

New Bedford wins 2017 Commonwealth Award for best Creative Community

The Massachusetts Cultural Council (MCC) today announced the winners of the 2017 Commonwealth Awards, honoring exceptional achievement in the arts, humanities, and sciences. The Commonwealth Awards will be presented on Wednesday, February 15, 2017 during a Massachusetts State House ceremony. The awardees include:

Access – Recognizes exceptional initiatives or programs that make arts and culture accessible and inclusive for older adults, persons with disabilities, and other underserved populations.

- Discovery Museums, Acton, for breaking down barriers and accommodating all visitors, including those on the autism spectrum, deaf, or blind, through its new Discovery Woods, a fully-accessible nature playscape designed around a 550-square foot treehouse.

Achievement – For an individual or cultural organization whose creative achievements have uniquely enriched life in Massachusetts.

- Keith Lockhart, Boston Pops Orchestra, Boston, who celebrated his twentieth anniversary as Boston Pops Conductor in 2015, for his extraordinary stewardship of “America’s Orchestra” and his generous civic spirit.
- José Mateo, José Mateo Ballet Theatre, Cambridge, for his artistic achievement in choreography and his innovative, humanistic approach to dance education that fosters diversity and inclusion.

Creative Community – For a city, town, or local organization

that has demonstrated the central role of arts and culture in building healthier, more vital, more livable communities.

- City of New Bedford, for providing sustained leadership, funding, and infrastructure to the places where art and culture are presented, and where artists live and work, providing a model for cities everywhere.

Creative Youth Development – For an individual, school, or cultural organization that has successfully helped young people develop their creative potential, foster critical learning and life skills, & become active contributors to their communities.

- Springfield SciTech High School Band, for providing Springfield's youth with opportunities to experience music and to give back to their community by sharing their joy in its creation.

Cultural Philanthropy – For an individual, corporation, or foundation that has made lasting contributions to the cultural life of Massachusetts through charitable giving.

- Nancy Donahue, Lowell, for her instrumental role in creating and nurturing the arts across the Merrimack Valley.

Leadership – For the leader of a non-profit cultural organization, school, or community that has demonstrated extraordinary commitment to serving the public.

- Paul Grogan, The Boston Foundation, Boston, for his leadership and commitment to ensuring the health and vitality of the arts and cultural sector in Boston and across the Commonwealth.
- David Tebaldi, Mass Humanities, Northampton, for his 32-year record of remarkable leadership of one of our nation's most respected state humanities councils.

Local Cultural Council of the Year

- Greenfield Cultural Council, for maintaining an active role in their community with partnerships that expand access to the arts for its citizens.

Media – For an individual or media organization that has demonstrated outstanding support of the cultural community in Massachusetts by telling its stories to the broader public.

- The Berkshire Eagle, for its quality, in-depth coverage of the rich and diverse cultural community of Western Massachusetts and beyond.

Mayor's Arts Challenge – an opportunity for city leaders across the Commonwealth to showcase how arts and culture help make their communities better places to live, work, and visit.

- Fitchburg Mayor Stephen DiNatale, for his passionate advocacy on behalf of Fitchburg's unique arts and cultural heritage.

"This extraordinary group of organizations and individuals beautifully represents our state's unique cultural fabric," said MCC Executive Director Anita Walker. "Their collective and individual achievements have immeasurably improved our quality of life in Massachusetts, and I am delighted to honor them at our 2017 Commonwealth Awards ceremony."

State government leaders will be on hand to present the Awards. The ceremony will also feature a performance by the Springfield SciTech High School Band.

Presented every two years, the Commonwealth Awards shine a spotlight on the extraordinary contributions the arts, humanities, and sciences make to education, economic growth and vitality, and quality of life in communities across Massachusetts. The Commonwealth Awards ceremony also presents an opportunity for the Massachusetts nonprofit cultural sector to gather, assert its value, and make the case for public investment in its work. Past winners include leading artists,

writers, and scholars such as Olympia Dukakis and David McCullough; world-renowned institutions like Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival and the Peabody Essex Museum; and social innovators like the Cambridge Science Festival and the Barr Foundation.

The 2017 Commonwealth Awards ceremony continues this tradition on Wednesday, February 15 with a ceremony at the Massachusetts State House at 2pm. The event is free and open to the public, and registration opens on January 17. Details and registration information will be available online.