Governor John B. Swainson Award

The annual Governor John B. Swainson Award recognizes public employees who step outside of their primary job responsibilities to help preserve or interpret Michigan history. Employees at a variety of governmental levels are eligible; however, history cannot be a part of their job description.

The award, established in 1996 by the Michigan History Center and the Michigan Historical Commission, honors Governor John B. Swainson, a supporter of Michigan history who served as president of the commission from 1985 until his death in 1994. Swainson is one of the few public officials who served in each branch of Michigan State Government.

Eligibility & Criteria

- May be individuals, groups or organizations
- Must be a resident of the State of Michigan
- Must work in the public sector, teachers at public schools are eligible
- Sitting Michigan Historical Commissioners are not eligible
- Could be for a single project or on-going work
- History cannot be a part of their job description
- Contributions honored may be at the local, state or national level
- Posthumous nominations will not be considered

Nomination Requirements

- Prepare a brief description (500 – 1,500 words) of the nominee's work or projects
- Prepare an explanation (500 – 1,500 words) of how the nominee has advanced and impacted Michigan history awareness, stewardship, preservation and inspiration
- Gather 2-5 supporting documents (for example: newspaper articles, programs, publication titles, websites)
- Gather 2-3 letters of support
- Fill out a nomination form and submit it along with all supporting documents and materials

Evaluation

Commissioners and staff review the nominations considering:

- Alignment with the purpose of the proposed award
- The overall significance and impact (state, local or national) of the nominee's work in support of Michigan history
- The strength of the nomination text, supporting materials and letters of support
- The degree to which the nominee appears to have demonstrated genuine passion, commitment and effort in support of Michigan history

Previous Winners

- Guy Forstrom, a fire department employee from Breitung Township in Dickinson County, organized and raised funds for the restoration of a historic fire engine.
- During the restorations of the 1890 Iron County Courthouse, Susan Passamani, a retired administrative assistant from the county Board of Commissioners, developed and implemented a "history room" and then encouraged, coordinated and guided tours.
- An operations engineer with the Michigan Department of Transportation, LeighAnn Mikesell, helped rehabilitate Muskegon's Veterans Memorial Park that was first dedicated on November 11, 1934, as a tribute to those who lost their lives in World War I.

Additional Information

- Application and supporting materials can be submitted via email or mail (see nomination form for email and physical address)
- Multiple Swainson Awards may be given each year

Award Schedule

May 31: Nomination period opens

October 31: Nomination period closes

January: Nomination reviews are completed

February: Michigan Historical Commission makes final decisions; awards recipients are contacted

March 15: Award recipients provide a short personal biography and photograph

May or June: Award recipients are honored at a special ceremony in Lansing

Michigan Historical Commission and Michigan History Center

Swainson Award Nomination Form

Recognizing government employees who make important contributions to preserving and sharing Michigan history even though working to preserve or interpret history is not part of their job.

NOMINEE SECTION

Name of Nominee _____ Email _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State____ Zip _____ Daytime Phone _____

Organization _____ Job Title _____

Your Name _____ Email _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State_____ Zip _____ Daytime Phone _____

Government position (cannot be employment in a history field).

One- or two-sentence summary of the nominee's contribution to Michigan history.

Attachment Checklist:

- ☐ Brief description (500 - 1500 words) of the nominee's work or projects.
- ☐ Explanation (500 - 1500 words) of how the nominee has advanced and impacted Michigan history awareness, stewardship, preservation and inspiration.
- ☐ Supporting documents
- ☐ Letters of support

Email complete packet to:
davism1@michigan.gov

or Mail complete packet to:
Michigan Historical Commission
Michigan History Center
Department of Natural Resources
702 W. Kalamazoo Street
P.O. Box 30740
Lansing, MI 48909-8240