

## Belmont kicks off History Week

*Community Heritage Awards, dedication of bandstand start festivities*

By TIM CAMERATO | Oct 20, 2015

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THE WINNERS OF THIS YEAR'S Community Heritage Awards. From left: Jennifer Shaw, Wallace Rhodes, Selectman Ruth Mooney and Earl Sweeney.

TIM CAMERATO/CITIZEN



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**BELMONT** — A ceremony at the Historic Bandstand and the presentation of the annual Community Heritage Awards kicked off Belmont’s participation in New Hampshire History Week.

The week is a tradition started in 2011 by a coalition of organizations dedicated to preserving and educating people about the Granite State’s past.

At the Historic Bandstand, Belmont residents, state preservationists and local legislators did just that with a ceremony celebrating the recent renovation of the 1908 town treasure.

Jennifer Goodman, executive director of the New Hampshire Preservation Alliance, attended the event. She said the bandstand has survived floods, neglect, vandalism, a nearby fire and four moves.

“A hundred years after its construction, people in this audience and beyond have made possible an exemplary preservation,” Goodman said.

State Sen. Jeanie Forrester helped unveil a plaque for the bandstand designating the importance of Land and Community Investment Heritage Program funding on the structure. Forester is a member of LCHIP’s Board of Directors and said projects like the bandstand renovation are very important to communities.

“You can look around at the built environment and you can say, ‘How cool is that building? Look what we built here and look what we built there,’” Forrester said. “But in a situation like this, how cool is it to say ‘Look what we’ve saved.’”

The ceremony was followed by the annual Community Heritage Awards, which thank community leaders for their efforts bettering Belmont and the Lakes Region. This year, Wallace Rhodes, Earl Sweeney and Jennifer Shaw were recognized for their contributions to the community.

Heritage Commission Chairman Linda Frawley presented the citations along with Selectman Ruth Mooney. She first introduced Shaw, a teacher at Belmont elementary and high schools.

“For the past 13 of her nearly 30 years teaching, Mrs. Shaw has introduced Belmont’s children to music,” Frawley said.

She said Shaw’s instruction as a chorus teacher has “paid community dividends.”

“Those young, smiling faces and beautiful voices performing at the bandstand when we ‘Decked the Village’ made some Christmases to remember on Main Street,” Frawley said.

Shaw has also been active in many Lakes Region performing groups. She also donates her time to her parish, along with Belmont’s Old Home Day.

Frawley said she was also honored to celebrate the work of Sweeney. The retired law enforcement official had a distinguished five-decade career serving as a Belmont police officer, police chief, deputy/assistant/acting commissioner of the Department of Safety, director of the New Hampshire Police Standards and Training Council and even chairman of the state Board of Parole.

“He literally wrote the book and I believe introduced the concept of stalking, among other contributions” Frawley said.

Sweeney thanked the crowd for the award and also commended the town on its work revitalizing the Village together.

“It was a laughing stock to read about the selectmen’s meetings in the news media a few years ago,” Sweeney said. “I think you folks have worked together ... and I think you deserve a lot of credit.”

The award for Rhodes was a surprise. Frawley said he’s a “passionate, self-taught researcher” who prides himself on detail.

The Belmont native created the initial sketch that would one day become the town seal, and he is often cited as the “Belmont Town Historian.”

“Considering we have been referring to him all these years as the Town Historian, I thought with the select board here, we should make it official,” Frawley said.

The selectmen did, giving him the position as Town Historian Emeritus.

People can enjoy other history-themed events all week. The Belmont Public Library is currently hosting an exhibit of archival “treasures” not normally seen because of limited space.

The Belmont Historical Society holds its annual meeting at the Belmont Mill at 7 p.m., Tuesday. The society is also welcoming people to an open house of the 1792 Province Road Meeting House between 9 a.m. and noon. A fall cleaning day will be underway with the help of the Belknap County Restorative Justice Program and County Conservation District.

Belmont Town Historian Wallace Rhodes will also lead a walking tour of the Village District on Thursday. The tour begins at 5:30 p.m., at the library building on Main Street, and ends at 6:30 p.m.

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### Staff Profile

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