

Contact: Silver Dollar City Publicity
(417) 338-8207/8210
Electronic version and images available:
Contact mbohner@silverdollarcity.com

SILVER DOLLAR CITY CRAFTSMEN HONORED FOR EXCELLENCE

Master Candy Maker June Ward of Galena was named Craftsman of the Year for the second year in a row at Silver Dollar City's annual Craft Achievement Awards, presented October 25. The Hugo Herschend Award for Craftsman of the Year was presented to Ward, who has been a candy maker at the park for 39 years, in recognition of her technical skill, teaching ability and quality of demonstrations.

Fellow candy makers also recognized were Judy Cottle of Branson, who received the Leslie Jones Storytelling Award for dialogue and demonstration at the candy shop, and Susan Wenkel of Reeds Spring who received the Shad Heller Demonstrator of the Year Award. The candy team stirs up 90,000 pounds of homemade fudge, nut brittles, divinity and dozens of other types of candy each year.

Hall of Fame Awards were presented to pen-and-ink artist Joe Benjamin of Spokane, a craftsman at the park for 14 years, and to Publicity and Public Relations Director Lisa Rau of Kimberling City for her support of the park's craftsmen and crafts programs.

The Living Treasure Award, recognizing an outstanding lifetime contribution to American crafts work, went to candle maker Cricket Huth of Kimberling City, who also received an award for best selling products. Huth heads the candle making team at Carrie's Candles, which offers candles from dipped tapers to pillars and soy candles, in more than 50 fragrances.

The Director's Award went to Master Bladesmith Ray Johnson of Reeds Spring, a craftsman at Silver Dollar City for 18 years. The Jim Bass Award for traditional pioneer crafts went to blacksmith Wayne Rice of Ozark, a craftsman at the park for 3 years.

Best New Product Awards went to glassblower Sharon Fry of Ozark, Master Carver Pam Gresham of Branson, and Master Furniture Craftsman Warren Cook of Branson. Best New Heirloom Product awards went to artist Joe Benjamin, cut glass artist and Master Craftsman George Stiverson, and glassblower and Master Craftsman Todd Nelson with coppersmith Rex Morton for their blown glass and copper fountain. Nelson and Morton also received a People's Choice Award. Additional People's Choice Awards went to Joe Benjamin and furniture maker Dale Harlan of Conway, Ark.

The Newcomer of the Year Award for outstanding new craftsman went to tyro craftsman and taffy maker Delbert Daniel of Branson West.

Alliance Awards for combined media went to Master Craftsman and chip carver Pam Gresham of Branson and blacksmith Wayne Rice for their carved box with metal roses, and also to Gresham and coppersmith Rex Morton of Branson for their carved plaque and wine rack.

The *Festival of American Music & Crafts* Craftsperson of the Year Award was presented to bronze sculptor Barry Johnson, and an outstanding shop award went to Brown's Candy and its employees, with team leader Sheri Dyche of Galena.

The award winners were chosen by the combined votes of the craftsmen, guests at the park, and a panel of judges. Recipients were presented with handmade glass awards created by Silver Dollar City craftsmen.

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Caption for group photo:

Honorees at Silver Dollar City's Craftsmen Awards ceremony included, from left, front: Delbert Daniel, Pam Gresham, Judy Cottle, Joe Benjamin, Cricket Huth; back:, Lisa Rau, Wayne Rice, Susan Wenkel, Ray Johnson, Todd Nelson, Warren Cook, June Ward, and Barry Johnson. (Not pictured: Sheri Dyche, Rex Morton, Sharon Fry, George Stiverson, Dale Harlan)