

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: September 14, 2016

CONTACT: Kira Bacon, kbacon@vermontartscouncil.org, 802.828.5422

2016 Governor's Arts Awards Recipients Announced

Montpelier – The Vermont Arts Council, in association with the Governor's office, is pleased to announce the recipients of the 2016 Governor's Arts Awards. These awards are presented annually to recognize outstanding individual and organizational contributions to the arts. Awards are given to educators, artists, performers, advocates, administrators, volunteers, and scholars. In 2016, Vermonters will be recognized for their contributions in five categories.

Eric Aho of Saxton's River is the recipient of The Governor's Award for Excellence in the Arts, the highest honor presented to an artist by the state of Vermont. In selecting Aho, Governor Peter Shumlin said, "The beauty of your paintings has long been known to me and countless other Vermonters. As you have developed an international reputation and helped to advance and sustain the arts, we Vermonters are proud to count you among our own."

Aho's paintings have been exhibited widely and are included in the collections of major institutions both domestically and internationally. In a 2012 review in "Art New England" critic Christophe Volpe said of Aho's work, "From modestly scaled landscapes sensitive to tradition yet committed to saying something new, Aho creates what are arguably among the best large-scale landscape paintings being painted today."

Five other Vermonters, all from Windham County, are also recipients of 2016 Arts Awards. "Windham County has long been considered one of the strongest arts centers in Vermont," said Vermont Arts Council Executive Director Alex Aldrich. "This year's Arts Awards honorees have played a vital role in the creative culture for decades. They have enriched the lives of many young people through circus arts, theater, and music, and have advocated strongly for the arts in their communities. Their passion for the arts as an integral part of community life has had a profound and rippling influence not just in Windham County, but the entire state of Vermont."

The 2016 Arts Awards recipients are:

[Governor's Award for Excellence in the Arts](#)

Eric Aho, Saxtons River (<http://ericaho.com/>)

[Walter Cerf Medal for Outstanding Achievement in the Arts](#)

Elsie Smith and Serenity Smith Forchion, Brattleboro

(<https://www.necenterforcircusarts.org/aboutus/thepeople/founders/>)

[Ellen McCulloch-Lovell Award in Arts Education](#)

Peter Gould, Brattleboro (<http://www.gettheetotheunnery.com/the-staff.html>)

[Margaret L. \(Peggy\) Kannenstine Award for Arts Advocacy](#)

Robert McBride, Bellows Falls (<http://www.ramp-vt.org/events/artists/robert-mc-bride.html>)

[Arthur Williams Award for Meritorious Service to the Arts](#)

Stephen Rice, Brattleboro (<https://sites.google.com/a/wsesu.org/buhs-band/>)

The Governor's Arts Awards celebration will be held at 7 p.m. Tuesday, November 15 in the Michael S. Currier Center, The Putney School, Putney, VT. Tickets for the event will be available October 3, 2016.

The Vermont Arts Council envisions a state where everyone has access to the arts and creativity in their life, education, and community. Through its programs and services, the Council strives to increase public awareness of the positive role artists and arts organizations play in communities and to maximize opportunities for everyone to experience the arts. Since 1965, the Council has been the state's primary provider of funding, advocacy, and information for the arts in Vermont.

www.vermontartscouncil.org.

###