



Stephanie Zollshan / Berkshire Eagle Staff

Honoree Sandra Newman, the founder of Community Access to the Arts and her mother, Helen Sierles, 100, greet guests at the first ever Berkshire Awards at the Berkshire Museum.

Winners: 'Essential' to quality of life

By Adam Poulisse
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — The Berkshire Museum was at capacity Friday night, filled with family, friends and colleagues of the three community leaders that took home the first-ever Berkshire Awards.

The three inaugural winners — the Crane family, Community Access to the Arts Founder and Executive Director Sandy Newman and naturalist, writer and educator Thom Smith — were honored because of their

dedication to perpetuating the rich nature and culture of the Berkshires.

"We hope it inspires people to do something that's essential to the quality of life here," said Van Shields, the museum's executive director.

The awards were made by Michael and Maureen Banner, two local silversmiths, and were inspired by the awards given during the first agricultural fairs in Pittsfield in the 1800s.

It was a dignified event complete with black

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