

Press Release

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21st Annual Tribute to the Arts Luncheon to Recognize Four for Their Exceptional Contributions to the Arts and Culture in Bethlehem

On Thursday, May 5th the Bethlehem Fine Arts Commission (BFAC) will hold its 21st annual Tribute to the Arts Awards event, which celebrates the positive impact of the arts in Bethlehem.

As in previous years, this year's recipients were selected by commission members from nominations submitted by the public.

Individual Award

We honor Bob Schantz's influence as an art teacher as well as his multiple talents as designer, graphic artist, weaver, potter, performer, and ringmaster extraordinaire. Mary Mulder's nomination claims that "like Rumpelstiltskin, Bob Schantz can turn straw into gold. Many a pile of discarded materials or overlooked space has been turned into something beautiful and lively." For 30 years he has been infecting students with his antic vision and can-do spirit. His creative efforts at Donegan Elementary School and now Northeast Middle School, as well as in the broader Bethlehem arts community, are legendary, and nominators were eager to share their favorite examples. We thank him for his inspiration and sheer energy.

Arts Organization Award

The Celtic Cultural Alliance, which will present its 24th Celtic Classic Highland Games and Festival this September, was started in 1988 by Neville Gardner (Donegal Square) and Robert Virgilio (The Bethlehem Inn). The Alliance has encouraged the development of area businesses such as the O'Grady-Quinlan School of Irish Dance, and local artists such as Blackwater, harpist Carol Thompson, textile artist Claire Marcus, bagpiper John Bottomley, and the City of Bethlehem and Lehigh Valley Pipe Bands. The annual event attracts an impressive variety of artists from near and far, but just as important, it sponsors competitions and scholarships that provide opportunities in the arts for young people in our community. We honor them as a non-profit grass roots organization for their lively contribution to the Bethlehem arts scene.

Service Award

Members of the Bethlehem Garden Club have been caring for the Japanese Garden of Serenity, designed by the distinguished landscape architect Yoshinaga Sakon and presented by our sister city of Tondabayashi, since 1971. Japanese garden design is widely recognized as an art form devoted to expressing the essence of nature as achieved through a balance of many elements. A rotating group of enthusiasts undertook to learn the aesthetics and practical skills necessary to perpetuate its beauty. Currently, Sharon Yoshida heads the committee and Ralph Lindgren is the pruning specialist. Ralph helped redesign a major portion of the garden when vandals destroyed the tea house and adjacent beds. We honor all the volunteers who, largely unrecognized, have been pruning, planting, devising special tools, and re-visioning the garden as necessary for 40 years.

Special Recognition

This year we will also recognize the exceptional service of one of our commission members, Bob Cohen, who is retiring after serving three terms as a commission member. Bob is well known in the Lehigh Valley for his regular weekly program of classical music on WDIY. In addition, he is a noted cabaret singer with the Rotary Club a-cappella "Morganaires," and performs at the Touchstone Theatre annual British Music Hall, as well as at Kirkland Village retirement community.

The public is invited to attend the Tribute to the Arts reception honoring the awardees. The reception will be held on Thursday, May 5th 5:30 – 7:00 at the Payne Gallery on Moravian College's south campus at Main and Church Streets. Tickets are \$33. The deadline for reservations is April 29th. For more information about the Bethlehem Fine Arts Commission and the Tribute to the Arts reception, please visit the website, www.bfac-lv.org. Tickets may be reserved by calling Barbara Diamond at 610-691-8269. BFAC thanks WDIY for their support by providing media promotion for our event.

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