

Amherst Area Chamber of Commerce picks four for annual kudos

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Those who have helped make Amherst a greener and more sustainable community and worked to promote the vitality of its businesses are being recognized by the Amherst Area Chamber of Commerce.

Recipients of this year's A+ awards are the Hitchcock Center for the Environment, Christopher Riddle, co-founder of Kuhn-Riddle Architects, Ray Shafie, former owner of Copy Cat Print Shop, and Youssef Fadel, who works for New England Promotional Marketing.

Now in their third year, the awards will be presented at the annual awards dinner Oct. 4 at the Lord Jeffery Inn.

Tony Maroulis, executive director of the Amherst Area Chamber, said the selections were made by a panel composed of members of the dinner committee, the Chamber board and interested volunteers.

The Hitchcock Center is earning a legacy award for environmental leadership. This was an easy choice, Maroulis said, because the center is celebrating its 50th year and is planning to move to the Hampshire College campus.

"It's an amazing organization with notable successes in ecological education for kids and adults," Maroulis said.

Riddle, who Maroulis said has helped "green the Valley" through his architectural work, is being recognized for lifetime achievement in business. The award also honors Riddle's involvement with the annual walk to benefit A Better Chance, a residential program which allows selected inner-city students to attend Amherst Regional High School, Maroulis said.

"His work in the community is just as valuable as his work with his firm," Maroulis said.

The other lifetime achievement in business award is going to Shafie.

"Ray has been indefatigable," Maroulis said. "He's a great cheerleader not only for the Chamber but for the business community at large."

The first-ever Chamber MVP award will be presented to Fadel.

"I couldn't be more pleased about this one," Maroulis said. "I've been lucky over the last four years to not only work with him, but count him as a friend."

A past president of the Chamber, Fadel has served on numerous committees, and has chaired the marketing and Winterfest committees.

April Williams, chairwoman of the dinner committee, said in a statement that the winners represent a vibrant community.

"The diverse nature of the group is truly indicative of the positive spirit and can-do attitude that make our community thrive, even in difficult times," Williams said.

The awards are given to Chamber members and organizations that enrich through education, community activism, business and politics. Previous winners have included State Rep. Ellen Story, Amherst businessman Barry Roberts, the Kestrel Trust and the Amherst Cinema Arts Center.

The awards dinner is presented by PeoplesBank. Local radio personality Monte Belmonte of 93.9 The River will emcee.

For ticket and sponsorship information, contact Joan Temkin, the Chamber's membership and marketing director, at 253-0700 or joan@amherstarea.com.

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