PRESS RELEASE

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Mattatuck Museum Receives Connecticut League of Museums Award of Merit for "Free to Be" Exhibition

WATERBURY, CT—The Mattatuck Museum is pleased to announce that it has received a 2026 Award of Merit from the Connecticut League of Museums (CLM) for *Free to Be*, an annual exhibition celebrating the creativity, perspectives, and artistic expression of artists on the autism spectrum. The CLM Awards Committee recognized the exhibition's creative partnership and its efforts to elevate the work of artists on the spectrum, describing the project as "a refreshing democratization of art." Presented in partnership with The Social Chase, Inc., *Free to Be* showcases the unique perspectives of artists on the autism spectrum through a wide range of media and styles. The exhibition highlights art as a form of self-expression, communication, and identity, inviting visitors to experience the world through the eyes of these talented creators.

The partnership reflects a shared commitment to building inclusive communities and amplifying neurodiverse voices. The Social Chase, Inc., is a volunteer nonprofit organization that provides an inclusive community of support for young adults on the spectrum through social activities, advocacy, resource connections, and increased awareness of programs and opportunities.

The Museum is also inviting artists on the autism spectrum ages 8 and older to submit artwork for consideration for the upcoming *Free to Be* exhibition, opening December 6. **Submissions are due November 11, 2026.** Artists and families can learn more and submit artwork through the link found on mattmuseum.org/exhibitions/free-to-be-2026.

The Award of Merit will be presented at the Connecticut League of Museums' annual awards ceremony and reception on Tuesday, October 27, 2026, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at the New Britain Museum of American Art.

Since 1950, the Connecticut League of Museums has recognized excellence in museum work and supported museums, historical societies, libraries, and other cultural heritage institutions throughout Connecticut. Through its partnership with the Public History program at Central Connecticut State University, the League works to strengthen the state's cultural organizations and expand their capacity and community impact.

The recognition celebrates the importance of partnerships that create opportunities for artists to share their work, connect with audiences, and contribute to a more inclusive cultural community.

For more information about *Free to Be*, visit mattmuseum.org. To learn more about The Social Chase, Inc., visit thesocialchase.org.

ABOUT THE MATTATUCK MUSEUM

Located in the heart of downtown Waterbury's architectural district, the Mattatuck Museum is a vibrant destination, known locally and regionally as a community-centered institution of American art and history. The collections at The MATT span the history of American art from the colonial era to

the present day with special strengths in Naugatuck Valley history and Connecticut artists, as well as artists from around the world representing the diversity of our community. The collection includes more than 8,000 objects including paintings, unique works on paper, photography and sculpture.

In February 2021, The Mattatuck reopened after a $9 million renovation project to reimagine the Museum while continuing to be a welcoming, inclusive, stimulating, and enriching community anchor. The "new" Mattatuck Museum, designed by Ann Beha Architects, includes an extensive 14,000 square foot renovation to the existing space and an addition of almost 7,000 square feet to enhance public access, educational programming, collections storage, and exhibitions.

The Museum is operated with support from the Connecticut Department of Economic & Community Development/CT Office of the Arts, which also receives support from the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency. The Museum is a founding member of the Consortium of Connecticut Art Museums and is a member of the Connecticut Art Trail, a group of 29 world-class museums and historic sites (ctarttrail.org).

The Mattatuck Museum is located on the Green in Waterbury, CT at 144 West Main Street. The Museum is open Tuesday through Saturday from 11:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 11:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. The Museum is closed on Mondays. The Museum offers free, convenient off-street parking directly behind the Museum and in additional lots on Park Place. The Mattatuck Museum website (mattmuseum.org) outlines the Museum's updated guidelines for visitors, including what to expect on your visit, cleaning and safety protocols, and frequently asked questions. Follow us on Facebook and Instagram for more updates and content.

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