2020 Salute to Ocean County Awards

OCEAN COUNTY LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT IN THE ARTS

The Commission has created this award category to recognize the extraordinary achievements and contributions of those individuals and organizations to the quality of life in Ocean County. Recipients are selected from the distinguished list of Ocean County artists representing many art forms, nominated by various individuals and organizations.

2020: Robert "Bob" Popovics

Robert "Bob" Popovics has spent the last 50 years revolutionizing the fly-fishing world. Popovics' capacity for innovation has left an indelible mark on the craft and influenced thousands worldwide. He has played a critical role in expanding the popularity of saltwater flying fishing along the Jersey Shore and putting Ocean County on the world map of fly-fishing. He's as renowned for his groundbreaking work as for his kindness and enthusiasm in sharing his fly-knowledge.

Popovics is respected for his regular presentations on the fly-fishing show circuit, world-renowned books, cinematographer to scores of short movies about fly fishing and surf fishing, legendary innovations, and as one of the great ambassadors of fly-fishing for his eagerness to share his knowledge with fellow anglers. Bob has co-authored two widely circulated books: *Fleye Design: Techniques, Insights, Patterns* and *Pop Fleyes: Bob Popovics's Approach to Saltwater Fly Design*. The books introduced break-through techniques and materials to produce lifelike imitations of the forage fish of the Atlantic coast. In 1998, Popovics was inducted into the Freshwater Fishing Hall of Fame.

He is a founder and current club advisor of the *Atlantic Saltwater Flyrodders Club*, meetings held in his Seaside Park home open to all who share his passion for fly-fishing the surf. Some are locals, some come from hundreds of miles, and some are legends in fly-fishing. The meetings carry the most important fishing traditions Bob's father taught him during childhood, "making memories, spending time together with friends and, well, laughing. Fishing has always come second." The gatherings have played an influential role in spreading interest in saltwater fly-fishing into the mainstream and maintaining a strong presence in Ocean County.

Fly fishing figure Lefty Kreh called Bob "the most innovative fly tyer I have ever known." Popovics goes directly to the source. He can usually be found in the New Jersey surf observing and filming the fish: their habitat, movements, colors, and interaction with the surf itself. Noted angler and fly-pattern innovator Bob Clouser once deemed Bob, "as creative as they come. What's unique about his tying is that he's always trying to fix something that's broken." Those dedicated hours observing the surf have made Popovics the master angler he is today. He applies that knowledge to innovating and relentlessly improving flyes in his home studio and sharing the results along the way. He has even changed the material anglers use to make flyes, popularizing epoxy to mimic slim, glossy, durable bodies and silicone for translucence and flexibility.

2020 Salute to Ocean County Awards

Bob Popovics has made a life pouring an imaginative, limitless ingenuity into his craft, innovating new techniques, designs and methods, and eagerly sharing his expertise with anyone who shares the passion. Bob is an artist, eloquently expressing so through his fleye designs, books, short movies, and fly-casts. His innovative designs are as much a work of art as a functional tool for catching fish. What is potentially most remarkable about Bob Popovics, other than his revolutionary work and worldwide influence in the industry, may be the camaraderie he exudes and his willingness to share his insight with others.

"Bob is the single kindest, most approachable and most encouraging celebrity in any field I've ever met," says Jonny King, a fly-fishing writer and longtime friend. "People cling to him, and he is always patient. Bob has often told me that the key to demonstrating anything about tying or fishing publicly is not to show what you can do, but to make sure others realize they can do it, too. He brings no ego to his demos, but rather is always focused on helping people."

Please visit the documentary at:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2IR2b7mdrSw





Previous Award Recipients
2019: Thomas E. Rutledge - Art
2018: Eva Lucena Welch - Dance

2020 Salute to Ocean County Awards

PAULINE S. MILLER LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD FOR OCEAN COUNTY HISTORY

The Pauline S. Miller Lifetime Achievement Award is given to an individual who has demonstrated a passion for Ocean County Heritage and shared that history with the public. Criteria to receive this award is as follows: countywide impact, active in Ocean County for at least 10 years, advocate of Ocean County heritage, special emphasis on scholarship or teaching about Ocean County history.

2020: Deborah Whitcraft

Throughout her life and career, Deborah Whitcraft, 64, of Beach Haven, has been fearless and driven. She has never allowed her gender to be an impediment; never run from a challenge; always pursued knowledge and an adrenaline rush; faced the worlds of business and politics head-on.

She is known as a person of strong opinions and bold actions. She ran a successful diving and charter boat business for decades; served as her borough's first woman mayor, a position she held for eight years; published multiple books; once won $500,000 on her favorite slot machine in Atlantic City; and is a longtime volunteer EMT. Whitcraft founded the New Jersey Maritime Museum 15 years ago with Bob Yates & Jim Vogel and serves as the president of the board of trustees. She was elected to hold public office for the next 10 years, from 1996-2006, serving as mayor for 8 of the 10 years.

The New Jersey Maritime Museum houses artifacts, video footage, treasures from the deep, and all manner of educational material. "These notebooks alone contain data, photos and documentation on 5,000 New Jersey shipwrecks," she said. "Over 400 notebooks over there cover anything even remotely related to maritime history in New Jersey: pound fishing, the 1916 shark attack, rum runners, etc."

Along with co-author Gretchen Coyle, Whitcraft has published three books: one about Beach Haven and one about Tucker's Island (both part of Arcadia Publishing's Images of America series); and another called *Inferno at Sea* about the wreck of the Morro Castle.

Whitcraft and Coyle are planning their fifth trip to Cuba soon, for continued research and to interview families who lost loved ones aboard the ship. They consider their work to be humanitarian in nature.

When Superstorm Sandy struck, Whitcraft made a deal with God.

"The water came within a foot of this floor, and as the water was coming up […] I'm sitting on a cooler looking at all these books, none of which had been digitized. […] 'If you don't mess with our files and photos, I promise we'll scan every single document.'" After the storm, it took three years, but she made good on the promise. "Now, thank God, it's all backed up."

She owes a debt of gratitude for a large portion of the collection to Frank Watson. He had 50 years of archived research on New Jersey shipwrecks. Over

2020 Salute to Ocean County Awards

the course of several years, she and Watson merged their files. They would stay up all night, working alphabetically. When he passed away, they were only up to the M's.

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The insatiable hunger for shipwreck research has been Whitcraft's calling, "all my life, since I was 16. Everything maritime." She got into the dive business after high school in the mid-1970s. "It was what was on the bottom. … I wanted to know the history. I wanted to know why that thing was sitting there."

Whitcraft said the waters off the New Jersey coast are the resting place of thousands of shipwrecks, including many vessels considered to be "treasure ships," valued at (at that time) half to three-quarters of a million dollars per vessel.

Her first wreck as a certified diver, as she recounted to O'Brien, was called the *Oklahoma* – her research revealed it was a steel vessel, not wooden, so it couldn't be the one everyone had thought it was for so many years. She felt compelled to explore further, but she couldn't find any existing books in the libraries. So her work took on the form of a book: *New Jersey Maritime Disasters*, published by Margaret Buchholz. She had no idea how large a project it would be, exceeding her expectations more than tenfold, encompassing 5,000 wrecks from Sandy Hook to Cape May and representing "three centuries of catastrophe" going back as far as 1609. In the late 1700s to mid-1800s, wrecks were so common, they were almost taken for granted.

Whitcraft and Yates spent thousands of hours gathering info and photos from state and federal archives, from other enthusiasts and from overseas, detailing circumstances, fatalities, rescue attempts, and impacts on coastal communities. Her lifetime odyssey has been fueled by her curiosity to know "what happened to the people."

"In researching these wrecks, you get involved in the human element of the vessels," Whitcraft said.

"I have a very compassionate feeling toward shipwrecks," she explained. More than mere wood or steel, they were carriers of human beings. They might have been bringing optimistic immigrants in search of a new life, but too often they never made it to their new home, due to storms, pirates, or "mooncussers" – land pirates that would walk the beaches with mules with lights around their necks, fooling captains – so named because they worked under the cloak of darkness, "cussing" the full moon as it impeded their nefarious deeds.

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Whitcraft has been on the Island all her life. She was born in Mount Laurel, where her dad was a heavy machinery operator but landed on LBI when her parents bought the Ebbtide Motel in Ship Bottom when she was just a few years old. She attended grade school in Ship Bottom. For a time her mom Pauline was a waitress at Bjornberg's in Barnegat Light. Whitcraft graduated from Southern Regional High School in 1973, a star pupil and a member of the National Honor Society.

2020 Salute to Ocean County Awards

Along the way, she's used each opportunity as a springboard to launch her into the next thing. She's also taken every opportunity to have fun and maybe cause a bit of stir – usually to help others in some way. Her beliefs are rooted in community.

Currently, her 400-gigabyte collection of rare photos and documents is available free of charge to anyone who wants to display them. Her images hang in the Tide Table Group's restaurants – Old Causeway, Bird & Betty's, Parker's Garage, Black Whale – as well as Station 117, the Delaware Avenue Oyster House and Hotel LBI's lobby, "Living Room" bar, and public restrooms.

"Having it stored serves no purpose," she said. "I want people to appreciate it. I put that stuff there because it brings attention to the museum and the importance of preserving New Jersey's rich maritime history."

When she's gone, she wants her cremains spread in the museum's front yard, so she can continue to "keep an eye on things."

Please visit the documentary at:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2LPLUtEqtqk&feature=youtu.be





Previous Award Recipients
2019: Margaret "Poochy" Thomas Buchholz
2018: Alfred T. Stokley
2017: Jeanette Lloyd

2020 Salute to Ocean County Awards

JOHN C. BARTLETT, JR. GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP AWARD

The commission gives this award to those individuals in government who have demonstrated the highest professional and ethical standards in leadership in the Ocean County non-profit community. They champion the role of the arts and history in the County's vital tourism industry.

THERE ARE NO AWARD RECIPIENTS THIS YEAR

Previous Award Recipients
2019: Elaine H. McConnell
2018: J. Mark Mutter
2015: Ebony Rivera

JOSEPH H. VICARI, OCEAN COUNTY TOURISM AWARD

The Joseph H. Vicari Ocean County Tourism Award is given annually to honor the business, organization or individual who made the greatest contribution to the $4.7 Billion annual Ocean County tourism industry.

2020: STEVE STEINER, SURFLIGHT THEATRE, BEACH HAVEN
Please visit the documentary at: https://vimeo.com/401142581/e6782d7145

Previous Award Recipients
2019: Anthony E. Vaz, Christopher Vaz
2018: Lori Pepenella
2017: The Storino Family

SPECIAL AWARD

The Ocean County Cultural and Heritage Commission has created the following award categories to recognize the extraordinary achievements and contributions of those individuals and organizations to the quality of life in Ocean County.

THERE ARE NO AWARD RECIPIENTS THIS YEAR

Previous Award Recipients
2019: William deCamp, Jr.
2018: Joseph Lappin
2017: Richard Morris - Historic Preservation Advocate
2017: Valerie Vaughn - Giving Voices to the Stories of Ocean County

2020 Salute to Ocean County Awards

FOUNDERS AWARDS

The commission presents the founders award to advocates for the arts in Ocean County who have enriched the cultural fabric of our community through the creation of significant artistic institutions in Ocean County.

THERE ARE NO AWARD RECIPIENTS THIS YEAR

Previous Award Recipients

2017: Sherry D. Schnepp from Our Gang Players
2014: Heather Campagno from Brick Children's Community Theatre
2014: Loretta Campagno from Brick Children's Community Theatre
2014: Patti Wade from Northern Regional Cultural Council
2014: Pat Shepherd from Pine Shores Art Association

OCEAN COUNTY CULTURAL RESPONSE AWARD

The commission seeks to recognize the people and organizations that have responded to challenges of unanticipated disasters or challenges. The special award of merit celebrates those who set an example by responding to challenges of sustainability.

THERE ARE NO AWARD RECIPIENTS THIS YEAR

Previous Award Recipients

2013: Borough of Mantoloking
2013: Vintage Automobile Museum of New Jersey

OCEAN COUNTY CHAMPION OF THE ARTS AWARD

The commission recognizes the singular contribution of the award recipients on behalf of Ocean County and New Jersey art communities. The sum total of their civic and non-profit involvement has enriched the shared cultural life of their hometown and county.

2020: CAROL HERBERT

Previous Award Recipients

2015: Jay and Linda Grunin Foundation
2013: Judith Gibson Leone
2012: Ocean First Foundation

2020 Salute to Ocean County Awards

HISTORIC PRESERVATION AWARDS

Annually, the Ocean County Cultural & Heritage Commission honors individuals, organizations, and businesses that have made a significant contribution to preserving a historic property in Ocean County. The purpose of this award program is to recognize projects that preserve historical resources, heighten awareness of the importance of historic preservation, and acknowledge individuals, volunteers, professionals, and organizations that have been responsible for the restoration, rehabilitation, or adaptive use of historic buildings, structures, sites, cultural landscapes, or maritime properties. Only exterior work is judged.

THERE ARE NO AWARD RECIPIENTS THIS YEAR

Previous Award Recipients

2017: F & M Builders, LLC - 1877 Buhler House

2014: Crabbe Family - 1916 Crabbe Boat House Toms River

2013: Lakewood Historical Society - Sheldon Wolpin Museum 1927 Kuser Hall of Newman School Lakewood

SPECIAL RECOGNITION FOR ADVANCEMENT OF THE ARTS IN OCEAN COUNTY

The commission recognizes the significant and important contribution of these awardees to the artistic culture of Ocean County and New Jersey. The recipients have shown excellences of artist production, support of the general artistic community, and have been a major advocate for the arts at a state and regional level.

THERE ARE NO AWARD RECIPIENTS THIS YEAR

Previous Award Recipients

2018: June Anne M. Sullivan

2015: Marshall Kern

To see the documentaries for all of the awards, please visit:
https://vimeo.com/401142581/e6782d7145

2020 Salute to Ocean County Awards

ACADEMIC MERIT AWARDS

The Ocean County Cultural and Heritage Commission annually recognizes students from both Georgian Court University and Ocean County College for their outstanding academic achievements in the fields of Art and History. Students are selected by their faculty as the best in each category.

GEORGIAN COURT UNIVERSITY

2020 - Art: Grace Pringle • 2020 - History: Lucy Tamke

2019 - Art: Amanda Mercandante • 2019 - History: Kiyomi Locker

2018 - Art: Farris R. Ellington • 2018 - History: Michael Crawford

2017 - Art: Leigh Clapp • 2017 - History: Jillian Behan

2016 - Art: Kathryn Glorioso • 2016 - History: Jeffery Wallster

2015 - Art: Elizabeth Adams • 2015 - History: Kimberly Kosinski

2014 - Art: Gillian Foley • 2014 - History: Matthew Paul Crouch

2013 - Art: Breanna Boll • 2013 - History: April Belfiore

2012 - Art: Katharine Salvatore • 2012 - History: Lauren Staub

2011 - Art: Joanne Nolan • 2011 - History: Kathlyn Tilton

OCEAN COUNTY COLLEGE

2020 - Art: Yiling Hsu • 2020 - History: Gianna Magliaro

2019 - Art: Destiney Everett • 2019 - History: Scott Seidle

2018 - Art: Edris Ford • 2018 - History: Kayla Doyle

2017 - Art: Oleksandr Polodyanchuk • 2017 - History: Corey Reynolds

2016 - Art: Irina Lutsenko • 2016 - History: Jamee Costello

2015 - Art: Cassidy Lyons • 2015 - History: Megan Durham

2014 - Art: Clarence Causing • 2014 - History: Brooke Kemp

2013 - Art: Jordon T. Izzo • 2013 - History: Casey Kanarkowski

2012 - Art: Lauren L. Morone • 2012 - History: Lauren Staub

2011 - Art: Leanna P. Soden • 2011 - History: Matthew R. Solomon