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ARTHUR LEVITT CHALLENGES COMMUNITY TO REINVENT THE CREATIVE ARTS ECONOMY at the Cultural Alliance of Fairfield County's Arts & Culture Empowerment Awards Breakfast



Karen Brooks Hopkins (far right), President Emeritus of the Brooklyn Academy of Music, introduced the Cultural Alliance of Fairfield County's ACE Awards keynote speaker, Arthur Levitt, former chairman of the SEC and current Board of Director for Bloomberg, LP (middle). Kristina Newman-Scott, Connecticut Office of the Arts, Director of Culture (far left), also spoke at the gathering of business and cultural leaders to celebrate the vibrancy and importance of the cultural community on Thursday, May 19th, at the Shore and Country Club in Norwalk. (photo credit: Elaine Ubina)

Norwalk, CT – Artists, performers, educators, cultural and business leaders packed the ballroom at the Shore & Country Club, in Norwalk, on Thursday, May 19th, to celebrate the honorees of the inaugural Cultural Alliance of Fairfield County's (CAFC) Arts & Culture Empowerment (ACE) Awards.

Addressing the sold-out crowd, keynote speaker Arthur Levitt, the former Chairman of the SEC, shared his lifelong passion for the arts and acknowledged the critical role the art plays in creating a vibrant economy.

“Unfortunately, most of the wealth created by art is never touched by artists,” said Levitt. “Why is it that in a market-based economy, there is not a functioning market for artistic creativity?”

Looking at the art sector from a purely economic point of view, Levitt concludes that while creative arts produce measurable and meaningful benefits to our society (a \$650 million industry in Connecticut alone), artists do not enjoy any of the benefits of mass-market economic behavior. For most working artists, art is often a second job, and a career in the arts is often a career without meaningful

economic reward.

“Social gain and privatized pain,” noted Levitt. “It’s a total market failure and we must correct it. Where art creates a vibrant economy, the economy must feed the arts world in turn,” he added. Levitt went on to offer suggestions about how communities can support the arts and help transfer the wealth to those who create it.

“Today’s turnout at this wonderful celebration and awards breakfast is testament to your support. But we can also support artists directly with hard dollars by going to shows, buying their art, listening to music and telling friends to do the same and getting active in arts institutions with leadership and philanthropy,” added Levitt.

Following a standing ovation for Levitt’s keynote, Master of Ceremonies, Tony Award winning actor and singer, James Naughton went on to present the ACE Awards, created by CAFC to recognize and celebrate individuals, organizations, and businesses that have made significant contributions to the Fairfield County community through arts and culture.

The 2016 ACE Awards went to the following:

ACE Award, Corporate: Bank of America, a leading supporter of the arts and sponsor of Fairfield County’s Community Foundation’s Giving Day, which raised more than \$1 million in 24 hours for local nonprofits, with 24% of those funds raised by arts & cultural organizations that are members of the Cultural Alliance of Fairfield County.

ACE Award, Artist: Westport Artists’ Collective founders (a program of the Westport Arts Center) Duvian Montoya, Nina Bentley, Miggs Burroughs, Tammy Winser, Helen Klisser During and Jahmane West, recognized for encouraging the careers and talents of local artists and contributing to our diverse artistic community

ACE Award, Nonprofit: Curtain Call Inc., to be accepted by Lou Ursone, Executive Director of Curtain Call. Curtain Call offers year round high-level community theatre performances, educational programs and has sustained a highly engaged and supportive group of stakeholders

ACE Award, Educator: The educational staff of the Bruce Museum for their exemplary work in arts and science education developing programming across generations and inclusive of STEAM educational concepts (Science, Technology, Education, Art and Mathematics).

ACE Award, Citizen: Richard J. Wenning, executive director of BeFoundation, a family foundation devoted to dramatic improvement in the education of underserved children in Connecticut and CoFounder of SpreadMusicNow which is dedicated to ensuring there is adequate funding for music education.

Westport Resources was the Platinum sponsor for the event, along with Gold sponsors Cohen & Wolf and Fairfield County Bank; Silver sponsors Purdue

Pharma, the Ridgefield Playhouse, and Studio 2pt0, with media sponsorship from the Fairfield County Business Journal and WSHU public radio.

The Cultural Alliance of Fairfield County supports cultural organizations, artists and creative businesses in Fairfield County through marketing, professional development and advocacy. For more information, visit www.CulturalAllianceFC.org, and the organization's popular event calendar www.FCBuzz.org.

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Bill Tommins, Bank of America Southern Connecticut Market President, accepts the 2016 ACE Corporate Award from Cultural Alliance of Fairfield County (CAFC), for their widespread support of cultural organizations in the region. Bill is pictured with CAFC Board President, Cindy Vaccaro, and longtime CAFC supporter and Tony Award winning actor, James Naughton, who emceed the event. (photo: Elaine Ubina)



Joe Pucci, of Bernstein Global Wealth Management, and Johnna Torsonne of Pitney Bowes, with John Vaccaro, CEO of Westport Resources (Platinum sponsor for the ACE Awards) attended, demonstrating the important relationship between businesses and the arts & cultural community. (photo: Elaine Ubina)