

JULY 10, 2015

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2015 Governor's Awards in the Arts recipients announced



Journalist Al Smith to receive Milner Award

FRANKFORT, Ky. (July 10, 2015) — Nine Kentuckians, businesses or organizations are being honored by Gov. Steve Beshear for their lifelong commitment to and achievement in the arts as recipients of the 2015 Governor's Awards in the Arts.

Awards are presented in nine categories. The Milner Award is the first award given and is considered the most prestigious of the nine. A date for the awards ceremony has not yet been announced.

Award recipients are:

- » Al Smith, Milner Award — The award-winning news writer and broadcaster also is known as a fervent supporter of the arts. He served as chairman of the Kentucky Arts Commission, the predecessor to the current Kentucky Arts Council, twice—from 1977-79 and 1981-84. His story of a youth spent in Florida and Tennessee, service in the Army, and life after as a college dropout who became a newspaperman, first in New Orleans and then in Kentucky, is told in "Kentucky Cured" and an earlier memoir, "Wordsmith: My Life in Journalism," published in 2011. From a fresh start on a weekly paper in Western Kentucky, Smith built a chain of small weeklies and began a long career in broadcast journalism. Describing himself as a "cause" journalist in and out of the newsroom, he has been an advocate for education, the arts and economic development. The University of Kentucky and eight other colleges and universities have given him honorary doctorates. He lives in Lexington, with his wife, Martha Helen, mother of their three adult children.
- » Linda Fifield, Artist Award — Raised in the hills of Appalachia, Linda Fifield's childhood was rich with examples of handmade artwork. Her creative efforts have taken many forms over the years: quilting, weaving, knitting, crocheting, garment construction, basketry and beadwork. She learned woodturning from her husband, Jack Fifield, an accomplished woodturner. Linda used her woodturning skills to make hollow form wooden vessels, encasing them in beadwork. She was heavily influenced in her craft by a 1974 visit to Chicago's Field Museum where she saw examples of Native American weavers, which inspired her and set her on her own creative path. Additionally, her work has been included in many museum collections, including the Smithsonian Institution, and has been featured on the cover of American Craft magazine.
- » Big Ass Solutions, Business Award — Tagged with a name so irreverent—the Wall Street Journal refuses to use the company's full name in print—Big Ass Solutions is not only known for its gigantic fans and other industrial solutions, but also for its reputation as an employer of a diverse corps of artists. The company employs more than 20 graphic and interior designers, writers, web professionals and artists who drive the company's in-house creative services shop. In 2014, it was the first company to commission work by an artist involved in StudioWorks, a Louisville-based nonprofit art gallery and studio benefitting adults with developmental disabilities. The company also supports its community through charitable giving and has scholarship and internship programs for graduating high school seniors in Kentucky.
- » Creative Diversity Studio, Community Arts — Louisville-based Creative Diversity Studio is a day training center and art studio for adults with disabilities. The studio puts burgeoning adult artists on a professional track, surrounding them with professional artists, with and without disabilities, and staff to help guide them through the creative process. Creative Diversity provides a sense of community and belonging to its participants. The artists show their work during the popular Frankfort Avenue Trolley Hop and in many Louisville festivals, including the St. James Art Show.

- » Nathan Link, Education Award — Not long after joining the faculty at Centre College in Danville, music professor Nathan Link established the Kentucky Music Ensemble, through which he has cultivated a love of Kentucky folk music among student members of the ensemble and audiences. In addition to being a proponent for traditional music, Link developed courses centered on the study of Kentucky folk music, and he was instrumental in pioneering a minor in African and African-American studies at Centre, which explores the little-known, but tremendous overlap between traditional Appalachian music and African-American music.
- » Willie Rascoe, Folk Heritage Award — Willie Rascoe started sculpting driftwood as a hobby in 1974. Since then, he has developed his talent into a professional calling, creating human and animal forms from wood, seeds, bones, shells and other natural elements he collects on his walks along the banks of western Kentucky's lakes, rivers and streams. Rascoe began showing his work in 1982, and since then, his vast body of work has appeared in several art galleries, museums and festivals, including a 2008 exhibit at Nashville International Airport titled "Flying Solo."
- » Paducah Convention and Visitors Bureau, Government Award — Paducah has recognized art as one of its greatest resources for education, engagement and community spirit. The diversity of artists who are part of Paducah's creative cultural community have enriched the city and broadened its international horizons through events like "Meet the Artists Day," the American Quilt Society's Quilt Week or the variety of groups performing at Maiden Alley Cinema. The Paducah Convention and Visitors Bureau also was responsible for Paducah's designation in 2013 as a Creative City of Craft and Folk Art by the United Nations Educational, Scientific & Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The distinction makes Paducah one of only seven Creative Cities of Craft and Folk Art worldwide and the second in the United States, including Santa Fe, New Mexico. One other American city, Iowa City, is designated a UNESCO Creative City for Literature.
- » Dave Shuffett, Media Award — As host of Kentucky Educational Television's "Kentucky Life" from 1999 to 2015, Dave Shuffett received nine Emmy nominations for on-camera performance and producing. A native of Greensburg in Green County, Shuffett served as host and producer of "Kentucky Afield" from 1989 to 1995. In 1995 he went on to pursue his own television series and production company. The resulting series, "Outdoors with Dave Shuffett," was syndicated nationally. Shuffett joined "Kentucky Life" in the summer of 1999 for the series' sixth season, replacing former host Byron Crawford. During Shuffett's tenure on "Kentucky Life," he featured segments on notable Kentucky arts figures like author Barbara Kingsolver, film director John Carpenter and actor Harry Dean Stanton, as well as countless segments on local art and craft in Kentucky's cities and towns. Shuffett is the author of "My Kentucky Life," a collection of his photos and stories of people and places throughout the state.
- » Sam Bush, National Award — Bowling Green native and multiple Grammy Award winner Sam Bush has energized audiences and inspired generations of acoustic musicians by pushing the boundaries of traditional bluegrass to create an exciting blend of bluegrass, jazz, rock 'n' roll and soul. As a toddler, he was exposed to his father's own bluegrass collection, and by age 11 he took up the instrument that he has been identified with for his more than five decade career – the mandolin. Bush's musicianship at what has since been called "Newgrass" has led to collaborations with other big name artists like Leon Russell, Lyle Lovett, Emmylou Harris, Alison Krauss, Tony Rice, Dolly Parton and Doc Watson. He demonstrates as much mastery of live venues as he does recording studios, and is a frequent artist at well-known venues like the Telluride Bluegrass Festival in Telluride, Colorado, Merlefest in Wilkesboro, North Carolina, and the Lonesome Pine Special Concert Series in Louisville.



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