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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DOWNTOWN ALPENA'S MURAL PROJECT FRESH WAVES WINS STATEWIDE AWARD FOR PLACEMAKING

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Alpena, MI - Last week, the Alpena Downtown Development Authority (DDA) received statewide recognition for its Fresh Waves project, winning a 2021 "Best Placemaking Project" award through the Michigan Downtown Association (MDA), a statewide organization for downtown education and advocacy. Earlier this fall, Fresh Waves, a project by the Alpena DDA to create vibrant murals throughout Downtown Alpena, was nominated for the MDA's "Best Placemaking Project" award. The project competed against other projects throughout the state and was evaluated based on the impact they have had on their downtowns. The award was presented to the Alpena DDA Executive Director at the MDA's Annual Conference last week in Detroit, Michigan.

"Over the last three years of the project, we have seen first-hand how public art can not only beautify our downtown but encourage our community to see our downtown as a vibrant place full of possibility," said DDA Executive Director Anne Gentry. "It is so rewarding to hear people talk about Alpena as 'the small town with all the murals,' to see traffic slow down to enjoy them, and to see senior photos have them as a backdrop. It was so exciting to receive statewide recognition for our project and showcase one of the incredible things happening in Downtown Alpena."

The Fresh Waves project began in 2019 when the DDA was approached by Alpena native and mural artist Aaron Golbeck who wanted to bring fresh, one-of-a-kind artwork to his hometown. That year, the DDA commissioned him and artist Chad Bolsinger to create the mural on the side of Family Enterprise located at 211 S. Second Ave. In 2020, two murals were completed, one on the side of Salon 125 (125 W. Chisholm St.) by artist Mark Piotrowski and one on Thunder Bay Theatre's warehouse (400 N. Second Ave.) by artist Britt Flood. This year, twelve pieces of artwork were completed on free-standing structures near the entrance to the Boat Harbor by artists Sarah Bedford, Mariah Brancheau, Danyeel Dorr, Samantha Freske, Hope Reed, Tiffany Tracey, and Angelina Villalobos.

"We couldn't pull off this project without our talented artists, the property and business owners who trusted the vision, the support of our DDA Promotions Committee and Board, and of course our community who encourages us to keep this momentum going," said Gentry. "We look forward to growing the project next year and beyond, bringing more vibrant artwork to our downtown." For those looking for more information about Fresh Waves or the award, please contact anneg@alpena.mi.us or call 989-356-6422.