

# With new Chamber partnership, Cultural Coalition honors local boosters of arts and culture

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Cultural Coalition wanted to honor arts and culture promoters in the region, but its two staff members get that many people have enough awards ceremonies and galas to attend throughout the year.

So as part of its new partnership with the Chamber of Commerce of Eastern Connecticut, the organization presented two new awards at the chamber's annual meeting.

For providing vendor opportunities to artisans at the annual O'tis a Festival, hosting exhibits and running various cultural events, the Otis Library in Norwich was named the inaugural Outstanding Arts & Cultural Organization.

The Cultural Coalition gave its Outstanding Business Supporter of Arts & Culture award to Dominion Energy, whose foundation has provided nearly \$1 million in grants since 2003 to support the arts locally, Cultural Coalition Executive Director Wendy Bury said.

The chamber, which enrolled 131 new members in 2018, held its annual meeting Wednesday evening at e Spa at Norwich Inn.

The other award winners are:

Small Business of the Year: SAVA Insurance Group

Business of the Year: Dime Bank

Community Revitalization Leader: Vincent Scarano and Hygienic Art, Inc. New

Business of the Year: Fresh Men Spa Lounge

Nonprofit of the Year: New England Science & Sailing Foundation Best Place to Work: Ear, Nose & Throat Associates of Southeastern CT Tourism Leader of the Year: Whaler's Inn

Volunteer of the Year: Anne Ogden

Young Professional of the Year: Sarah Patella

Board of Directors Special Award: New London Mayor Michael Passero

The new chairman of the chamber board is Chelsea Groton Bank President Michael Rauh.

“The reality is we live in a no-growth state, and that’s a tough environment to do business in,” he said, calling on the chamber to take the lead. He also said that as an organization, it needs to better reflect the diversity of the area.

For the chamber, 2019 will see the creation of an Eastern Connecticut curriculum for the Connecticut Hospitality Awareness Training program, a new business breakfast co-hosted with the Cultural Coalition, and the development of a more strategic social media plan.

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