



PRESS RELEASE: For Immediate Release  
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DATE: December 1, 2016

The Union County Community Arts Council has announced Union County artists Claire Ritter and Jason Stein have been awarded Regional Artist Project grants through the region's RAPG program. Regional Artist Project Grants provide awards for individuals and groups of unincorporated artists to pursue projects that further enhance their artistic development. The RAPG is open to eligible artists in all disciplines and provides an all or nothing grant of up to \$2,000 to pay for one professional development or to purchase or rent one piece of equipment.

Stein is a jeweler, metal smith and sculptor with a degree in metals and jewelry design from the Rochester Institute of Technology and a masters of fine art in metal design from East Carolina University. His award will support the purchase of a casting tool used in the creation of his metal designs.

Ritter is an American composer and pianist who is currently a private music instructor living in Weddington and continues to compose, perform and record. She was awarded the NC Arts Council Jazz Composer Fellowship in 2000 and has received numerous awards from the Arts and Science Council for her collaborative efforts. Her grant will support the recording of a live piano performance at Queens University for a future recording.

"The Union County Community Arts Council recognizes that Union County has a strong arts community that can benefit from these grant funds", said Barbara Faulk, executive director. "As an arts council, our goal is to assist artists by providing services and opportunities that help them evolve as artists."

The grant program is offered by the arts councils of Union, Cabarrus, Cleveland, Gaston, Iredell, Mecklenburg, Rowan, Lincoln, Rutherford and York SC counties. Artists who have lived in these counties for one year are eligible to apply through the arts councils where they live. The North Carolina Arts Council, a state agency, the Blumenthal Endowment and the participating arts councils support the program.