



INDY'S WEEKLY ALTERNATIVE NEWSPAPER HIGHLIGHTING ARTS, ENTERTAINMENT AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

10th Annual NUVO Cultural Vision Awards

BY EDITORS

When we initiated the NUVO Cultural Vision Awards 10 years ago, we had at least two goals in mind. The first was to recognize individuals and organizations in this city doing innovative work. Contrary to stereotype, Indianapolis is a place where new and creative things happen. Unfortunately, because of that stereotype — that this is the last place to adopt a new idea or way of doing things — genuine innovation here is often overlooked. The NUVO Cultural Vision Awards are about shining a light on the talented people and creative enterprises who defy that stereotype.

Our second goal for the awards can be summed up in a single word: community. Selecting and recognizing Cultural Vision Award honorees is an ongoing process. Nominees for the awards are suggested throughout the course of the year by people all over the city. Anyone can make a nomination and anyone can be nominated. These nominations are compiled and brought before NUVO's Editorial Board, which, in a series of meetings, arrives at the final selection you find here.



The NUVO Cultural Vision Awards were first handed out in 1999, and there are now 100 honorees. Fewer than five have moved to other cities; 10 have passed on to the afterlife; and the rest are still here, still working every day to improve the community and culture of Indianapolis.

We see all of these honorees, no matter what their field of endeavor, as being related to one another. They share a certain commitment, creativity, enthusiasm and willingness to say "yes." We think they represent a kind of community within which we all belong, and we hope to find opportunities to bring them together so that they might draw strength from one another and so that NUVO might draw strength from them.

Once again, this year's honorees exemplify the qualities the NUVO Cultural Vision Awards are intended to celebrate. You'll meet artists and activists, peacemakers and provocateurs, educators and innovators. Read their stories. Each one provides an opportunity to reflect upon our own commitment to community, as well as a reason to celebrate the culture of this place we all call home.

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Just cause

Indianapolis Peace and Justice Center

Capital punishment. A living wage. Nukes. War. Palestinian-Israeli relations.



Violence against women. Environmental concerns. It's safe to say that few just causes have escaped the notice of the Indianapolis Peace and Justice Center in its 25-plus years of existence.

IPJC is housed in a modest classroom inside Broadway United Methodist Church, where bookshelves are stocked with titles like *The World Is My Country* and *Nuclear Culture*, and metal shelves hold boxes brimming with papers. More accurately, the room is home to IPJC's prodigious archives, while the center itself is embodied in its people, its associations and its work.

Founding member and current Vice President Jane Haldeman says some 30 groups partner with IPJC, which she describes as "kind of a two-headed animal."

"We're an umbrella group, but we're also a group that wants to take action," she explains.

And their actions are plentiful. Over the years, the center has called countless anti-war rallies on Monument Circle, timed to coincide with military milestones and keep Indy residents from slipping into complacency. Since Sept. 11, the Federal Building downtown is the scene of IPJC-led vigils every Friday afternoon.

Collaborations with groups like Justice for Janitors, Christian Peacemaker Teams, the Indiana Information Center on the Abolition of Capital Punishment and various student peace groups have called the power structure to task and boosted visibility of critical causes.

IPJC co-sponsors the annual Midwest Peace and Justice Summit and has hosted presentations on everything from the U.S. occupation in Iraq to IndyGo's role in helping the workforce stay employed. International, national and local peace and social justice concerns: All are on this organization's radar.

And as time went by, the nonprofit that grew out of a draft resistance hotline in the early 1980s gradually became the oldest continuously operating organization of its kind in Indy.

"We're just a bunch of grey-headed but hardworking folk," Haldeman jokes.

What is she proudest of? *The Indianapolis Peace and Justice Journal*, an eight-page newsletter the center has published each month without fail since its inception. With a current distribution of 3,500, the journal compiles the kind of atypical news, opinion and political cartoons too often buried in conventional media. "We print news that's not covered in other ways; that's basically our motivation," Haldeman says.

In print or in person, by e-mail or vigil, the voice of IPJC is a welcome one.

It is us now

Indianapolis International Film Festival

It was just over five years ago that Brian Owens returned to Indianapolis from a trip to the Toronto Film Festival. Owens had not only feasted on all the films there, but was also struck with a vision he couldn't shake: He was convinced the time had come for Indianapolis to have an international film festival of its own.



Now, five years later, the Indianapolis International Film Festival has established itself as a destination for cinema from around the world. "It's definitely grown faster than I'd originally expected," Owens says. "I knew it was something people would take to, but I think word spread a little faster than expected, especially outside the city."

Indeed, the IIFF's reputation may be larger among filmmakers on the national and international festival circuit than it is among folks in Indianapolis.

But that is changing, thanks, especially, to the festival's success in attracting younger audiences. While the IIFF has succeeded in drawing filmgoers of all ages, it has proven to have a special appeal to college-age fans and people in their 20s. "Seeing that loyalty from a young audience is really exciting," Owens says. "It's not about wearing hip colors. It's about letting people know

we have the best of something we can possibly offer.”

The festival has created a unique venue for types of films that don't generally find wide distribution. It's a gold mine of short films — works that can be as short as 90 seconds — and foreign language features.

Owens sees Indianapolis occupying a distinctive niche among film festivals. “If you come here and succeed here, odds are you're going to succeed anywhere. It used to be Peoria, I think it's us now. We're a really good test market. I think that's what we offer.”

But Owens believes that, ultimately, the IFFF is for and about people in Indianapolis who simply love movies — all kinds of movies. “This is about the public.”

This is contentment

Regina Mehallick, founder
R Bistro

“I have food running through my head all the time,” says Chef Regina Mehallick, founder of R Bistro. Every week there's a new menu, and a fresh array of seasonal ingredients to choose from. To share a meal at R Bistro is to take a leap, to open oneself to the possibility of a culinary improvisation.

Mehallick has accomplished a lot since opening R Bistro seven years ago. For starters, by establishing her business at the east end of downtown's Massachusetts Avenue corridor, she helped to extend and define a neighborhood that would eventually be designated one of the city's Cultural Districts.

But Mehallick's emphasis on locally grown meats and produce not only anticipated what would soon emerge as a major trend, but has helped to put the culture back in local agriculture.

Mehallick moved to Indianapolis with her husband after living and working several years in the U.K. After a stint in the kitchen at the Canterbury Hotel, she opened R Bistro. “I wanted it to be a small menu with complete dishes and incorporating local ingredients,” she says. It didn't take long for the city's foodies to find and fall for Mehallick's inventive interpretations of various cuisines. Asked to characterize what she does, Mehallick, who now works with a collaborative team of chefs, says, “It's kind of like whatever we want to do. It's obviously very contemporary. It has a bistro flair. I think we've established that and people are willing to come here and have Indiana food or English food or Italian or Mediterranean or all-American.”

At the heart of all these variations is Mehallick's reliance on Indiana suppliers, many of whom now seek her out. Last fall, she got a call from a woman in Anderson who had just picked 20 pounds of chestnuts and wanted Mehallick to have them. “Yesterday,” she says, “we got the first-of-the-year lettuces from a greenhouse and,” her eyes light up, “oh, my God, they're this beautiful color and so tender!”

Business-people have urged Mehallick to expand R Bistro or open additional restaurants in other locations. She's not interested. “I don't know if in business that's the way you should be — but I am,” she says. Then she takes a long look around the space she's created — from the selection of wines and beer behind the bar to the works by local artists on the walls — and says, “This is contentment.”

Doing what you love

Ron Spencer, executive artistic director
Theatre on the Square



Ron Spencer is an institution in the Indianapolis theater community, and a reminder that not all of our great local artists leave for more culturally savvy pastures.

Spencer is an anecdotal treasure as well as a theater maven. Spend enough time hanging around the theater, and you might hear Spencer recite, in his gravelly voice, cigarette in hand, a story like this: “My first venture into performing was at age 6 when I played Tom Thumb, the groom, in *A Tom Thumb Wedding* at McCordsville Grade School [Indiana]. ... Not only was that my introduction to theater, it was also when I realized I was gay. I passed out during the dress rehearsal when I had to kiss Connie Ramsey, my little blond bride-to-be.”

Spencer first broke into Indianapolis theaters at age 14 via Civic Theatre, which was, at the time, located where Footlite Musicals is now housed. But he was drawn to material that most Indianapolis theaters weren't offering. “I always enjoyed the unusual and consequently lesser-produced plays and musicals. I have never directed a musical by Rodgers and Hammerstein or Lerner and Lowe. I directed and choreographed the first production of Stephen Sondheim's *Company* to be staged in Indy at the now defunct Command Player at Fort Benjamin Harrison in 1974 with a mixed cast. I also had firsts with *Chicago* and *Irma La Douce* at Theatre in the Woods at the Jewish Community Center in the '70s and *Nine* at Buck Creek in the '80s,” he says.

“Theatre on the Square came about when Joe Traynor, our charter board president, suggested that since I was working a regular 9 to 5 job all day and working all night on shows that perhaps I should consider starting my own theater company. As it turns out, my first and sanest reaction was to laugh and assure him he had lost his mind.” TOTS first opened in 1988 in Fountain Square. When it outgrew its location, it moved in 1993 to its current location on Massachusetts Avenue.

As TOTS' executive artistic director, Spencer has helped to bring such challenging shows as *Corpus Christi*, *Equus*, *The Last Session* and *Southern Baptist Sissies* to Indianapolis audiences. As an actor, he has donned drag to star in campy takes of such shows as *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane*, and has sung beautifully in musicals such as *Kiss of the Spider Woman* at TOTS and *Victor/Victoria* (which just closed June 1 at American Cabaret Theatre).

Today, Spencer says, “With producing well over a hundred shows in the past 20 years and directing 80 of them, I have come to the realization that if you are going to work 12 to 16 hours a day, then it should be at something you love.”

Saving lives

IndyFeral

Scratch an apartment complex in Indianapolis, and you'll find a multitude of stray and feral cats. Look in any urban neighborhood, and though you may not see them, free-roaming, unowned felines are eking out an existence.

It wasn't long ago that these cats living on the fringes — an estimated 178,000 of them in Indianapolis — were subject to systematic extermination as the city worked to impound and destroy all unadoptable strays. IndyFeral founder Lisa Tudor knew there was a better way, and it was called Trap-Neuter-Return, or TNR.

Tudor recalls, “Historically, the city's method of dealing with the problem was trapping and euthanizing stray and feral cats. And we just felt like folks wanted a non-lethal method to [manage the problem]. TNR had been around since the early '90s and was having great success on the East and West Coasts, so we thought, why can't we do that?”

Formed in 2002, the grass-roots animal welfare organization mounted an aggressive TNR program, marshalling cat lovers citywide. The goal was to interrupt the breeding cycle of the prolific felines without harming them. After sterilization and basic veterinary care, the wild kitties would live out their lives in groupings called cat colonies, which are monitored by volunteers. (“Feral cats and kittens are not adoption candidates,” Tudor explains.)

Since an ordinance passed in 2005 adopting TNR as an official tactic, IndyFeral has spayed or neutered 13,000 unowned cats. In the same time period, Indianapolis Animal Care and Control has seen a 37 percent decrease in stray and feral cat intake.



“The good thing about that 37 percent,” Tudor says, “is that it represents 2,000 fewer cats that ended up in the shelter.” Before IndyFeral, these cats would have met their death at IACC — and the cost of trapping, feeding and then disposing of them would have run around \$150 a cat.

That translates to nearly \$300,000 of taxpayers’ money saved by an organization that is funded by grants and individual donations.

IndyFeral has helped set up over 1,700 managed cat colonies, and typically sterilizes 250 to 300 cats each month. There is always a waiting list for this service, which costs only \$20 a cat.

Stray and unowned cats produce 80 percent of the kittens born every year, according to Humane Society of the United States. No matter how you slice it — lives and money saved, overpopulation decreased — the nonprofit organization has had an overwhelmingly positive impact on the city.

“What’s most gratifying is that there are so many other like-minded people who want a non-lethal alternative to solving this problem,” says Tudor, who jokes about the “if you build it, they will come” factor.

“We just knew that if we gave folks the tools and resources they needed, the community would step up to the plate. And they have.”

Getting things done

Keep Indianapolis Beautiful

“I’m surrounded by very bright, passionate people,” says Keep Indianapolis Beautiful’s Dave Forsell of his team of full- and part-time staffers — and KIB’s small army of volunteers. Indeed, every year approximately 30,000 people volunteer their time and energy on behalf of some 400 KIB projects. What keeps them coming back? “We get things done,” Forsell says.



Keep Indianapolis Beautiful dates back to the Hudnut Mayoral Administration of the 1970s. The city’s image at that time was unflattering. As John Gunther wrote in his bestseller, *Inside America*, Indianapolis was “unkempt and unswept.” Hudnut initiated the Indianapolis Clean City Committee to change that by declaring war on litter. With the passage of time, the Clean City Committee evolved into KIB — and its mission grew.

Today, KIB is working to make Indianapolis a green city. “What I think is nice about our organization,” Forsell says, “is we provide traditional volunteer opportunities, but we’re also interested in creating change.”

A couple of projects exemplify what Forsell is talking about. The Neighborhoods program has received national attention as it works toward its goal of planting 100,000 new trees in Center Township in 10 years. To determine where the trees should go, KIB created a map showing the township’s most stressed-out neighborhoods, based on nine factors elucidating pre-existing environmental and socio-economic pressures. So far, KIB has planted 7,000 trees in township “hot spots” where the existence of trees can help the most. “We’re using our ends as a means towards growing leadership and a culture of ownership,” Forsell says.

In the meantime, KIB has begun the process of building itself a new headquarters — a structure that Forsell promises will be a “culture-shifter,” embodying state-of-the-art principles of green design. “We’ve planted our flag in terms of environmental and sustainable design — and we’re making it happen.”

Forsell describes KIB’s strategy for problem solving as “a third way,” an approach “where people with disparate values systems can work together for the common good.” This strategy defines a middle route between corporate interests on the one hand and environmental advocates on the other. “Sometimes we disappoint people on either side,” Forsell admits. But this means that KIB is also able to rally large numbers of people to its various activities. “We’re passionate and authentic and very interested in mutuality and reciprocity,” Forsell says. “These aren’t intangibles at Keep Indianapolis Beautiful. They turn into tree plantings and beautiful parks.”

Hand-crafted music

Standard Recording Company

Even after seven years and 29 releases, the guys behind local independent record label Standard Recording Company still playfully claim they're one risky decision away from indigence. Take their latest project, an ambitious three-CD set called *Of Great and Mortal Men* that will tell the story (in song) of each U.S. president. As 27-year-old Kevin Phillips — who runs Standard along with 32-year-old Mark Latta — puts it, the presidents project will “either go over really great, or we'll be working at McDonald's by the end of the year.”



Despite fears of fast-food wage slavery, Phillips and Latta have established an innovative and dependable source for new music, and a valuable resource for Indiana bands that want to record and release their work in a way consistent with their creative vision, right down to details like packaging and distribution.

Standard began life in 2001 as a studio and label near Kokomo, Ind., but didn't find success until a 2004 move to Indianapolis in search of a bigger market and cultural center. Latta and Phillips have since left the studio behind (as well as any physical office space) and taken on a hand-picked group of mostly Indiana-based acts, including Muncie psych-rockers Everthus the Deadbeats, and Indianapolis performers that range from twisted folk quartet Harley Poe to art rockers Everything, Now! to rock collective Margot & The Nuclear So and So's (who have moved on through several “major” labels).

While the music on Standard might fall under the “indie-rock” umbrella, Latta says there's no specific criteria for how they choose a band: “A band has to tour, but nearly every other label will tell you that same thing.”

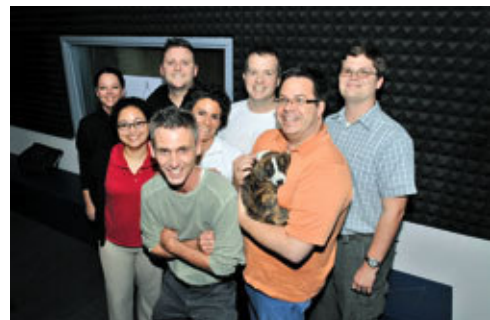
Phillips adds, “What Mark and I look for are people that will work at least as hard, if not harder, than we work on a release.”

Like the best of the independent rock record labels that sprouted up throughout the '80s and '90s, Standard can take more chances than any corporate outfit, giving a full-scale release to a band making challenging music, maintaining interest in local music and cultivating mutually beneficial relationships with performers. In the end, Latta and Phillips see themselves as “enablers” to the local music community — “not in the negative sense, but we want to help people that want to put out an album, or tour,” Latta says.

Defining community

Indy Pride

Indy Pride “fosters events that seek to educate, honor the history of the GLBT communities and celebrate the diversity of and create unity, in and between, the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and straight communities,” according to its mission statement. The importance of this mission is evident in its humble beginnings. “The first Pride event was held in a hotel ballroom because members of the community were afraid to hold an outdoors event,” according to



Pride board President Scott Vankirk.

“Indy Pride was formed around 1995 or so,” Vankirk says. “The organization almost went bankrupt in 1996. Around 2000, the organization consistently began holding a Pride event in June of each year.” This event, which now includes a parade, festival and musical performance, is how most people know about Indy Pride. Headliners at the concert have included Abigail, Paul Lekaukis, CeCe Penniston, Thea Austin and Kristine W (headlining this year). Attendance has exponentially grown over the years, from an estimated 6,000 in 2002 to 30,000 in 2007.

“More churches and not-for-profit organizations have become involved,” Vankirk says. “Pride has truly pulled the GLBT community together — at least for one weekend of events.”

But the June Pride events aren’t the only Indy Pride initiatives. “Since 2001, Indy Pride has used profits from events to fund scholarships for students. In addition to the annual Pride events, Indy Pride sponsors an evening of GLBT comedy (Laugh OUT Loud), the annual Hoosier 250 Tricycle Races & Silent Auction and a Community Thanksgiving Dinner. Indy Pride is an umbrella organization, that includes the Pride of Indy Band, the Pride Bag Ladies and the Chris Gonzalez Library,” Vankirk explains.

“The Pride of Indy Band and Color Guard is Indiana’s only LGBTs instrumental and pageantry ensemble. ... The Bag Ladies are men willing to dress in high heels and wear outrageous costumes, who, each year around Halloween, travel from bar to bar soliciting money until the early hours of the morning on what is called The Bag Lady Bus Tour. The Damien Center, the Gregory Powers Direct Emergency Financial Assistance (DEFA) Fund, Indiana Youth Group (YIG), Step Up and the Indiana AIDS Fund all benefit from money raised by The Bag Ladies,” Vankirk says. “Recently, Indy Pride agreed to sponsor the Chris Gonzalez Library. This library, named after community leader Chris Gonzalez, contains over 6,000 LGBT-themed books.”

This year, Indy Pride’s June celebration will include a week’s worth of events. Check out the lineup, beginning June 7, at www.indyprideinc.com.

Making a world of difference

The Indianapolis Children’s Choir

“The Indianapolis Children’s Choir is perceived as being a group of little children who sing,” acknowledges founding artistic director Henry Leck.

With the ICC board, staff and representatives from present and past members and their families, Leck is intent on getting the fuller story to the public.

“It’s staggering” to think in terms of the number and variety of people involved with and touched by ICC since 1986, offers Don Steffy, ICC executive director. Programs range from special classes for pre-natal, infants and toddlers, to primary through high school choirs across a full spectrum of Central Indiana’s population with satellites in various locations, in addition to the main site on the campus of Butler University.

“Poor and privileged children see the other side of life from their own through various kinds of experiences,” Leck explains.

While musical content primarily is chosen to be age and ability appropriate, there is an emphasis on works with breadth and depth “to reach into the human spirit in other ages and other places,” Leck explains. “We choose music to lead beyond the experience of singing to bring them into the culture, economics and social condition.

“The reach is beyond self, beyond ICC, beyond Indianapolis. How else but through music can [children and youth] internalize the poverty of a Mexican family?”

Leck explains ICC doesn’t do music just to sound pretty or learn X-number of songs. His deeper desire is “to find music that ennobles the child. The objective is to change lives. Children sharing their joy and accomplishments also change the lives of people in the seats.”

Philanthropy has become part of ICC’s mission.



"I have a sense that the spirit of philanthropy is dying," Leck says. "It has to start with children, with sensitivity toward other children in need, keeping up with needs and world events." ICC is "growing a generation of givers" through concerts for a cause.

"We are not an organization that is mired in its organization," Leck adds. "We asked our advisory board of teachers from every [Central Indiana] school system, 'How can ICC be supportive in the schools?' They told us their needs and we are putting resource materials for free use on our Web site."

ICC is impressive beyond its "branding as quality singing."

Lifetime Achievement Award

Meeting the world on its terms

Gerald Bepko

In 1972, when Gerald Bepko arrived at IUPUI from Yale University to take a job in the law school, cars were his new campus' most distinguishing characteristic. There were seas of them, parked in vast surface lots. "The university lacked something in terms of its presence in the community," Bepko says of those days.

Since then, the story of IUPUI has been one of transformation, as the campus has grown into a major urban university. Although he is adamant about giving credit to the many people he has worked with in the intervening years, no one can doubt that Gerald Bepko's vision of what IUPUI could be has contributed greatly to the university's growth and maturity — and, ultimately, to the development of Indianapolis as a whole.

From the beginning, Bepko had an acute understanding of the role of the urban university in the life of the city. "If you are from Indianapolis and go to Princeton, the chances of your coming back to Indianapolis are diminished," Bepko observes. "The chances of someone who gets a law degree from IUPUI, for example, staying in Indianapolis is much greater. So the points of engagement between the university and the city become exponential as the university matures and, especially, as the university develops a personality, as IUPUI has. The success of the city, in some sense, is the responsibility of the university, which has to tailor its academic programs to make sure they're relevant, to see if they can address particular issues that are recognized by the larger community."

After beginning at IUPUI as an associate professor, Bepko served as associate dean and dean of the law school, finally becoming the university's chancellor in 1986 — a post he held for 16 years. During that time, IUPUI's physical presence was profoundly altered through an ambitious building campaign that, among other things, saw the creation of a new library, law school, school of infomatics and the reinvention of the Herron School of Art and Design on the IUPUI campus.

Bepko was an advocate for the creation of what he calls "centers of excellence" at IUPUI — like the Center for Urban Policy and the Environment or the POLIS Center — interdisciplinary constellations for applied study that transcended the boundaries of classically described university departments. "They want to meet the world on its own terms," Bepko says, "and find centers of intellectual energy in terms of the issues confronting the larger community. We want to look at things in ways that will be innovative and excite students in the learning process."

During Bepko's watch, IUPUI added its first truly significant student housing. "The campus won't have a life unless there are people living on it," says Bepko, who was keen to see IUPUI outgrow its stereotype as a commuter campus. "As there is more housing and more students living on campus, the campus will have more of a life of its own. It will be a greater place for encouraging the intellectual development of students."

Bepko, who is now IUPUI's chancellor emeritus and a professor in the law school, divides his time between Indianapolis and Florida. He serves as a member of the city's Cultural Development Commission and, with his wife Jean, enjoys local theater, shows at the Indianapolis Museum of Art and city sports.



“The community was kind of unsure of itself,” he says, looking back on his first years at IUPUI. That, he says, has changed. “Over the years people became more confident in themselves. It’s been reflected in the students and the faculty. It has become a real university.”

10 years, 100 honorees

1999

- Central Indiana Community Foundation / Brian Payne
- Asante Children’s Theatre / Deborah Asante
- Indianapolis Art Center / Joyce Sommers
- The POLIS Center / David Bodenhamer
- Circle Center Mall Mural Project / Carol Tharp-Perrin and Larry Gindhart
- Parents for Public Education / Maureen Jayne
- STAR Program – Broad Ripple High School / Ralph Bedwell
- STAR Program – Thomson Consumer Electronics / Dick Knoph
- Thomas Binford (Lifetime Achievement)

2000

- Indianapolis Marion Co. Public Library “Meet the Artist” / Anthony Radford
- La Plaza – Fiesta / Carmen DeRusha
- Tabernacle Presbyterian Church / John Byers
- Indianapolis 10 Point Coalition / Rev. Charles Harrison
- Southeast Neighborhood Development / Bill Taft
- WFYI “Across Indiana” / Michael Atwood
- Young Audiences of Indiana / Joellen Florio Rossebo
- Indy Jazz Fest/APA / Cameron Smith
- Sam Jones (Lifetime Achievement)

2001

- Armonics Architecture / Olon Dotson and Russell Lewis
- Julian Center / Anne Delaney
- Phoenix Theatre / Bryan Fonseca
- Key Learning Community / Patricia Bolanos
- Dayspring Center / Nellie Gold
- Indianapolis Mayor Bart Peterson
- International Violin Competition / Glenn Kwok
- Indy Parks Greenways / Ray Irvin
- Fr. Boniface Hardin (Lifetime Achievement)

2002

- Branching Out Productions / Dino Sierp
- Berdache Communications / Wayne Zink
- Peace Learning Center / Charlie Wiles
- Indianapolis Convention & Visitors Association / Bill McGowan
- Butler University Theatre Department / Dr. John Green
- Christamore House / Olgen Williams
- Concerned Clergy of Indianapolis / Rev. C.V. Jetter
- CURE / Celia Sweet
- Theater of Inclusion / Dante Ventresca and Susurrus / Melli Hoppe
- Raymond Leppard (Lifetime Achievement)

2003

- Indiana Youth Group / Rob Connelly
- Key Cinema / Ron Keedy
- Martin Luther King Mult-Service Center / Diane Jackson
- The IU-Kenya Partnership / Robert Einterz, M.D.
- University Writers’ Series / Susan Neville and Fran Quinn

- Hoosier Environmental Council / Tim Maloney
- Community Faith and Labor Coalition / Nancy Holle
- 100 Black Men of Indianapolis / Rod Haywood
- Blaine Hogan
- U.S. Congressman Andy Jacobs (Lifetime Achievement)

2004

- Ball State University Indianapolis Center / Scott Truex
- Chatterbox Jazz Club / David Andrichik
- Organization for a New Eastside / Terry Jones
- Indiana General Assembly Rep. Bill Crawford
- Improving Kids Environment / Tom Neltner
- United States of Mind / Josh Strodman
- Emmis Broadcasting / Ed Wank & Dave O'Brien
- Storytelling Arts of Indiana / Ellen Munds
- Indiana Film Commission / Jane Rulon
- Mari Evans (Lifetime Achievement)

2005

- American Pianists Assoc. / Helen Small
- AYS / Ellen Clippinger
- Radio Radio / David and Roni Clough
- Traders Point Creamery / Peter and Jane Elder Kunz
- Young and Laramore / David Young
- Historic Landmarks Foundation / J. Reid Williamson
- Second Helpings / Gina Brooks
- Harrison Center for the Arts / Joanna Taft
- Heartland Film Festival / Jeff Sparks
- Anna White (Lifetime Achievement)

2006

- Indianapolis Cultural Development Commission / Kiera Amstutz
- Justice for Janitors / Becky Maran
- ACLU of Indiana / Ken Falk
- Planned Parenthood of Indiana / Betty Cockrum
- Luna Music / Todd Robinson
- Indianapolis Museum of Art / Lisa Freiman
- Forest Manor Multi-Service Center / Regina Marsh
- Big Hat Books / Liz Barden
- IDADA / Mark Ruschman
- Virtue and Aletra Hampton (Lifetime Achievement)

2007

- Indianapolis Metropolitan Youth Orchestra / Betty Perry
- YATS! / Joe Vuskovich
- Buselli Wallarab Jazz Orchestra / Mark Buselli and Brent Wallarab
- Indiana Canine Assistant Network / Sally Irvin
- Sagamore Institute / John Clark
- Indy Fringe Festival / Pauline Moffatt
- Indiana Equality / Jon Keep
- Tonic Ball / Ken Honeywell
- William Ryder
- Sandy Reiberg (Lifetime Achievement)

2008

- Indy PRIDE / Scott VanKirk
- R Bistro / Regina Mehalik
- Indy Feral / Lisa Tudor

- Indianapolis Peace and Justice Center / Ron and Jane Haldeman
 - Indianapolis International Film Festival / Brian Owens
 - Theatre on the Square / Ron Spencer
 - Keep Indianapolis Beautiful / David Forsell
 - Standard Recording Co. / Mark Latta and Kevin Phillips
 - Indianapolis Children's Choir / Henry Leck and Don Steffy
 - Gerald Bepko (Lifetime Achievement)
-