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**** FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE ****

Ten Area Artists Receive Individual Artist Awards

The Central MN Arts Board is excited to announce the Individual Artist Award (IAA) recipients for 2021!

The Individual Artist Award provides awards of \$2,000 each in recognition and support of outstanding artists living in the Minnesota counties of Benton, Sherburne, Stearns or Wright (Region 7W). Funding for the program is generously provided by the McKnight Foundation.

Artists are invited to apply for this award once each year in January. A panel of six arts professionals reviewed and scored each application. Those with the highest average score were recommended to the CMAB Directors for awards. At their March 11, 2021 board meeting, the CMAB Directors accepted the review panel's recommendations.

Fiscal Year 2021 Individual Artist Award recipients are:

1. **Naomi Hart**, Visual Arts mixed media – Stearns County
2. **Paula Benfer**, Visual Arts collagraph printmaking - Sherburne County
3. **Sandy Bot-Miller**, Visual Arts fiber – Stearns County
4. **Sarah Drake**, Visual Arts paper collage – Benton County
5. **Heidi Jeub**, Visual Arts painting & bookbinding – Stearns County
6. **MacKenzie Mitzuk**, Visual Arts surrealism painting – Sherburne County
7. **Sydney Kakuk**, Music classical voice – Stearns County
8. **Christopher Bolin**, Literary Art poetry – Stearns County
9. **David Swenson**, Visual Arts ceramics – Wright County
10. **Cezarija Abartis**, Literary Arts fiction – Stearns County

To view samples of the winning artists' work, visit the Central Minnesota Arts Board website at www.centralmnartsboard.org.

The 2021 Individual Artist Award reviewers included:

Sean Donahue: Central MN Arts Board Director, Sauk Rapids-Rice Public Schools Board Member, Theatre Manager, Central MN Theatre, President.

D. Helene Woods: Visual and public artist, BFA fine arts, experience in grant writing; Hennepin County Multi Cultural Arts committee, committee member Other Worldly Arts, prior director for the Central MN Arts Board and past grant recipient.

Donna Rice: Professional sculptor with a BFA in Glass and Metals and a wide-ranging interest in all of the arts; served as a panelist for Central MN Arts Board Project and Individual Artist awards and juried the Uptown Art Festival in Minneapolis.

Jeffrey Bleam: St. Cloud State University Associate Professor of Theatre, BSED Communication, MA Theatre/PhD Theatre, freelance director/designer, experience in graphic design, visual arts, filmmaking and creative writing; served as a panelist for the Central MN Arts Board and for Minnesota State Arts Board.

Tracy Rittmueller: Lyricality Founder, Director; B.A. in English Literature Creative Writing; Pushcart Prize Nomination,

Loft/Jerome Foundation Emerging Writer's Award Honorable Mention, 2020 American Benedictine Academy Essay Contest 1st place; Central Minnesota Arts Board Artist Career Development Grant award recipient and served as a panelist for the Central MN Arts Board.

Erica Witzmann: Artist, instructor, Bachelor of Arts, Art History major, Monticello Arts Initiative volunteer; served as a panelist for Central MN Arts Board.

The Central Minnesota Arts Board supports collaborative and innovative arts opportunities through partnerships and financial investments in Benton, Sherburne, Stearns, and Wright counties as one of eleven Regional Arts Councils designated by the Minnesota State Arts Board working with community partners to increase access to the unique cultural assets of Minnesota.

For more information about the Central MN Arts Board, visit <http://www.centralmnartsboard.org> or call the office at 320-968-4290 or toll free at 1-866-825-1471.