was founded in 2000 to support, strengthen, and grow Northfield’s unique downtown district. It is made up of business owners, building owners, and engaged residents who value the role downtown plays in Northfield’s vibrancy. Join us today!***

## What is Artists on Main Street?

The NDDC was selected in Fall 2018 to participate in the Artists on Main Street program (AOMS), a three-year community development initiative offered through Rethos: Places Reimagined and Springboard for the Arts, with support from the Bush Foundation. The program explores the intersection of arts and culture, downtown revitalization, and historic preservation by investing in “creative placemaking” projects within a defined area of a community. Creative placemaking has many different definitions, but could be simply described as using art and other creative activities to make positive physical, economic, and social impacts within a particular place or community.

The overarching goals of Northfield’s program include:

- Providing art and creative placemaking experiences that draw people to shop, dine and connect in Downtown Northfield;
- Enhancing the downtown’s aesthetics through the creativity of our local artists;
- Utilizing the arts as a springboard for improving diversity and inclusiveness in Downtown Northfield across all cultures.

Northfield’s first year of involvement (2019) in the program was a rousing success, with ten projects funded under the theme of “*Connections/Conexiones*” – highlighting the physical and cultural divides that too often get in the way of a thriving community. These projects included musical performances, poetry readings, spoken word events, pop-up art installations, and one large cement shark.

In this second year of Northfield’s program, the theme “*Visions of Northfield’s Future*” was chosen. Artists and creatives were invited to apply for up to \$10,000 to support projects that might, for example, address concepts such as evolving demographics and increasing cultural diversity; climate change or the environment/ nature in general; the impact of technology and digital life on physical communities; or many others.

