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## ArtsFairfax recognizes ‘extraordinary contributions’ to arts, lauds Bulova

By Janet Rems / Special to The Fairfax County Times Oct 31, 2019 Updated 29 min ago

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### Story Highlights

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Deirdre Johnson (Federal Realty) Shelly Hazel (ARTSFAIRFAX Board Chair), Chairman Sharon Bulova, Cong. Gerry Connolly, honoree Foon Sham, Linda Sullivan (ARTSFAIRFAX President & CEO), Supervisor Herrity, Tim Sargeant (Master of Ceremonies).

PHOTO BY NESHAN NALTCHAYAN

This year's ArtsFairfax luncheon, Oct. 18 at the Fairview Marriott, recognized more than the 'extraordinary contributions' of the recipients of its four distinct awards. It also paid a heartfelt tribute to retiring County Board of Supervisors Chairman Sharon Bulova, an exemplar of dedication to the county's rich arts environment, especially music.

One of three recipients of the prestigious 2019 Jinx Hazel Arts Award—named in honor of the late Mrs. John ("Jinx") Hazel, who was known for her "unflagging" dedication to the region's arts—Bulova was greeted with an enthusiastic standing ovation from the luncheon's approximately 350 attendees, an amalgam of Fairfax County's arts, business and government communities. The luncheon program noted, "Chairman Bulova has created an extraordinary cultural legacy for Fairfax County that will continue to grow long after her last day in office."

Singled out in a film about Bulova's arts-related accomplishments were her launching of "Evenings on the Ellipse" summer concert series at the Fairfax County Government Center, ongoing support for the Workshop Arts Center at Lorton, and commissioning a commemorative musical composition, "Resolutions," to celebrate Fairfax County's 275th anniversary and the Fairfax Symphony Orchestra's 60th anniversary in 2017.

Her longtime support of the symphony orchestra also was recognized in 2018 when FSO renamed its proactive student initiative as the "Fairfax Symphony All-Stars: Sharon Bulova Young Artists' Program." At that occasion, Bulova was invited to take the baton and conduct a piece at the All-Stars annual concert at George Mason University's Center for the Arts.

Not resting on her new laurel, Bulova announced at the luncheon the addition of an official "poet laureate" program to the county's arts roster, under the auspices of ArtsFairfax.

Noting Fairfax County's "well-earned reputation as a collection of A-types," she said: "We work hard and play hard ... and community arts are part of our playing hard." She added, "In retirement, I look forward to being an arts participant and patron."

Sharing the Jinx Hazel award with Bulova were Reston residents Margaret and Shashi Gupta, the co-owners of Herndon-based Apex CoVantage, an international technology company. Among the Gaptas' many arts contributions, it was noted, was a \$1 million donation to the Wolf Trap Institute for Early Learning Through the Arts. It is the largest individual gift in the history of the Wolf Trap Institute. In accepting the award, Margaret Gupta said it was particularly meaningful to be honored for a gift that "will impact so many disadvantaged children," adding "the arts are the most effective way to reach children."

Arts Fairfax's other 2019 honorees included: Stephen Roberts for Arts Philanthropy, sculptor Foon Sham for Arts Achievement, and the NextStop Theatre Company in the Emerging Arts category.

Roberts was honored for his recent creation of the Ross-Roberts Fund for the Arts at the Community Foundation for Northern Virginia as a legacy in honor of his late wife, Dr. Sue Goetz Ross, and their shared love of and personal involvement in music, including as choral singers. Noting that their marriage was "built around arts and music," he said of his wife, "She would be really honored to be here." He also lauded ArtsFairfax as "a model and inspiration to all of us."

An internationally celebrated sculptor, Foon Sham, whose often massive sculptures are created primarily from wood, was recognized for his "outstanding career achievements"—including participation in 150 group- exhibitions and 40 solo-exhibitions—and how his "artistic expression is reflecting and shaping the culture of Fairfax County." A more than 30-year Fairfax resident who was emigrated from Hong Kong, he thanked ArtsFairfax for the grants that allowed him to "achieve what I have" and, describing it as "an amazing feeling," to "create art pieces people use as landmarks, can interact with."

His current work, "Mushroom," was commissioned by the Smithsonian Garden and is situated, through 2020, outside the National Museum of American History along with two others. He credited a previous exhibition of his work at the Greater Reston Arts Center as "seminal" and described an exhibit at the Workhouse Arts Center as a tribute to his own background and to the great diversity of people who reside in Fairfax County.

The professional NextStop Theatre Company in Herndon, which was formed in 2013 as the next phase of growth of the amateur Elden Street Players, was recognized for its "groundbreaking productions and commitment to our community." Evan Hoffmann, NextStop's producing artistic director, noted that the tremendous growth of Fairfax and Loudoun counties was the impetus for the transition.

NextStop, which will produce nine shows this season as well as offering educational outreach programs, employs more than 100 professional artists annually and serves nearly 15,000 audience members each year, including 700 season subscribers. Hoffmann, who grew up in Herndon, said, "Being honored validates what we've been doing and invigorates us." It also "changes the perception" that you have to leave Fairfax County to pursue a career in theater.

Each year ArtsFairfax selects a different artist to create individualized awards to present to honorees. The 2019 awards, large, elegant ceramic vases, each with a different shape and crystalline glazes, were created by Bikki Stricker, who lives and works in Falls Church.

Rep. Gerry Connolly (D-11th District), also a well-known amateur, community thespian, informed attendees, “Successful countries and successful cultures integrate the arts in their communities.”

Virginia Lt. Gov. Justin Fairfax, another guest speaker, commended Fairfax County as one of the “finest creative communities in the country,” adding, “the arts are not only about quality of life but our economy.”

## **More Information**

### **About ArtsFairfax**

ArtsFairfax is a nonprofit that supports Fairfax County’s more than 230 nonprofit arts organizations through county-funded competitive grants as well as private support. For more information about ArtsFairfax’s mission and its various initiatives, visit [www.artsfairfax.org](http://www.artsfairfax.org).

## **More Information**

### **Arts Impact on Fairfax County**

- \$271 million in total economic activity
- \$9.3 million in local government revenue
- \$10 million-plus in state government revenue
- Creating the equivalent of 6,220 full-time jobs