

This award celebrates nominees whose creativity, personal artistic achievements, support of the arts and/or leadership has had a significant impact on Muskoka's arts community.

## Recipient

### Gayle Dempsey

Gayle Dempsey is a fifth-generation Muskokan whose lifelong love of the arts has permeated every aspect of her life and work. A painter, agent, impresario, educator, writer, poet, mother and mentor, Gayle Dempsey is the recipient of the inaugural Muskoka Award in the Arts.

Dempsey's contributions and leadership in the Muskoka arts community and the creativity and passion she brings to whatever endeavour she undertakes inspire those around her.

Though she studied arts at the University of Waterloo, Dempsey left school and worked for a time at a customs brokerage until the birth of her first child, when she returned to Muskoka.

After coming back to her roots, Dempsey was inspired to find the path she had left behind.

"I did a lot of soul searching and I came to the realization that I needed to embrace more creativity in my life, and then as soon as I really discovered art I realized how passionate I was about art and the creative



Artist Gayle Dempsey has devoted her life to her craft. Along the way she has enabled countless others to embrace their creativity.

process itself."

That passion for the creative process has led Dempsey to develop the Kaleidoscope Arts in Education

school programs and use her own Muskoka Place Gallery as a facility to help others learn about and explore their own creativity through art.

"It's about the creative process itself," Dempsey says. "The thing about the creative process is that it uplifts and unifies, and it's organic and authentic, and you can use the same process to build a painting, a poem, a building, a relationship, a community, a new world of peace and sustainable prosperity. That's really absolutely the heart of it for me."

The Kaleidoscope program was an offshoot from the Muskoka Lakes Music Festival. Dempsey manages the festival with her partner Gary Froude, whom she credits as her support and an inspiration in pursuing her life's passion.

Dempsey's own paintings shimmer with vibrancy and life – rich in colour and emotion – expressed through her own unique impressionistic style. The natural world and the harmony of ecology and the elements is a recurring theme in her art. Nurturing and building the arts and creativity in her own community is a recurring theme in her personal activities.

"I think that's why it's important to take every opportunity to nurture that creative process; I'm inspired when I see the spark of creativity ignite someone's passion," Dempsey says. "And I think also I'm constantly inspired by the peace and beauty of Muskoka – it's the combination of those two things."