

New movement to seek public support for arts

By MARY KLEMIC
STAFF WRITER

Arts booster Leon Cohan of Bloomfield Hills will lead a "major new advocacy effort" on behalf of public support for the arts, he said Monday night at the eighth annual Governors' Arts Awards ceremony at the Detroit Institute of Arts.

Cohan, senior vice president and general counsel for Detroit Edison, made the announcement as he accepted the Civic Leader Award.

Concerned Citizens for the Arts in Michigan and Michigan Advocates for the Arts asked him to lead the effort, Cohan said. The new organization "and a plan for a vigorous, high-energy citizen volunteer movement on behalf of public support for the arts" will be unveiled next month, he said.

"This will not be a partisan effort. Our leadership and our supporters will be Republicans and Democrats," said Cohan, who was honored with seven other Wayne State University alumni at WSU's Arts Achievement Awards ceremony in March.

"But we will work energetically within the political process to persuade decision makers, and we will make certain that our broad constituency is aware of who are the friends and who are the foes of public support for the arts."

Honor roll call

Other award recipients Monday night were Tyree Guyton, whose major work is the Heidelberg Project, an "art environment" of several blocks on Detroit's east side, presented with the Michigan Artist Award; Michigan Public Radio and its first executive director, Donovan Reynolds; Ed Jacomo, former headmaster at Friends School in Detroit and now associate professor in the College of Fine Arts at Western Michigan University; the Arts in Education Award; Detroit Symphony Orchestra Hall and Zelman "Tiny" Konikow, president of the Chamber Music Society of Detroit; Special Recognition Awards.

Also, the Detroit Edison Foundation, the Business Honor Roll Award; and the Attie Theatre of Detroit and Pontiac, the Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp of Twin Lake and the Hiawatha Music Co-op of Marquette, Arts Organization Awards.

Arts value

In his acceptance speech, which was interrupted by applause three times, Cohan emphasized the value of public support for the arts.

"The arts must be fully prepared to bear their fair share of the sacrifices required in economic hard times," said Cohan, who

was chairman of the Michigan Council for the Arts 1987-91.

"And the private sector of course has a major role to play in supporting the arts, and I'm very proud that the company for which I work, Detroit Edison, is being honored tonight for its contributions."

"But there will always be a public responsibility to encourage and support the arts and arts education. And we need to proclaim that message and to proclaim it loudly and clearly."

The arts will prevail partly because of the boost they provide Michigan's economy, employment, tourism and competitive standing, Cohan said.

"And the arts will prevail because we know that when there is a regular program of arts education in the public schools, a young person's life can be opened to the beauty of music, or painting, or dance, or poetry, and turned away

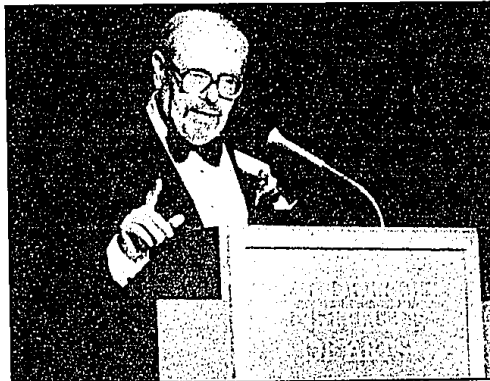
from a lifetime sentence to despair and crime and drugs."

"And finally, the arts will prevail because there is more power and meaning in a symphony conducted by Neeme Jarvi, or a trumpet solo by Winton Marsalis, or a work of art by Tyree Guyton, or a play at the Attie Theatre, than there is in all the arguments of those who seek to persuade us that the relatively few tax dollars invested to bring these glories into the lives of our citizens must either be eliminated or drastically reduced."

Other comments

Gov. John Engler flew in from a governors conference in Wisconsin to present the awards. Engler's budget cuts, which included reducing the amount of tax used to support the arts, had drawn strong criticism.

See ARTS, 11A



Arts honoree: Leon Cohan of Bloomfield Hills, recipient of the Civic Leader Award at the eighth annual Governors' Arts Awards on Monday, announced a new advocacy effort for public support of the arts in his acceptance speech.



Cultural crowd: Honorees and guests enjoyed hors d'oeuvres, dinner and music in Prentiss Court at the Detroit Institute of Arts on Monday night.

At the scene: Betty Ruedisueli (left), executive director of the Rochester Arts Commission, and Virginia Rodgers, director of the Oakland County Office of Cultural Affairs, visit before the awards ceremony.

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