

With love from, Catherine McPartland, Eleanor McPartland, [Karen Magnusdottir McComish](#), Sophie Jones, Sage Bohl

To write about:

Impressions of Paula, how she supported us, what she was like, what reflections we have on the relationship and space she constructed for us all

Paula's impact on our little town is unforgettable. After returning from my sophomore year of college to see a new thrift store on Spring Street, I was excited. But Bux Vintage quickly became more than a shop for the younger people of Berkshire county: it was a meeting place where we could share our art, our fashion, and our personalities without fear of judgement or ridicule. Paula was always there to welcome us in. When she provided the space for us and encouraged us to share our art, we all saw the culmination of the incredible force that she was. Kind, driven, incredibly unique, warm, and most importantly, a supporter of the powers of self-expression. In Paula's shop we felt comfort coupled with the motivation to create beautiful things. Spring Street came alive when Paula's sign was out as children stopped for free candy, friends stopped in to say hello, and those who were new to town discovered her enchanting array of jewelry, dresses, purses, and shoes. Our town was incredibly blessed to encounter someone so generous.

Paula radiated kindness in such a contagious way. Genuine. Warm. Open. Welcoming. Genuinely non-judgemental, in fact, celebrated differences and when people wore clothes or did make up that went against the WASPy atmosphere of Williamstown.

Even though I only knew her for a short time, I considered Paula to be my friend. She was so warm and welcoming as soon as I walked into her store. Seeing her in the store or just around town was always such a joy. Paula was someone who would brighten your day with just a few small words or actions. Whether it was saying hi when she saw you in public or telling you about something interesting that came into the store, she always made you feel special and appreciated. She was someone that young people felt comfortable talking to and expressing themselves around.

When Paula opened her store, a cosmic clicking-into-place happened. It was, to use a phrase that cannot avoid sounding somewhat glib and wholly inadequate, what she was meant to do. It allowed for a perfect melding together of her love of all things vintage and her love of people. In its infancy, I worried the store would not survive Paula's generosity. She would frequently sell items at reduced cost to customers whose love of her wares exceeded their ability to pay for them. But, though it is perhaps rare, genuine goodness and business success can coexist, and Paula's store was a hit. In the summer, I would wander in almost every time I happened to be on Spring st., for just a moment on my way to work or for hours with a pack of friends with colourful hair and crocheted tops. It was on such a group excursion that Paula first floated the idea of the youth art and clothing sale. The shop had already become something of a haven for queer young people, people who had colourful hair and wore crocheted tops and people who wore dark sweatshirts and were still making their way through the horrors of middle school. Paula's space was, more than a store, a sort of unofficial meetinghouse for Williamstown's young bohemian element.

When we did the art show, she facilitated the whole thing, was so giving throughout, and frustratingly humble. She organized the whole thing but constantly gave credit to the youth involved, thanking us for

our contributions, as if she weren't the one giving us an incredible opportunity. She held the show after a few of us walked in wearing homemade clothing in the beginning of the summer, striking up a conversation with us. She gave a few of us vintage fabric and beads for free, and when we came back to the store to show her what we created, she so excitedly celebrated and applauded our work, showing it off to other customers as well. She decided she wanted to host a youth art show so that we could have a chance to sell our creations. She did not take any of the profit, and even invited us all out for dinner afterwards. She had a knack for making people feel special, talented, valued, and loved.

Paula created such a beautiful space for so many people and made particularly queer youth feel so respected and valued especially for our creativity, fashion, and artistic pursuits. She always had a passion for art and fashion, and her store was truly an extension of her own personality, and reflected how much of a giving person she was. Whenever you walked into the store, you could tell how much work she put into it. It was truly her passion, and she wanted to share this passion with others. Her store was more than a store. It was more like a space she facilitated for the community. It was something that was not in Williamstown before and was desperately needed. The store was such a singular place filled with her singular warmth and presence. Paula was a creative in the truest sense, who wanted to give others the space to express themselves and have their art appreciated. She showed that though pursuing your passions takes time and work, it is possible. (eleanor)

Before she moved to North Adams and while I was still in elementary school, I would often walk over to Paula's apartment off Cole ave. The whole apartment, from the collection of vintage Playboy magazines in the foyer to the couch fashioned from old movie seats, was decorated in characteristically eclectic style. Often when you walked in, Paula would be photographing clothing to sell on her Ebay. My sister and I (cathy and eleanor) were delighted by her collection of vintage clothes as well as the general cozy oddity of the place. She always let us try things on, even things that were probably too valuable to be left to the mercy of grubby little hands, and sometimes--if the stars aligned or if we pestered enough--she would let us take items home.

Her houses, both in Williamstown and in North Adams, were a revelation to me, proof that adulthood did not have to be defined by dullness. She was the best person to thrift shop with, someone who appreciated items others would look past. I feel that she has shaped my personality and worldview in ways I can't fully comprehend. (eleanor)

She will live on in us as we continue to value gems and oddities others would look past, ppl and items alike <3