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For additional information contact:

Lisa LaPlante at (616) 632-7182 or [Lisa.LaPlante@kentcountymi.gov](mailto:Lisa.LaPlante@kentcountymi.gov)

## **ArtPrize Portrait Celebrating Diversity, Inclusion and First Amendment on Display in Kent County**

**GRAND RAPIDS** – ArtPrize 2015 is a memory, but one piece has received a home in the Kent County Administration Building, 300 Monroe NW. **FREEDOM – Liberty Lighting Our Way** by Sharon Lange is scheduled to be on display through December in the first floor lobby. The portrait celebrates a variety of races and religions and the First Amendment: freedom of religion, speech, the press, to assemble and to petition.

The ArtPrize submission was on display in the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel. “We manifest what we focus on. If we focus on racial harmony, that’s what we will get,” said Sharon. “I appreciate that the portrait is in a place where it gets visibility and communicates a healing message. This location in the County Building is the place this portrait needs to be.”

Five different Faith Leaders are illustrated in the painting: a Catholic Priest, a Jewish Rabbi, a Muslim Imam, a Buddhist Monk, and a Protestant Minister. Lange spent seven months completing the portrait which was painted with oil on Belgian Linen. From the Artist’s Statement:

*“The composition speaks to the strengths of us as a Collective, and Diversity the secret to our strength. Just as both cotton and synthetic fabric have their individual advantages and disadvantages, a blend creates a stronger, more resilient garment that will, without a doubt, hold together better over time. So too is the fabric of our nation, made stronger by our diverse nature, woven together with our collective strengths. These philosophies, intertwined into the fabric of who we are, not without our blemishes, but stronger than any other country on earth.”*

Coincidentally, the portrait was installed as Kent County celebrates the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Cultural Insight Council, created to promote diversity and inclusion ([details here](#)). “This is a wonderful piece, and really speaks to the important values we at Kent County hold close to our hearts,” said Daryl Delabbio, Kent County Administrator/Controller. “Diversity and inclusion are vital to providing a comfortable work environment and culturally competent customer service. We feel privileged that Sharon Lange would loan her artwork to us.”

The installation in the Kent County building took a little over an hour to complete, as Facilities Management exercised extreme caution with the 150 lb. piece. As the crew put up the piece, several members of the Kent County Cultural Insight Council took photos. You can find more information about the portrait, including how it was painted and video interviews with the participants, on Sharon’s website: [freedom.mattersmost.com](http://freedom.mattersmost.com).

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