

New Bedford Creative's Wicked Cool Places Grants Will Invigorate City's Art Sector

The announcement of the latest round of Wicked Cool Places grant awards is a cause for celebration and appreciation for the critical role of culture in our community, believes Margo Saulnier, New Bedford's Creative Strategist.

"The range and impact of the newest Wicked Cool Places grant awards is astonishing," states Saulnier. "These sixteen projects represent a far-reaching slate of place-making and place-keeping projects in the city. Each underscores the profound impact of creativity in our community – and the ability of our 'cultural ambassadors' to activate and showcase all of New Bedford."

Wicked Cool Places (WCP) is the grant program administered by New Bedford Creative, housed at the New Bedford Economic Development Council (NBEDC). Funding is provided by the city of New Bedford's Arts, Culture and Tourism Fund, with additional support from Bristol County Savings Bank, Mass Cultural Council, and MassDevelopment's "TDI Creative Cities Initiative."

This year, a total of \$70,000 will be invested in the program's most diverse round of competitive applications since the program's inception in 2018. New projects will join returning favorites to offer the City of New Bedford and South Coast a profound range of resident-driven projects and events which will enrich the entire region.

Anthony Sapienza, President of the Board of Directors for the NBEDC, notes that, "Wicked Cool Places awards reflect the strength of New Bedford and the ability of its creative citizens to invigorate not only our economy but our very sense

of purpose as a city.”

The WCP awards achieve that by recognizing the broadest possible definition of culture. Grant awards to city cultural ambassadors highlight the role visual art, music, performance, heritage, health, well-being and critical thinking play in our world today. The sixteen projects also mirror the multifaceted potential of all neighborhoods in the City of New Bedford.

This year’s New Bedford Creative Wicked Cool Places awards are:

\$50,000 funded by the city of New Bedford’s Arts, Culture and Tourism Fund, with additional support by Bristol County Savings Bank:

- The Community Economic Development Center (CEDC) designed “Patio de Comida” specifically to serve the city’s Latino population. It features foods from Guatemala, El Salvador, Dominican Republic, Mexico, and more at Riverside Park. \$5,000 will help it host more food vendors, kids activities and local artists, including Mayan dancers, Marimba players, weavers, and contemporary musicians.

- Massachusetts Design, Art, and Technology Institute (DATMA) has been awarded \$4,000 to collaborate with New Bedford High School faculty and students, the Consortium for Research & Robotics, and NORPEL Fisheries to create a three-dimensional (3D) public art mural.

- In June, the Queer Arts Council of New Bedford will use \$5,000 to bring back the AHA! Pride Block Party to Custom House Square and the historical 54th Regiment Plaza to continue creating and establishing inclusive queer spaces downtown and avenues for the LGBTQ+ creative community and businesses.

- Continuing into its fifth year, Reggae On West Beach is a truly inclusive, diverse, multigenerational, family-friendly

summer series for all walks of life. This event has established the West Beach Pavilion as a summer destination venue and is greatly anticipated – each year – and a \$5,000 award will continue this new tradition in the south end.

- With local artist Eden Soares, Pilgrim United Church of Christ is being awarded \$4,000 to recognize the historic importance of its building as a site where Booker T. Washington spoke when he visited New Bedford in 1895 by installing a mural on the south wall, adding to the renaissance of public art in the city of New Bedford.

- The New Bedford Symphony Orchestra and Cape Verdean Association in New Bedford (CVANB) will partner to present a free, outdoor music festival at CVANB's Island Park on Acushnet Avenue beside the historic Strand Theater. "Junta Mon: Together in Music" will use \$5,000 to make that happen.

- The public mural group SuperflatNB will bring together 12 BIPOC artists to co-create a rotating mural along Acushnet Avenue across from Custom House Square Park with a \$5,000 award. The theme for the mural is Harmony within Flora and Fauna.

- New Moon Dance Party has been awarded \$5,000 to present a series of outdoor community dance parties during warmer months at Riverside Park. These events will be radically inclusive, providing a safe place for self-expression to all dancers.

- This spring, the New Bedford Art Museum's artMOBILE Clay-on-Wheels project will be an active participant in several vibrant springtime venues, beginning with SouthCoast Spring Arts and continuing at open space parks in New Bedford thanks to a \$5,000 award.

- The Rotch-Jones-Duff House (RJD) and Reverie Theatre Group (RTG), formerly the Glass Horse Project, will partner for a third summer to produce Shakespeare's most admired and uplifting comedy, "A Midsummer Night's Dream." RTG will stage

six free performances across two weekends in August 2022 with the help of a \$2,000 WCP grant.

- \$5,000 will help the South Coast LGBTQ+ Network to grow its annual South Coast Pride, working with community volunteers, businesses, schools and other nonprofits to create healthy, family-friendly, fun activities, including the 6th annual South Coast Pride all-inclusive community event in Buttonwood Park on June 4.

\$5,000 funded by Mass Cultural Council, to support place-keeping within the Seaport Cultural District:

- La Soul Renaissance will curate six cultural events with \$5,000 that celebrate and uplift the cultural memory of New Bedford's African and Indigenous community through spoken word poetry and intercultural discussions facilitated at the Verdean Veterans Memorial Hall. The events will be recorded, broadcast online, and archived to preserve cultural memory.

- \$15,000 funded by MassDevelopment / TDI and the Barr Foundation as part of the "TDI Creative Cities Initiative" to support arts-based economic development:

- Downtown New Bedford Inc. (dNB Inc) will host the Shop Small Crawl (spring), All Treats, No Tricks (fall), and the Holiday Stroll (winter) in 2022, attracting thousands of residents and visitors to downtown New Bedford with a \$3,000 grant.

- In an effort to continue supporting Black-owned businesses, BuyBlackNB will use \$5,000 to host outdoor markets where all people are invited to come purchase goods and services from Black-owned businesses in a safe and inclusive space, including a Juneteenth Vendor Market, a celebration of Black Independence Day.

- Building resilience in children from birth to preschool through Music Therapy and Yoga, Rosemary Williams of Mindful Melodies's main goal is to expand music therapy services for

children who do not have the opportunity to have access to this form of therapy in early intervention or preschool settings in low income communities. The Little Melodies project will receive \$5,000 to further this goal.

– Coastal Foodshed will hire local and diverse musicians twice a month with \$2,000 to perform during the Mobile Farm Stand held at Serenity Gardens in New Bedford each Tuesday from 2pm – 6pm from June through October. While Coastal Foodshed's main goal is always to increase access to locally grown foods for Southcoast residents, they also believe the markets offer the opportunity to celebrate and build community through cooking demonstrations, music, and arts that bring residents together.

More information about New Bedford Creative and Wicked Cool Places, including future grant opportunities, can be found at NewBedfordCreative.org.