

Local supporters of art in Evanston to be awarded

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The 2009 Evanston Mayor's Award for the Arts will be given to Karen Thomson and The Actors Gymnasium at the State of the City Address between 11:45 a.m. and 2 p.m. tomorrow, Feb. 26, at the Orrington Hotel in Evanston. The Mayor's Award is given to an Evanston artist and an Evanston arts organization every year for their artistic contributions to the community.

Thomson, a teacher, is being honored for founding Literature for All of Us, an organization that uses literature to help motivate low-income teen mothers. She is also a recipient of the 1999 Studs Terkel Humanities Service Award.

The Actors Gymnasium is a school for circus and performing arts. It produces works of physical theater and is a talent resource for unique entertainment, as well as offering workshops, classes and camps.

Also at the Mayor's State of the City Address, businessman Jim Nash, president of Farnsworth-Hill, Inc., will be awarded the Leadership Award by the Evanston Arts Council's Arts and Business Committee for his support of the arts in Evanston. Farnsworth-Hill, Inc. is an Evanston-based real estate brokerage and management firm, which participated in "Art Under the Glass," a program that exhibits local artists in vacant spaces. Twelve storefronts managed by Farnsworth-Hill are currently displaying artwork.

Skeggs not slowing: Glenbrook South High School graduate Julia Skeggs, of Glenview, will make her Krannert Center debut as Nellie Forbush in the University of Illinois Opera Department's production of "South Pacific" tomorrow, Feb. 26. Skeggs, a sophomore at the University of Illinois-Champaign/ Urbana, graduated in 2008 from Glenbrook Brook South High School, where she appeared in many shows, including "Les Miserables" as Madame Thenardier and "Thoroughly Modern Millie" as Muzzie. She was active all four years in the GBS music department, which won a Grammy Award for Best High School Music Program. Skeggs is majoring in theater with a minor in music-vocal performance.

Virtuoso coming to NU next year: Internationally renowned pianist Yefim Bronfman will perform at Pick-Staiger Concert Hall on the Northwestern University campus March 1, 2011, as part of the \$50,000 Jean Gimbel Lane Prize in Piano Performance awarded to him by the Bienen School of Music at Northwestern. As the 2010 prize recipient, the Grammy Award-winning Bronfman, who has earned worldwide praise for his solo, chamber and orchestral recordings, will also spend two to three non-consecutive weeks in residency at the Bienen School of Music.

Getting outrageous: Former Highland Park High School teacher and administrator Susan Benjamin has the dirt on many of Hollywood's biggest stars, and she's willing to share them with you in "Outstanding Talents, Outrageous Lives," at 10:30 a.m. on March 3 and April 7 at the Wilmette Theatre. Frank Sinatra will be the subject of this presentation where she intertwines stories and musical highlights of composers' and performers' personal lives and career accomplishments. Benjamin, who worked for Township High School District 113 as a teacher, the English Department chairwoman at Highland Park High School and assistant superintendent at Deerfield and Highland Park high schools, now presents "Outstanding Talents, Outrageous Lives" at libraries, clubs and schools in the Chicago area and Longboat Key Education Center in Florida.

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