



SUPPORTING THE ARTS IN RICHLAND

STAR AWARD

The Richland Arts Commission accepts nominations for two annual awards to recognize local contributions made in support of the arts. These awards are intended to distinguish two recipients for their outstanding contribution and support of the arts in Richland, Washington. The awards are presented to one individual and to one organization (for profit or not-for-profit) annually. The award is made for the year prior.

2023 RECIPIENTS

ACADEMY OF CHILDREN’S THEATER



The 2023 STAR Organization Award is presented to the Academy of Children's Theatre (ACT), an organization dedicated to fostering creativity and passion for the arts in youth since its founding in June of 1995. ACT's first performances, How to Eat Like a Child and Fame, debuted at Sunfest, marking the beginning of their commitment to inspiring young performers.

Over the years, ACT has grown to offer a wide range of opportunities for children, including classes, workshops, and 4-6 Main Stage plays and musicals annually. While acting is a major focus, ACT also provides a platform for students to explore other vital roles in theater such as directing, lighting, and stage managing. These experiences build essential life skills, including public speaking, problem solving, critical analysis, and teamwork.

Beyond their in-house productions, ACT reaches out to the community through outreach programs in schools and nonprofit organizations, encouraging students to engage with and contribute to their local communities. ACT is steadfast in placing children at the heart of its productions, ensuring an immersive, safe, and affirming environment that nurtures a love for theater arts.

BRANDIE SODEN

Director of Art in the Park Festival
Allied Arts Association

The 2023 STAR Individual Award was proudly presented to Brandie Soden, an inspiring leader and passionate advocate for the arts in the Tri-Cities. A Richland native and Bomber Alumni, Brandie has been a driving force behind the beloved Art in the Park Festival, a cultural cornerstone in the region for over 73 years. As Director of the festival since 2021, Brandie has led a remarkable transformation, doubling event attendance in just three years—from 34,000 to over 71,000 attendees. Her visionary leadership has not only enhanced the festival's impact but has also generated vital revenue for local businesses, all while keeping the event free to the public.

Under Brandie's stewardship, Art in the Park has garnered numerous accolades, including the 2023 "Most Dynamic Festival" award, and has earned top rankings as the 4th "Best Festival in the Pacific Northwest" and the 6th "Best Festival in the United States" in 2023. Brandie's dedication to enriching the cultural landscape of Richland and the greater Tri-Cities community exemplifies the spirit of the STAR Award, recognizing her as an outstanding ambassador for the arts.



PAST RECIPIENTS

- 2022 - The Rude Mechanicals | Ellicia Elliot
- 2021 - Arts Center Task Force | Josh Darby
- 2020 - Mid-Columbia Ballet | Courtney Jette
- 2019 - Drew Boy Creative | Luke Ray
- 2018 - The Emerald of Siam | Adrienne Shields
- 2017 - Tri-Cities Steel Band Association | Patrick Fleming
- 2016 - Fox-Vance Family Foundation | Nancy Doran
- 2015 - HAPO | Robert Waltrous

- 2014 - Tri-Cities Chinese American Association | Debra Rogo
- 2013 - RPBI (Market at the Parkway) | Chuck Eaton
- 2012 - Tumbleweed Art Studio | Jo Brodzinski
- 2011 - Battelle | Justin Raffa
- 2010 - (not awarded) | Tom Powers
- 2009 - Columbia Center Rotary | Fred Dixon
- 2008 - Allied Arts Association | Artis Vaughan
- 2007 - (not awarded) | Jerry Greenfield

