



October 16, 2024

Dear Governor's Creative Leadership Awards Committee,

On behalf of the Town of Lyons Arts and Humanities Commission (LAHC), we would like to nominate Chrystal DeCoster for the 2025 Governor's Creative Leadership Award.

Chrystal has been a tireless advocate and volunteer for the Town of Lyons over the last two decades, serving on our Arts and Humanities Commission, in her role as a curator and operator of a local art gallery, and by her volunteer efforts in countless other creative projects around town. Her work as a champion for the creative community, support of local artists, and efforts in providing legwork and energy for countless projects and pursuits have made a lasting contribution and impact on the town, and a natural nominee for the category of **Arts and Community Action**. Chrystal has been a tireless force of change and action and an advocate for all types of public art in the Lyons community.

Three recent examples of Chrystal's impact on the Town of Lyons are her efforts to establish Lyons as a Creative District, her work in organizing and managing our town's Quarterly Art Show program and her efforts to commission a sculpture in honor of our Lyons' matriarch LaVern Johnson. Additionally, she is the owner and operator of Western Stars Gallery, which showcases local talent through commission sales, community events, and philanthropic fundraising.

Chrystal has been a principal in the efforts to establish Lyons as a Creative District. Although this program has been on a temporary hiatus, it is through her determination that we are confident that the CCI will grant Lyons this status. Chrystal has been instrumental in fundraising, organizing, filling out paperwork and continually "banging the drum" on behalf of the Lyons Creative District. She attends countless networking events as well as organizational meetings and workshops. The organization has been granted a 501-C 3 status and is simply waiting for the rest of the process to come to fruition.

The Tandem Town Hall Art Show and Library Art Show are Chrystal's brainchild and ongoing project. The Town of Lyons hosts a rotating art show that gives a platform for local artists of "all ages and stages" (i.e. open to anyone) to hang their work in our town hall chambers. Each quarter, dozens of new and returning residents display their work. Simultaneously, each quarter features a solo art show on the walls of our public library. These events are curated entirely through Chrystal's efforts in securing artists for the solo shows, planning with the library, securing music and food for the openings, and assisting the artists with all aspects of their shows. She helps with everything from the hanging of pieces to the sale of work, to promotion of the opening events. She makes the logistical arrangements for each show and fundraises on behalf of the LAHC at the event openings. This is a tremendous amount of work in planning and execution and Chrystal projects the shows out years in advance.

When our town matriarch, LaVern Johnson, passed away in 2022, Chrystal led the charge to turn locals' desire to memorialize her through a bronze sculpture. Naturally, a local sculptor was chosen, local stone masons were hired, and a small committee got the statue created and installed in time for LaVern's birthday. The group also organized and led fundraising efforts to have all of this paid for through private donations.

Through these efforts and many more, Chrystal has achieved legendary status as volunteer and activist in all creative things in the Town of Lyons. Whether it's supporting an up-and-coming musician through a house concert she hosts, or promoting a new creative business in town, she has furthered the reputation



that Lyons holds as being a creative, funky town that everyone loves. We hope you will consider our nomination to honor her for the Governor's Award.

With best regards,

Kristen Bruckner

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Town of Lyons, Arts and Culture Coordinator and staff liaison to the Lyons Arts and Humanities Commission

Claudia Paterno

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Chair, Lyons Arts and Humanities Commission