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**TO: Local and regional media outlets**  
**FROM: KSUT Public Radio**  
**DATE: June 1, 2026**  
**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **KSUT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO RECEIVE GOVERNOR'S CREATIVE LEADERSHIP AWARD**

**DENVER** — KSUT Executive Director Tami Graham is among four individuals chosen to receive the Governor's Creative Leadership Award, Colorado Governor Jared Polis announced recently.

On Wednesday, May 27, Polis and the Colorado Creative Industries (CCI) division of the Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade (OEDIT) announced the 2026 recipients of the Governor's Creative Leadership Award. This year's honorees from Colorado Springs, Mancos and Walsenburg are recognized for their significant commitment to the state's creative landscape through civic leadership.

"Arts and culture play a really important role in Colorado's thriving economy. Growing up in a family of artists, I know firsthand the impact art can have. I am thrilled to celebrate this year's award honorees and I am grateful for the amazing contributions to Colorado's culture and economy inspiring the next generation of artists," said Polis.

Graham, who will finish her first decade as KSUT's Executive Director on July 18, received the 2026 Arts and Community Action Award. In addition to her duties at KSUT, she is an ex-officio board member with the Mancos Common Press; a board member for the Durango Mesa Park Foundation; and is active with Rocky Mountain Community Radio (RMCR), a coalition of 21 non-commercial radio stations in Colorado, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming. She also cofounded the Armida Huerta Adventure Fund, which raises money to increase accessibility to pack-rafting to LGBTQ individuals and BIPOC women.

This year's other recipients include Ashley Cornelius of Colorado Springs, 2026 Arts and Advocacy Award; and Brendt Berger and Maria Cocchiarelli-Berger, 2026 Arts and Creative Placemaking Award.

Graham began her duties as KSUT's Executive Director on July 18, 2016. She led KSUT's Capital Campaign to build the Eddie Box, Jr. Media Center, which opened its doors in 2020, as well as the Mancos Common Press' recent capital campaign, resulting in the construction of the Mancos Commons, a 4,000 square foot expansion which includes three workforce housing units. The two fundraising initiatives raised more than \$5 million for the two endeavors.

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Graham served for six years as an appointee of Polis' to the Colorado Creative Industries board, representing Southwest Colorado.

“Tami’s 40 years of public, community and college radio experience, wealth of knowledge about nonprofit fundraising and management, and decades of community connections across the Four Corners region has led KSUT to unprecedented growth and success despite challenging economic times, a pandemic, and the rescission of federal funding of public media,” said KSUT Development Director Chris Aaland.

Graham served seven years from 1990-97 as Station Manager at KDUR, Fort Lewis College’s community radio station. From 2013 until her hiring as Executive Director at KSUT, she was KSUT’s Capital Campaign Coordinator. She is a 1990 graduate of Fort Lewis College with a bachelor’s degree in psychology and a 1999 graduate of JFK University in Orinda, Calif., with a master’s degree in transpersonal psychology and organizational development. She has been a nonprofit consultant based out of Mancos, offering mediation, training and facilitation services throughout the region since 2003.

Graham has produced dozens of concerts and special events across the Four Corners through Tami Graham Presents, including performances by Michael Franti & Spearhead, Bruce Cockburn, Zap Mama and others. She was an early board member of Durango Society of Cultural & Performing Arts in the early ‘90s, helping bring a *Who’s Who* list of performers to the region that included Ben Harper, Ani DiFranco, Ralph Stanley and more. She has continued producing concerts and other special events for KSUT.

Graham was a finalist for the Durango Chamber’s Morley Ballantine Award this past February. She received Fort Lewis College’s Woman of the Year Award in 1996.

The Governor’s Creative Leadership awards will be presented on Thursday, June 4, at the Colorado Creative Industries Summit in Trinidad. The CCI Summit is a two-day event that convenes more than 350 artists and creative leaders from across the state, featuring over 50 sessions, activations, and tours that explore Colorado’s creative ecosystem. The wide range of sessions examine the role of creativity in addressing shared challenges and opportunities at the intersection of business, education, health, infrastructure and policy.

“We are thrilled to recognize the incredible contributions of the recipients announced today. The creative industries contribute nearly \$20 billion to Colorado’s economy and support over 120,000 jobs annually. These recipients’ work strengthens our creative economy and reinforces the vital role arts and culture play in driving economic vitality. Congratulations to the honorees!” said OEDIT Executive Director Eve Lieberman.

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The awards luncheon will feature the awards presentation, a moderated conversation on local cultural movements, music performances, and a poetry reading from Colorado Poet Laureate Crisosto Apache.

“Arts and creativity play a critical role in supporting community development and cultural identity,” said CCI Director Josh Blanchard. “These outstanding artists and arts leaders uplift their communities’ and contribute to making art accessible to all. As we look toward the next 150 years, these leaders remind us that creativity in Colorado is vibrant and essential to fostering resilient local economies and communities.”

The three categories of Creative Leadership Awards include Arts and Community Action, Arts and Advocacy, and Arts and Creative Placemaking. The awards program honors and uplifts individuals that have gone above and beyond to utilize the arts as a tool for catalyzing social change, strengthening communities, and advocating for access to the arts for all.

This year’s awards were created by Trinidad artist Thomas Laidig. Since a young age, Laidig has been on a life-long quest to carve indelible stone statements, which have evolved into a language he coined “Catastrophic Geometry”. Laidig spends every summer teaching and facilitating at the MARBLE/Marble Stone Carving Symposium.

KSUT is a community-supported public broadcasting organization dedicated to serving the multicultural community of the Four Corners by providing eclectic entertainment, education, in-depth news and community and public information services promoting multicultural awareness and understanding through two signals: Four Corners Public Radio and Southern Ute Tribal Radio.

KSUT was chosen as the Best Radio Station in Durango and La Plata County for each of the past 13 years in the *Durango Herald*’s annual readers’ poll. KSUT was also a finalist for the Nonprofit of the Year award presented by the Durango Chamber this past February.

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