

The Slate Belt Heritage Center proudly announces the winners for this year's 2023 Annual Preservation Awards.



By Karen Brewer

BANGOR - The Special Focus Award goes to an individual who has shown exemplary actions in saving or conserving traditions or a body of knowledge and contributes to educational information. This award is to acknowledge individuals who have performed acts that promote and preserve the culture and heritage of the Slate Belt. This year's winner is Ms. Hope Horn. Ms. Horn was nominated back in February 2020 due to her continuous teachings of the 'Wool School' out of the former Oughoughton one-room schoolhouse in Richmond, PA. Ms. Horn has spent countless hours in her school teaching classes on dying, spinning and weaving products from wool, while using her own sheep and goats, and doing all the sheering herself along with dying the wool with natural produces like goldenrod. She also sells products at the adjacent restored general store located next to the school. Ms. Horn has a passion for passing on educational information and conserving a traditional body of knowledge. For this, she has been nominated for the Special Focus Award for 2023.

The Architectural Award goes to an individual who has shown an exemplary act in saving or conserving a historic building, place or artifact where restoration is authentic to preservation. The award is to acknowledge individuals who have performed acts that promote and preserve the culture and heritage of the Slate Belt. This year's winner is Mr. Raymond DiFebo. Mr. DiFebo was also nominated back in February 2020 for his work taking the former pre-1900s Fosbinder Butcher Shop located in Martin's Creek and restoring it as a place of residence. The original store counter now rests in the kitchen. Additionally, the original posts and beams, block and tackle for moving carcasses, meat hooks, wainscoting and tin ceiling have also been retained, along with the storeroom for animal hides and the concrete smokehouse. Mr.



DiFebo has preserved a historic building, as well as authentic and original artifacts. For this he has been nominated for the Architectural Award for 2023.

Additionally within the Architectural Award, SBHC also recognizes businesses who have shown an exemplary act in saving or conserving a historic building, place or artifact where restoration is authentic to preservation. The award is to acknowledge businesses who have performed acts that promote and preserve the culture and heritage of the Slate Belt. This year's winner is Johnsonville Farm & Garden. Owners, Aline Haddad and Jesse Poliskiewicz operate a community-based general store stocked with agricultural necessities and local products. In general, Ms. Haddad came up with the concept of restoring and reopening the former store when she returned home from college in 2012 after acquiring knowledge in agriculture, animal husbandry and organic farming. Overall, she believed that Upper Mount Bethel, the Bangor Area, and the Slate Belt needed such a vital resource to nurture and compliment the rural nature of the surrounding region by fostering farm and garden practices and supplying the basic resources needed to promote such a lifestyle in the community. For this, her business has been nominated for the Architectural Award/Business Category for 2023.

The Initiative Award goes to an individual who has shown exemplary actions in promoting and preserving the heritage of the Slate Belt through In-Kind Actions. The award is to acknowledge individuals who have performed acts that promote and preserve the culture and heritage of the Slate Belt. This year's winner is Mr. David Raker. Mr. Raker visited the Heritage Center back in 2022 and was impressed that the organization had all their monthly presentations on DVDs. Without any prompting from SBHC staff, he then decided to digitize all the Center's presentations. After checking with the board's approval, permission was granted, and he spent his own time conducting the digitization at no charge. What he accomplished here is something others can use as an example for documenting history in the Slate Belt. For this act, Mr. Raker has been nominated for the Initiative or In-Kind Preservation Award for 2023.

A public ceremony, for these awards, will be held on Thursday, June 15th, at 7:00 PM at the Heritage Center. The Center is located at 30 North 1st Street, Bangor, PA.



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