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“Our Gloucester” Project one of 89 NEA Our Town projects selected nationwide

GLOUCESTER MA — National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Chairman Jane Chu announced 89 awards totaling \$6.89 million supporting projects across the nation through the NEA’s Our Town program. The Gloucester Lyceum & Sawyer Free Library is the lead organization for a grant of \$50,000 to fund five cultural organizations in a project titled “Our Gloucester: Discovering Who We Are Through the Arts.” The NEA received 274 eligible applications for Our Town this year and will make grants ranging from \$25,000 to \$100,000.

“The arts reflect the vision, energy, and talent of America’s artists and arts organizations,” said NEA Chairman Jane Chu. “The National Endowment for the Arts is proud to support projects such as Our Gloucester, to cultivate vitality in their communities through the arts.”

Mayor Sefatia Romeo Theken adds: “We are excited and honored to be recommended for a prestigious NEA Our Town Grant. It will provide a great means of bringing all of our communities together to tell the Gloucester Story and to celebrate our diversity, our culture of tolerance and caring, and our heritage in fishing and the arts.”

Five cultural organizations will partner in helping the community of Gloucester answer the questions: “Who are we? What is special about Gloucester? and, What in our culture and heritage is worth protecting and strengthening anew?” The arts, with their power to probe and clarify the deeper truths in society, will be the vehicles for this search and reflection, through both ensemble performances and community-wide discussions. Each partner will engage a broad cross section of citizens through a different art form — theater, music, storytelling, and literature. The answers to these questions can help lay the groundwork for community development initiatives and investments based on the values and assets of “Our Gloucester.”

The partner organizations and their roles in the Our Gloucester project are as follows:

The Gloucester Lyceum and Sawyer Free Library will present a speaker's series focusing on innovation in Gloucester. The series will continue a rich tradition of speakers at the library since the founding of the Gloucester Lyceum in 1830.

The Gloucester Meetinghouse Foundation will present four weekend programs of music reflecting Gloucester's diverse ethnic community at the historic Universalist Church.

The Gloucester Writers Center is planning three storytelling Fish Tales events, featuring Gloucester school children, ages 12–18; fishing, maritime, and schooner stories; and Gloucester neighborhoods.

Mosaic Gloucester is a large-scale community oral history and mosaic mural project. Launched with the support of the Gloucester Arts and Culture Initiative, the Mass Cultural Council, and Americold, Mosaic Gloucester will bring the people of Gloucester together to tell stories, make tiles, and create a visual depiction of Gloucester. The result will be a beautiful, large mosaic panel hanging in public view on Americold's building at 69 Rogers Street.

The Folklore Theatre Company will bring together a collaborative playwriting circle of local artists and community members to craft a play centered around a historic meal of diverse Church members in Gloucester. Nine performances will take place in April, 2018.

The Gloucester Cultural Initiative, a new non-profit successor to the MCC-funded Gloucester Arts and Culture Initiative, the group which facilitated the Our Town grant application, will play the role of project manager for Our Gloucester.

For a complete list of projects recommended for Our Town grant support, visit the NEA web site at arts.gov.

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