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Winthrop Celebrates Fifth Annual Medal of Honor Ceremony

Quick Facts

- Winthrop University will award six individuals during the fifth annual Medal of Honor in the Arts Ceremony Oct. 20.
- Tickets to the ceremony, held in Johnson Hall, are \$50 per person.



Harry and Becca Dalton

ROCK HILL, S.C. - In celebration of the arts, Winthrop University will recognize the contributions of a philanthropic couple, an organist, a topiary artist, an arts administrator and an arts educator during a special evening on Oct. 20.

The **Medal of Honor in the Arts** is the most prestigious award granted by the **College of Visual and Performing Arts**. Now in its fifth year, the 8 p.m. event in **Johnson Hall** will raise money benefiting scholarships for visual and performing arts students.

This year's recipients are: **Harry and Becca Dalton** of Rock Hill, S.C.; **Shirley Fishburne** of Rock Hill; **Roy Fluhrer** of Greenville, S.C.; **Pearl Fryar** of Bishopville, S.C.; and **Susie Surkamer** of Columbia, S.C. Previous recipients have represented a cross section of the arts: designers, musicians, arts educators, philanthropists, playwrights and others whose work through the years has made a lasting impression.



Shirley Fishburne

Winthrop officials said the 2006 awardees are highly deserving individuals who have made the world a better place. "The Winthrop University **Medal of Honor in the Arts** is approaching its five-year anniversary and has recognized such luminaries as William Ivey Long, Leo Twiggs and Andie MacDowell," said Elizabeth Patenaude, dean of the **College of Visual and Performing Arts**. "It is a magical evening honoring the awardees and featuring the remarkable talents of our gifted dance, theatre, music and visual arts students. The benefit performance provides much needed financial support for our students through scholarship support."

Here is the background on this year's recipients:

- Harry and Becca Dalton** are known throughout York County for their generosity and volunteer efforts. The two Charlotte, N.C., natives helped save Nanny's Mountain near Clover and Worth Mountain area on the Broad River; participated in the restoration of two historic buildings on Main Street in Rock Hill; and provided funding for the Dalton Gallery at the Rock Hill Center for the Arts, Clinton Junior College library art gallery, Winthrop Galleries and Winthrop's Department of Theatre and Dance. They are participating sponsors for a new Dalton Downtown Arts initiative to encourage collaboration among area galleries.



Roy Fluhrer



Pearl Fryar

The retired president of Caraustar Industries and retired chairman of the former Star Paper Tube Inc., **Harry Dalton** earned a master's degree in history from Winthrop in 1986. Becca Dalton is the recipient of the Clara Barton Award from the American Red Cross and a lifetime service award from the Women's



Susie Surkamer

Society of Christian Service for the United Methodist Church. Passionate about the environment and their work with the Sierra Club, the two established a chair for environmental sciences and environmental studies at Winthrop.

Gifted in many areas, both **Daltons** admit to being “dealt a weak hand” when artistic talents were distributed. “That probably explains why Becca and I are so indebted to those artistically talented persons; those who can create what we are incapable of doing on canvas, in song or word, with musical instrument, in dance, or with clay,” **Harry Dalton** said. “Vicariously, we live through those with these talents. They have enriched our lives. We enjoy supporting them not only for our benefit but also for the benefit of others.”

- Music and Winthrop have both played a major role in the life of **Shirley Fishburne**. She earned a bachelor’s degree and master’s degree in organ performance at Winthrop before earning an Ed.D. from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. She also attended the Haarlem Organ Academy in Holland and is a certified Orff instructor to teach music to children.

Fishburne taught music at Winthrop for 17 years, in addition to teaching at other area colleges and schools. She served as co-chair for the steering committee to restore the D.B. Johnson Memorial Organ in **Byrnes Auditorium**, volunteering her time to present eight organ recitals throughout South Carolina and Georgia to raise awareness of the organ.

“Even though I grew up in a small town in the lower part of our state, Winthrop has been a part of my life for as long as I can remember. The best piano teacher in our community was Lila Melle Holiday Olin, a 1955 Winthrop graduate who had studied with Dr. Walter B. Roberts and Mary Elizabeth Dunlap. How lucky I was to have had such wonderful instruction from the very beginning,” said Fishburne. “When it was time to choose a college, I turned down a full four-year scholarship to a fine private school in our state to come to Winthrop. The first time I played the four-manual Aeolian Skinner organ in Byrnes, it was love at first sound and I knew that was where I wanted to study.”

- **Roy Fluhrer**, who was “born in a trunk” in Chicago to parents touring with the Federal Theatre Project in the latter stages of the Great Depression, has spent his life in the arts. He won an acting scholarship to Northwestern University as a junior in high school, earning a degree from there and later a master’s degree and Ph.D. from Bowling Green State University. He worked as artistic and managing director of a theatre in Ohio, as chair of the theatre department at the University of Idaho and as vice chancellor of the N.C. School of the Arts. Since 1989, he has headed the Fine Arts Center in Greenville, South Carolina’s first secondary school for gifted students in the literary, visual and performing arts.

For the nearly 17 years **Fishburne** has spent in South Carolina, including part of the time as president of the S.C. Arts Alliance, he has worked on various local, state and national committees to lend his voice to fulfilling the belief in the power of the arts to transform not only our lives and our educational system but the very fabric of our culture. He is a long-time member of the Arts in Basic Curriculum Project housed at Winthrop.

It is a rare day that **Fluhrer** does not recall the admonition of Henry James – to be someone on whom nothing is lost. “I cannot imagine a life without the extraordinary possibilities afforded by the arts,” he said.

- Since 1984, **Pearl Fryar** has not stopped molding the scrubs and trees in his 3-acre yard in Bishopville into topiary art with a gas powered hedge trimmer. The first recognition of his talents came in the mid-1990s when Fryar was included in a series of art exhibitions at Winthrop and the South Carolina State Museum to spotlight self-taught artists.

With an exhibition at Spoleto USA in 1997 and a feature in Art in America, **Fryar’s** reputation grew. Tour buses began arriving at his garden by the dozens. He has since appeared on ETV, Home & Garden Television, and has also been featured in Sandlapper and Southern Living magazines. **Fryar** has won numerous awards as well as being named a S.C. Ambassador for Economic Development by Gov. Mark Sanford in 2003.

Now retired after 36 years as a production line troubleshooter for Rexam Beverage Can Americas, he has ventured into metal sculpture what he calls “junque art.” He is the subject of a recent feature-length documentary entitled “A Man Named Pearl.”

“All I wanted to do was have a nice yard and win the ‘Yard of the Month’ award,” **Fryar** said. “Now, people call me an ‘artist,’ ‘nationally-acclaimed gardener,’ ‘topiary sculptor’ and ‘self-taught artist and world-class topiary sculptor.’ I’m proud to say I did win ‘Yard of the Month’ – not just once, but three times! Since then I’ve been having a great time sharing my techniques, philosophies, ideas and plans with children of all ages and abilities – and any adults who are interested.”

• For more than 30 years, **Susie Surkamer** has dedicated her career to the development of a thriving arts environment in South Carolina. Her work with the S.C. Arts Commission began in 1974 when she joined the agency as dancer-in-residence. She moved to the areas of arts development and administration before being named executive director in 1994.

Since then, the S.C. Arts Commission has earned a national reputation as a leader in arts education reform, rural arts development, design arts and other initiatives. **Surkamer's** work in strengthening partnerships has led to her service on numerous state, regional and national boards and alliances, including Winthrop's Board of Visitors. She has served on several panels for the National Endowment for the Arts and for other organizations.

"At this time in my career, one of the most satisfying rewards is witnessing the ongoing results of long range plans and programs put into place years ago. My position at the South Carolina Arts Commission affords me the opportunity to form beneficial partnerships between organizations with a common dedication – a passion for the arts," **Surkamer** said. "One of the best examples is the Arts in the Basic Curriculum program housed by Winthrop University's **College of Visual and Performing Arts**. For nearly 20 years, ABC has positively impacted arts education in South Carolina and across the country. It's very gratifying to have a role in igniting a passion for the arts in a new generation of students."

Organizers of the **Medal of Honor in the Arts** will present the recipients with a hand-crafted medal created for the event, as well as present a theatre scene and musical, dance and performance art pieces. Each of the entertainment segments pays tribute to a recipient and the recipient's love of art in order to highlight the talented students and faculty of the **College of Visual and Performing Arts**. Among the performers scheduled are the Chamber Singers and Winthrop dance and theatre students.

Winthrop commissioned Alf Ward, who retired this summer from Winthrop as professor emeritus of art, to design and produce the medal to present to the recipients. Ward has served as chair of the Department of Silversmithing, Jewelry at the City of London Polytechnic and as a consultant designer to Spink & Sons in London, and by Appointment to Her Majesty the Queen. He has designed and produced silverware for the American Crafts Council and ceremonial maces for the University of Tennessee, Coastal Carolina University and Winthrop. He also has designed brooch pins for the last 10 First Ladies of South Carolina.

Medal of Honor tickets are \$50 per person. For ticket information, call 803/323-2399 or 803/323-2323 or visit <http://www.winthrop.edu/arts>.

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