

STARS

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Members of the Planning Committee from left to right- Zach Grider, Brittany Emerson, Hannah England, Tracy Wariner, and Zach Smith

Council and emceed by well-known Star actors Gregory Blair and Zach Smith, was held Saturday, Feb. 15 to honor Anna Mae Grider and Mary McGowan at the Historic Star Theater. Grider and McGowan were presented with a Legacy Award, roses and a proclamation from Russell Springs Mayor Eddie Thomas as “Mayors for the Day.”

From the beginning, Grider and McGowan both were instrumental in the success of The Star Theater from its renovation to an award-winning facility that houses musicals, plays and concerts.

Grider was praised at Saturday’s event for her decades of tireless work as a set designer/build-er, costume designer and longtime arts council treasurer. She was joined at the event by her family, also longtime members of the local arts community through their work at the Star and the Dance Shoppe in downtown Rus-sell Springs. Although Grider has retired from her position at the arts council, she continues to look back fondly on those years she dedi-cated to the Star. “Every-thing was beautiful and I appreciate everything that the Arts Council has meant to me and what the city is doing for the Star,” Grider said after being recognized on Sat-urday.

McGowan, RCHS’ re-tired drama teacher, was recognized for her many years of dedication and commitment to the Star Theater as a director, actress and longtime arts council member and secretary. McGowan has inspired countless young Russell Countians to explore their creativ-ity through community theater. She has directed and starred in countless productions at the Star Theater and was recog-nized for her commit-ment to the venue with her husband, Gary Mc-Gowan at her side. Gary McGowan has also been a longtime fixture at the Star as a director, ac-tor, playwright and arts council member. The McGowans, although no longer residents of Rus-sell County, continue to support and inspire lo-cal actors and directors. “It touched my heart to know that I did make a difference in some lives.

Although I am not physi-cally at the Star anymore I will always be there in spirit watching over you all,” she said. “ It is my hope that everyone will work together to keep the feeling of the Star alive, to love and help each other.”McGowan said Saturday’s event is a memory that she will al-ways treasure. “Thanks to everyone from the bottom of my heart,” she said. “You all gave me a night I will never forget.”

Two scholarships were announced on Saturday, sponsored by the Rus-sell County Arts Coun-cil to continue to honor Grider and McGowan’s legacies. The Anna Mae Grider Scholarship for Leadership in the Arts and the Mary McGowan Scholarship for the Vi-sual and Performing Arts will each be given to local students. More information about these scholarships will be an-nounced.

In addition to honoring two of the Star’s forever leading ladies, awards were given to volunteer directors, actors, set de-signers and vocalists for their work during the 2019 season.

Winners included:

Best Actor: David Smith, A Christmas Carol

Best Actress: Pacey Aaron, Bonnie & Clyde The Musical

Best Supporting Actor: Zach Smith, Charlie Cox Runs With Scissors

Best Supporting Actress: Skyla Lawless, A Christ-mas Carol

Best Actor 18 & Under: Liam Overby, A Christ-mas Carol

Best Actress 18 & Under: Emmy Pike, A Christ-mas Carol

Best Male Vocal Perfor-mance: Joe Edmonds, Bonnie & Clyde The Mu-sical

Best Female Vocal Per-formance: Pacey Aaron, Bonnie & Clyde The Mu-sical

Rising Star Award: Bow-en Furkin, A Christmas Carol

Best Set Design: Aladdin Jr. The Musical

Best Director: Todd Wil-son, A Christmas Carol

Best Overall Show: A Christmas Carol

The event also memo-rialized longtime arts council member, ac-tress, director and sing-er Barbara Harford who

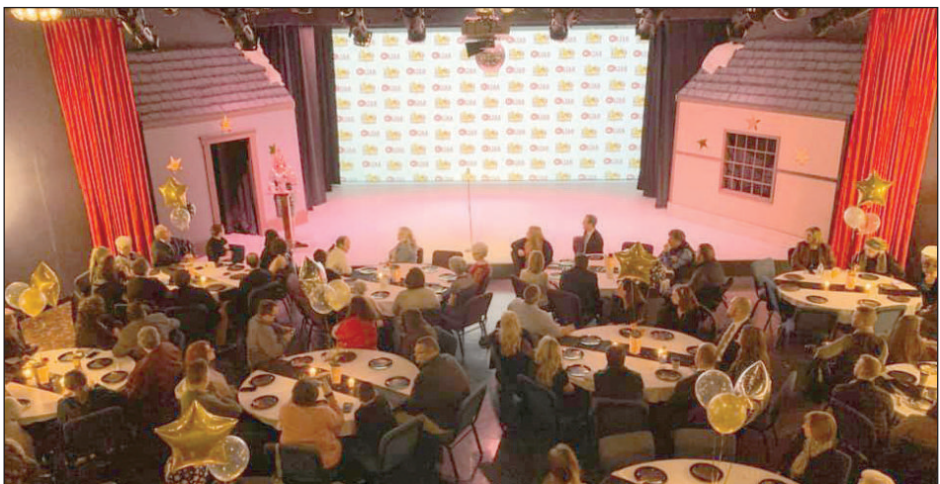
lost her battle to cancer. Harford and her hus-band Bruce and dog Os-kar, were fixtures at the Star for several years.

Star supporter, actress and local businesswom-an Anita Tucker was an award presenter at the program and looks back on Harford’s contribu-tions to the arts council.

“I was especially moved by the video shown at “A Night With The Stars” at the Star Theater Satur-day night. I had to shed a tear when I saw our grandson, Ethan, who played the role of Chip in in the Star’s produc-tion of Beauty and the Beast a few years back,” Tucker said. “There they are in one scene where she has her arms around him and another where he is sitting in her lap. She was so good for him and showed so much kindness and patience to help him have confi-dence in this role. I also saw my granddaughter with other children who surrounded Barb in the greenroom after one of the performances.”

Tucker remembers Har-ford’s love of animals and her beautiful sing-ing voice.

“She was so good with any age group and loved by all,” she said. “And Oskar, her lovable gold-



A Night With The Stars Was SOLD OUT!

endoodle, was one of the only dogs that ever liked me immediately. When they came in the bank he would make a running shoot back to my office. Hearing her sing this song just made chills run up and down my spine. She left a legacy that will be remembered forever.”

“A Night With the Stars,” was the first event of its kind to be held at the lo-cal community theater and could return in the years ahead to honor those who bring stories to life onstage at the Historic Star Theater through acting, music, direction and more.

This year’s program was planned by Star veterans Emcees Blair and Smith, Hannah England and arts council members-at-large Tracy Wariner and Brittany Emerson.

“Saturday night the Rus-sell County Arts Council celebrated and recog-nized some very special individuals whose vi-sion, hard work and years of dedication have made the Star what it is today. As an arts coun-cil, it is our purpose to bring artistic experienc-es to Russell County and to provide a cultural out-let for both children and adults alike,” Wariner said. “We are dedicated

to promoting the arts and giving back to the community who has so consistently supported us. We are so incredibly grateful for everyone who attended the event and made every moment unforgettable.”

Wariner thanks per-formers Joe Edmonds and Ambria Hites as well as community partners who helped make this program special. Thanks to Mayor Eddie Thom-as, Jamestown Chris-tian Church and Russell Springs United Method-ist Church for use of the tables, chairs and table linens.

“A Night With the Stars” also recognized upcom-ing shows coming to the Star stage. In April, Kasey Hoskins will di-rect a children’s theater production of “Fairytale Courtroom. In June, director Mariah Lane brings William Shake-speare’s “A Midsummer Night’s Dream.” August will include director Marisa Ramsey’s pro-duction of “An Enemy of the People.” Wariner will direct the musical “Mamma Mia!” in Octo-ber. To wrap up the sea-son, Cheryl Adams will direct “Elf Jr. The Musi-cal.”



Mark Emerson & Wife Brittany, Russell County Arts Council Member at Large

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