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## Arts awards get a touch-up

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The third annual St. Albert Mayor's Celebration of the Arts Awards is a long way off — Friday, Sept. 30 to be exact. However, the St. Albert Cultivates the Arts Committee is already sending out a call for award nominations.

And this year, the committee has completely revamped their awards package.

Instead of seven categories, the committee has added an extra award and renamed and redefined them to give greater clarity.

The eight awards include four returning titles from last year: the Emerging Artist, the Youth Artist, Excellence in Arts Teaching and the Lifetime Achievement Award.

Eliminated from this year's line-up is Creative Partnerships, a category that last year received no nominations. "It was time to put it aside, but there is always the possibility we can bring it back," says committee co-chair Nancy Watt.

The Sustained Support for the Arts category, which originally was open to businesses, organizations and individuals, was "too broad."

It has been split into three awards: the Community Arts Group award, the Arts Leadership award and the Corporate Patrons of the Arts.

"I'm delighted with the Community Arts Group award. There's a lot of community groups that contribute in fantastic ways and they didn't fit in other ways."

And the Arts Leadership Award singles out artists, directors, volunteers, administrators and creators. "A creator could be someone who has a vision and does something about it."

The Corporate Patrons of the Arts Award is open to a business or foundation that has provided financial, staff or volunteer support to local arts.

A completely new category is the Established Artist award highlighting someone at the peak of his or her career. "I love it. It fills a gap between Youth and Lifetime Achievement."

All award winners receive an original work by a St. Albert artist and a \$1,000 honorarium. The only exception is Corporate Patrons of the Arts, who will receive just an original piece of art.

The monetary awards are subsidized through corporate or individual sponsorship and at the moment, the committee is looking for two additional sponsors.

Another major change this year is in nominating the selection committee. “We are going to have an arms-length jury. To make lines totally clear, we’ve decided to go with a separate jury.”

The next step adds Watt, is to appoint a jury chair whose task will be to invite community members to sit on the jury. “They will represent all disciplines — music, theatre, dance, visual arts, multi-media and literature.”

For artists that often toil in obscurity, the awards are an affirmation of their hard work. “It’s important for the spirit of our community. When people are together and they celebrate success, whether it’s sports or the arts, it strengthens us. We need to come together as a community and celebrate what we do well.”

Deadline for nominations is Friday, June 17. Nomination criteria are available through Watt at 780-460-8500 or email [awards@startsfest.ca](mailto:awards@startsfest.ca).

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