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For Immediate Release

KFW Announces 2023 Art Meets Activism Grant Recipients

The Kentucky Foundation for Women has awarded 32 Art Meets Activism Grants totaling \$150,715 to feminist artists and social change organizations from across the state. These artists and organizations received grants to advance social change through feminist-led, arts-based activities in communities throughout Kentucky.

A complete list of statewide grants follows. Here is a sampling of Kentucky artists/organizations that received funding:

The B.L.O.O.M. Initiative (Paducah) \$1,500 to start a mentorship program for youth to shadow Paducah Rhythm Revue's professional cast and conduct their own live performances. The funds will allow the company to advertise performances, afford production costs and fairly compensate technical crew, showing that women can earn a fair wage in the performing arts. The project will increase awareness of cultural barriers and knock as many of them down as possible.

Demi Gardner (she/her) Louisville, \$5,000 to document the stories of Black women from Louisville's West End with the goal of cataloging and archiving the stories for the eventual creation of a feature-length documentary. The film will explore the Black mother's role in navigating a changing environment while archiving personal testimonies of West End residents.

Aflorar Herb Collective, Mari Mujica, Lorena Miller and Connie Martinez (she/her/ella) Shelbyville, \$6,000 to create an exhibit and interactive installation with portraits and oral histories of Aflorar Herb Collective (AHC) members and community elders using plants they grow, medicine they make, ancestral healing and self-care practices. Narratives, mixed media and photographs will become part of a bilingual presentation of art, people and herbs. The medicine-making recipes and healing modalities at the core of our collective will be shared virtually.

Devan Horton (she/her) Bellevue, \$5,000 to create paper (homemade paper which contains pollinator seeds) along with some botanical mediums (walnut ink, botanical dyes). This project will allow the community of Bellevue to create an image that will be planted in a vacant space, growing into a community meadow honoring mothers. This project not only contributes to an ecosystem but also teaches the power of planting seeds, gives a place to practice gratitude and connects community members to a place they call home.

Appalshop's Roadside Theater and WMMT-FM (Whitesburg) \$5,000 to collaborate on a reading series of Kentucky women authors, each featuring a free workshop and a public reading/discussion. These events will showcase the writing being done by Kentucky women and will give local, rural artists and community members the chance to learn from and build relationships with a broader network of artists throughout Kentucky.

Recovering Joy Arts and Nature Center (Somerset) \$8,050 to engage participants from Sky Hope Recovery Center for Women in fiber arts that connect tending plants and animals with dyeing and weaving skills that have been mainstays in cultures all over the world, including in Appalachia. Participant outcomes will include collaborative and individual artworks, increased awareness of interconnectedness, confidence in learning a process and an understanding of ways the arts can influence personal and societal change.

Joanna Thornewill Hay and Katima Smith-Willis (she/her) Frankfort, \$5,300 to support a collaboration of “Stories from the Balcony,” an oral history project about the Grand Theatre and the legacy of segregation in Frankfort, Kentucky. The project will bridge divides between generations and Black and White community members, and will raise up the next generation of young, Black women leaders.

The Kentucky Association of Professional African American Women (KAPAAW) and Tiffany Brannon (she/her) Lexington, \$3,600 to link artists with young Black girls to create art and write pieces that reflect their experiences. They will also write poems and stories to nurture voices for conscious change and promote positive change in their families and communities. With this newly found creative self-expression, the girls will acquire skills, develop capacity and advance social change.

“We are excited to fund these arts-centered, community-based projects. These grantees are forging vital connections, building skills, recording histories and creating new opportunities. These projects will help fuel lasting change in Kentucky,” said Sharon LaRue, Executive Director of the Kentucky Foundation for Women.

The Art Meets Activism program supports a wide variety of individual artists and organizations committed to building on the power of art to increase awareness about feminist issues, alter perceptions, stimulate dialogue, open new spaces for civic participation and imagine new ways to create a more just and equitable Kentucky. The grants are for activities that are artist driven and include the direct participation of individuals and communities.

KFW’s Artist Enrichment grant will be suspended this fall as the organization undergoes an assessment in order to better meet the needs of feminist artists in a changing world.

“We remain committed to building on the power of art to increase awareness about feminist issues and create social change. We are very excited to plan for our future and look forward to returning to grantmaking in Spring 2024,” said Ms. LaRue. (Link to announcement: www.kfw.org/feminist-blog/strategic-planning/)

The Kentucky Foundation for Women is a private foundation formed in 1985 by

Louisville writer Sallie Bingham. Its mission is to promote positive social change by supporting varied feminist expression in the arts.

CD1: 2 grantees: \$3,000

The B.L.O.O.M. Initiative (Paducah) \$1,500 to start a mentorship program for youth to shadow Paducah Rhythm Revue's professional cast and conduct their own live performances. The funds will allow the company to advertise performances, afford production costs and fairly compensate technical crew, showing that women can earn a fair wage in the performing arts. The project will increase awareness of cultural barriers and knock as many of them down as possible.

Catrina Higgs (she/her) Campbellsville, \$1,500 to create a mural representative of the magical and overwhelming nature of motherhood, parenthood and the minimized unpaid load and labor of those caregivers. This project will show the community who they need to value by shining a light on and giving gratitude to those caregivers who are predominantly women, POC and those who live in the pay gap canyon.

CD3: 10 grantees: \$52,030

Ambo Dance Theatre (Louisville) \$5,943 to support the outreach and production costs of "The Graham Cracker," our comical modern dance reimagining of "The Nutcracker" as a fantasy-inspired queer love story. Our production team will work to enhance the play's current queer narrative, build partnerships with other local LGBTQ-supporting organizations and work with JCPS' (Jefferson County Public Schools) Dance Programs to make our collaborative practices, uplifting narrative and performance opportunities more accessible to diverse populations.

Arielle Rogers (she/her) Louisville, \$1,500 to highlight, through photography, the strength, beauty, honor and divine power that represents the Black woman in rural Appalachia. This multigenerational project will focus on five adjectives each participant uses to describe their experience of living in Appalachia. The women will be empowered to capture special moments, traditions and ceremonies.

Demi Gardner (she/her) Louisville, \$5,000 to document the stories of Black women from Louisville's West End with the goal of cataloging and archiving the stories for the eventual creation of a feature-length documentary. The film will explore the Black mother's role in navigating a changing environment while archiving personal testimonies of West End residents.

Fairen Kia (she/her) Louisville, \$10,000 to host a fashion show with visual art, spoken word, performance art, using models, clothing and design artistry that is focused on body liberation as a way of fighting against fatphobia which is rooted in systemic racism. "Fat is Fashion" will celebrate fat and large-bodied people who are often underrepresented or

misrepresented in society. This fashion show will give them a safe space to share in community with others like them.

Jessica Sharpenstein (she/her) Louisville, \$4,602 to develop and facilitate a mindful arts integration camp and mini sessions for 10-15 adolescents exploring themes of visibility, trust, conflict and belonging in a community. Participants will share their lived worlds through drama, movement, writing and visual arts. The experience will end with a final exhibition and performance to increase awareness and spur the actions needed for an interpersonally and systemically harmonious community.

Pamala G. Wiley (she/her) Louisville, \$2,500 to create a series of writing workshops using the works of three womanists from the Black Arts Movement that represent a culture of feminine leadership and Black culture to young women. The workshops will educate, encourage and inspire a new generation of young women to express their ideas of leadership and culture through spoken word, podcasts and chapbooks that raise awareness of the Black womyn's experience.

Rebecca Cavalcante (she/they) Louisville, \$4,000 to create spaces for families impacted by incarceration to grow in community by building a community art piece. Through art workshops, an online survey and research, this project will culminate in a digital zine and a large-scale community art piece juxtaposing the beauty of nature with the starkness of data to visualize the impact of incarceration on Kentucky families.

The Speed Art Museum (Louisville) \$6,300 to nurture the talents of a female artist seeking to have a positive impact on the Russell neighborhood in Louisville's West End with a year-long residency. Their work will bring attention to Russell and culminate in an exhibition at the Speed. The project's most important accomplishments will be the impact on female residents of the West Louisville neighborhoods and the connections that will be built between Louisville's West End, the Speed and the larger community.

Steam Exchange (Louisville) \$4,470 to work with Steam Exchange's fashion designer Kara Mason and dancer Rahkyilah Jones to choreograph a dance and create custom costumes exploring feminism, body positivity, self-expression and Black joy. They will explore various dance styles, sewing and design skills. The class will culminate in a youth-organized Community Showcase to share their performance, costumes, music and other art they create throughout the year with the community.

Young Authors Greenhouse (Louisville) \$7,715 to create a youth-directed book writing project involving 40-45 young women (ages 11-14) as they choose a poetry or creative non-fiction writing theme that addresses what matters most to them. They will discuss leadership, improve writing skills, learn how writing can be a powerful way to create change and take part in the publishing process.

CD4: 4 grantees: \$16,500

Aflorar Herb Collective, Mari Mujica, Lorena Miller and Connie Martinez (she/her/ella) Shelbyville, \$6,000 to create an exhibit and interactive installation with portraits and oral histories of Aflorar Herb Collective (AHC) members and community elders using plants they grow, medicine they make, ancestral healing and self-care practices. Narratives, mixed media and photographs will become part of a bilingual presentation of art, people and herbs. The medicine-making recipes and healing modalities at the core of our collective will be shared virtually.

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CD5: 5 grantees: \$25,900

Appalshop's Roadside Theater and WMMT-FM (Whitesburg) \$5,000 to collaborate on a reading series of Kentucky women authors, each featuring a free workshop and a public reading/discussion. These events will showcase the writing being done by Kentucky women and will give local, rural artists and community members the chance to learn from and build relationships with a broader network of artists throughout Kentucky.

The Mountain Grrl Experience and Kris Bailey Preston (she/her) Pikeville, \$4,000 to pay female artists, musicians and workshop presenters during the Mountain Grrl Experience, a 3-day cultural event featuring musical performances, storytelling, dance, poetry, art and workshops led by women. Our mission is to celebrate and promote the creativity and resilience of Appalachian women in a safe and encouraging environment, with proceeds supporting advocacy, education and action for victims of domestic violence.

Nicole Musgrave (she/her) Whitesburg, \$6,350 to lead two improvisational courses for female, nonbinary and trans youth and adults in Eastern Kentucky that will explore the basics of quilting and quilting traditions from various cultures. Activities will provide participants opportunities to identify and heal perfectionism, discuss how creating something by hand with discarded materials subverts consumerist culture and broaden their awareness of the history of quilting while complicating assumptions about who quilts.

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individual artworks, increased awareness of interconnectedness, confidence in learning a process and an understanding of ways the arts can influence personal and societal change.

Tia Woods (she/her) Rush, \$2,500 to fund Wildflower Festival (WFF), where artists and art lovers gather to share and enjoy creativity, culture and community. WFF encourages artists to share their work and be inspired to lean into and own their feminine energy. This will result in more female creatives taking up space and building new relationships in the community.

CD6: 11 grantees: \$53,285

Ain't I A Girl Empowerment Program, Dayzaughn Graves and Shay Woods (she/her) Richmond, \$5,000 to facilitate a space for crafting, digital design and contemporary art forms to encourage healing and the authentic expressions of self. Continuously facilitating development among multiple generations through art helps to provide tools for the challenges that women face every day.

Ali Blair and Erica Chambers (she/her) Berea, \$5,942 to support a mentorship and internship program for girls and nonbinary teens, designed to foster their connection to place and possibility by centering female empowerment and increasing access to the music industry. The program will bolster the chances of representation by **championing** feminist artists leading Kentucky music, promoting music as a force for change and community building and providing opportunities to step into leadership, planning and producing community concerts.

Carnegie Center for Literacy & Learning (Lexington) \$4,000 to allow seven female or nonbinary writers to mentor young female and nonbinary 9th-12th graders as they explore writing and literary performance techniques. Together they will examine issues of concern to them including body image and self-esteem, feminism and LGBTQ+ issues. Students will discover their own voices and forge connections with established writers.

Heidi Stetzer (she/her) Berea, \$3,000 to lead printmaking workshops in collaboration with Berea Makerspace and New Opportunity School for Women (NOSW). The workshops will empower NOSW graduates, who are under-resourced Appalachian women, to engage in personal reflection through the exploration of new art forms, establish ownership and belonging in traditionally masculine creative spaces and foster community through creating collaborative art and permanent printmaking resources.

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Latinx Leadership and College Experience Camp (Lexington) \$10,000 to allow the LLCEC Social Justice Project Classes (SJPC) to offer youth opportunities to develop artistic skills while learning about social justice movements from femme and nonbinary artists. The SJPC connects creative outlets to the pursuit of social justice and supports youth leadership through artistic expression. This program will give youth space to tell their stories, heal from traumas and affirm their agency by completing a production or gaining a skill for lifelong expression.

Lucy Azubuike (she/her) Frankfort, \$4,000 to work on the third iteration of the art series “The Triangle: You, Me, Tree.” This series will engage residents of The Sunshine Center Frankfort in Tree Art exploration to create art and value and appreciate themselves and their surroundings while discovering joy and wisdom in nature. Grant activities will shift participants’ perceptions and perspectives toward a positive life transformation.

Monet Proctor (Lexington) \$1,500 to create printed copies of the first volume of the GrowBook - a field guide, mindfulness journal, and contemplative art companion for finding peace in nature and a sense of mindfulness. By holding space, reflecting on local farming practices to provide educational opportunities, completing contemplative art experiences, and working with mindful movement and yoga asana, Grow with Mo seeks to bring a sense of healing and sustainable growth to women.

Movement Continuum (Lexington) \$5,943 to nurture the cost-free dance program, Moving North. Established in 2022, Moving North offers a safe space for girls 10-18 years old living in Lexington communities that experience inequity in accessibility to dance training. Girls express creativity through dance while honing technical skills, cultivating healthy body images, building community between peers and mentors, encouraging social-emotional success and boosting the professional possibilities in the performing arts.

Tammy Clemons, Big Hill, \$5,000 to support the formation of a regional “ZiNetwork” (or zine interest group) to connect maker-activists in Kentucky and Appalachia. This project builds upon existing but geographically dispersed zine producers, activities and resources to establish formal opportunities for regional feminist zine-related networking, skill-sharing and artmaking. Outcomes include creating an ongoing communication network, virtual workshops and a collaborative zine project focused on art and activism.