

## Region's top artists honored at second annual Ewing Arts Awards

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By CALLIE GINTER Sentinel Staff



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Sandy Sherman sports a pin her high school art teacher gave her in 1965. Not because it adds pizzazz to an outfit, but because it's a symbol of the arts and how she has grown as an artist.

Thursday night, 51 years after she first received it, she wore the pin at the second annual Ruth and James Ewing Arts Awards, where she collected recognition that the small, quarter-size piece of jewelry inspired.

Sherman was one of the artists celebrated in the Monadnock Region for their contribution to the arts. Out of nearly 40 nominations, a panel of judges had the difficult job of choosing who to honor this year. Sixteen individuals, groups and institutions were selected.

Held in the Alumni Recital Hall at the Redfern Arts Center, about 200 people joined to pay tribute to local excellence in the arts. The Keene Sentinel and Arts Alive! partner each year and, with help from the Redfern Arts Center staff, stage the event.

Named for the late Ruth and James Ewing, the former owners of The Sentinel, the awards went to recipients whose expertise ranges from dance, to jazz, to guitar, to composing, to painting, pottery and architecture.

The artists honored represent those at the pinnacle of their respective art forms. Each received a glass trophy, and six performing artists and groups presented their work to the audience.

Jessica Gelter, executive director of Arts Alive!, welcomed the crowd. As she did last year, she challenged the audience with a task: "Face the darkness with creativity."

Ruth and James Ewing would have accepted such a challenge, some said. The couple bought The Sentinel in 1954 and began a life in the Monadnock Region that encompassed diversity, philanthropy and stewardship for nearly 40 years.

But the couple wouldn't have wanted the night to be about them, as they preferred to shine attention on others, said Sentinel President and COO Terrence L. Williams, who emceed the event.

Scott Mullett and the Keene Jazz Orchestra accepted the first award of the night and played a sophisticated Duke Ellington/Billy Strayhorn piece. As he and his trio of "cool cats" — George Robinson on drums and Steve Cady on bass — played in a hue of a pink lighting, the crowd swayed side to side in their seats.

In another performance, Maude Warshaw, 17, danced alongside twins Leeann Minard and May Minard, 17. Dancing in long skirts and black leotards, the student award winners and close friends moved powerfully to "Bottom of the River," a piece they choreographed.

Video presentations were displayed on a large, on-stage screen that offered, in artists' own words, a snapshot of their inspiration and artistic process.



Michael Moore / Sentinel Staff

### Spring in her step

Cassandra Tobey dances off stage with her Ruth and James Ewing Arts Award in hand at Keene State College Thursday night. In the background is presenter and member of the selection panel, Jessica Gelter, executive director of Arts Alive!

Sherman explained after Thursday's event that when she was a student at the now-closed Vilas High School in Alstead, they had art class in the cafeteria twice a week. Now, she said, every high school has a well-developed art program.

"It's huge now," Sherman said, talking about the arts in the region. "And it's come a long way, thanks to events like this."

Warshaw said the evening was fun, but it was more than just dancing for an audience. She explained that events like this help her stay driven and make her realize she's capable of pursuing her dreams.

"It was amazing to see all these people and be like, 'You know what? I can be an artist!'"

And maybe in 51 years she'll be like Sherman, looking back at herself and her Ewing Arts Award as a worthy reminder of how important the arts are to her.

The winners of the second annual Ewing Arts Awards are artist Christine Destrempe; The Colonial Theatre; artist Soosen Dunholter; artist Rosti Eismont; musician/composer Jose Lezcano; Karen Lyle and Keene Art Walk; student winners, dancers Leeann Minard, May Minard and Maude Warshaw; Scott Mullett and the Keene Jazz Orchestra; artist Jim Murphy; Mariposa Museum and World Culture Center; New Hampshire Dance Institute; artist Erika Radich; architect Dan Scully; artist Sandy Sherman; musician/composer Lawrence Siegel and dancer/choreographer Cassandra Tobey.