

# The 2024 Bloom Magazine Community Award Winners

During the *Bloom* Holiday Party at One World at Woolery Mill on December 19, *Bloom* Editor and Publisher Malcolm Abrams presented the 2024 *Bloom* Community Awards.

*Bloom Magazine* has four missions: to support local businesses, local charities, the arts, and diversity. The *Bloom* Community Awards were created to honor individuals and organizations who advance these missions in Bloomington. The crystal awards have four pillars, each representing one of the *Bloom* missions.

This year, two new awards were presented for support of local journalism.



The *Bloom* Community Awards recognize outstanding individuals and groups who support *Bloom*’s four missions. The 2024 winners are (front row, l-r) Nicole Griffin, for Support of Diversity; Melinda Seader and Aubrey Seader, Off-Night Productions, for Support of the Arts; (back row, l-r) Don Griffin, for Support of Diversity; the Rev. Forrest Gilmore, Beacon Inc., for Support of Charities; John Whikehart, for Support of Local Businesses; Dave Askins, *B Square Bulletin*, for Support of Local Journalism; and Jeremy Hogan, *The Bloomingtonian*, for Support of Local Journalism. *Photo by Rodney Margison*

## THE 2024 AWARD WINNERS ARE:

### Don and Nicole Griffin

*Support of Diversity*

Nicole and Donald Griffin Jr. grew up in Bloomington, then decided to return after college. Nicole is the director of the Indiana University Visitor Information Center, and Donald is the broker/owner of Griffin Realty. Nicole and Donald believe in Bloomington and have given back to this community by creating the City of Bloomington Black History Month Living Legend Award and by co-founding the Monroe County Black Democratic Caucus and the Heritage Project Summer Camp. By serving on boards and commissions both on the IU campus and in the community, the Griffins affirm their commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility, and belonging.

### Aubrey and Melinda Seader, Co-Founders, Off-Night Productions

*Support of the Arts*

Aubrey Seader, daughter, and Melinda Seader, mother, are co-founders of Off Night Productions, a female-led theater company producing contemporary theater and music on off-nights of the traditional performance week. Off Night Productions aims to tackle issues and limitations seen in the theater industry locally and globally by extending the traditional performance week, prioritizing female and non-binary artistic leadership, and practicing sustainability from the planning stages through set tear down. Aubrey and Melinda offer a collective 40 years of experience in theater, including performance, design, production, and administration. They and their board are excited to help grow and shape Bloomington’s thriving arts ecosystem through Off Night Productions.

### John Whikehart

*Support of Local Businesses*

John Whikehart is formerly the chancellor of Ivy Tech Bloomington and Bloomington’s Deputy Mayor. He has been involved in advisory boards for the Monroe Convention Center—leading two of them—since 2017. Since 2023, he has been president of the Monroe County Capital Improvements Board (CIB) where he created the Bloomington Entertainment and Arts District advisory committee to assist the CIB in both the integration of the arts into the design and later the marketing for the upcoming Convention Center expansion project, which will support all the nearby businesses and attractions with an estimated \$9 million annual impact on direct revenue generated for the local arts and restaurant scene, and as much as an \$18 million annual impact in support of new food and beverage, innkeepers, and property tax revenues.

### The Rev. Forrest Gilmore, Executive Director, Beacon Inc.

*Support of Charities*

The Rev. Forrest Gilmore has led Beacon Inc. as its executive director for nearly 15 years. In his tenure, the organization has grown 10 times its original size to a \$3.5 million annual budget with a staff of over 30. During that time, Beacon has expanded to include three Housing First Permanent Supportive Housing programs for disabled, chronically homeless individuals and families, a rapid re-housing program for working homeless families, and an overnight shelter. Beacon is now the largest nonprofit provider of housing for people struggling with poverty in Monroe County. ►

### Jeremy Hogan, Founder, ‘The Bloomingtonian’

*Support of Local Journalism*

Jeremy Hogan is a world-class news photographer and journalist. For 22 years he covered local news working at *The Herald-Times*. In 2019, he founded his website, *The Bloomingtonian*. His editorial video work, distributed globally through Getty Images, and his photography, featured by agencies like Getty and The Associated Press, appear in national and international news outlets. The *Bloomingtonian* provides independent coverage of local events, breaking news, and features, crime and fire reporting, with a focus on visual journalism. Jeremy’s award-winning photography is featured in every issue of *Bloom* in our two-page Big Picture.

### David Askins, Founder, ‘B Square Bulletin’

*Support of Local Journalism*

More than a half decade ago, Dave Askins launched the *B Square Bulletin*, a one-man, online-only news outlet focused on local government. He wrote a couple thousand articles in that time, starting with the idea that the workings of local government are important—covering boards, commissions, and councils that many did not even know existed. Askins added a mountain of useful facts to the local news commons during his tenure operating the publication, and contributed a regular column, “Dave Askins at City Hall,” to *Bloom*. ✨



The *Bloom Magazine* Community Awards. *Photo by Lisa Spencer*

## up front

*Edited by Rodney Margison*



(l-r) Academy students Bryson Montgomery, Elwyn Vegerler, and Lucas Wiatrowski with instructor Joann Novak. *Courtesy photo*

## MCCSC Academy Students Place in Statewide Competition

A team of three students from The Academy of Science and Entrepreneurship placed fifth out of 59 projects in the statewide computer science competition CSforGood held December 4 at the Indiana Statehouse in

Indianapolis. The team developed an app prototype called Hoolio that allows teams to post job reviews to help other teens make informed employment decisions. Students presented their work to judges, legislators, policy leaders, influencers, and the tech community.

I think the most rewarding part of the whole thing for me was actually getting the opportunity to go to the Statehouse,” says Academy student Lucas Wiatrowski. “I’m incredibly proud of the work we accomplished and am infinitely grateful for the opportunity to be there in the first place.”



Charles Pearce. *Courtesy photo*

## Arts Alliance Gets Exec Director, Acquires By Hand Gallery

In the span of less than a month, Arts Alliance of Greater Bloomington (AAGB) announced a staff addition and a gallery acquisition. In December, Charles R. Pearce was named as the organization’s first executive director. Pearce, a seasoned creative director and arts advocate, will focus on strategic growth, community engagement, and expanding opportunities for artists to showcase

their work. “[Pearce’s] passion and expertise will undoubtedly help us celebrate and elevate the incredible talent and creativity that make Bloomington a hub for the arts,” says AAGB President Henry Leck.

In January, AAGB announced it was acquiring By Hand Gallery in Fountain Square Mall—known for its curated selection of hand-crafted artwork by local and regional artists—on the retirement of its owners. “The addition of By Hand Gallery complements our existing initiatives and underscores our commitment to the cultural landscape of Bloomington,” Pearce says.



Beverly Calender-Anderson. *Courtesy photo*

## Beverly Calender-Anderson Named 2025 Legacy Award Recipient

Longtime City of Bloomington Safe and Civil City Director and most recently Director of Community and Family Resources Beverly Calender-Anderson was selected by the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Birthday Celebration Commission to receive the City’s 2025 Legacy Award. “Calendar-Anderson demonstrated a profound commitment to advancing race relations, justice, and human rights,” Michelle

Moss, City of Bloomington Volunteer Network Coordinator, says in a press release announcing the award. “She worked collaboratively with a diverse array of organizations, individuals, and institutions to champion equity and inclusivity.”

The award was presented to Calender-Anderson at the City’s annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Birthday Celebration, held January 20 at the Buskirk-Chumley Theater. “Beverly’s legacy of promoting unity and understanding continues to inspire and uplift our community,” Moss says. ✨