

SAUGATUCK-DOUGLAS HISTORY CENTER

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MICHAEL SWEENEY, JOHN KERR HONORED
BY SAUGATUCK-DOUGLAS HISTORY CENTER

SEPT. 18, 2020 -- Michael Sampson Sweeney has received Saugatuck-Douglas History Center's top-honor Charles J. Lorenz Award of Achievement for 2020, and John Kerr was named SDHC's Volunteer Of The Year.

The Lorenz Award was established in 1997 to honor the memory of Charles "Chuck" Lorenz, who gave generously of his time, talent, money and energy in researching the early history of Saugatuck and Singapore, as well as the formation and development of this organization. Winners are selected each year by a special History Center committee, recognizing distinguished leadership in fulfilling the Center's mission to "help the community understand its past and use its history to shape its future and preserve its quality of life".

Sweeney, who died July 26 at the age of 73, was a founding member of the Saugatuck Douglas Historical Society, which grew out of a movement to "save" the Saugatuck City Hall. Working with Charles Lorenz, Spring Ten Kley, and Terry Tatsch, he drafted the constitution and bylaws creating the SDHC's predecessor in May of 1986. His posthumous award was accepted by his former wife Spring and their son Peter.

As a professional musician, Sweeney became an expert on the history of the Saugatuck Jazz Festivals (1959-1961) and Saugatuck Pop Festivals (1968-1969). His artistic accomplishments also extended into tempera paintings of the lakeshore landscape. He compiled presentations and essays on his research into area history, art history and local music, and this research is now available for study on the SDHC website.

The Volunteer Of The Year Award honors outstanding service to the History Center. Candidates are nominated by standing committee chairs, and winners are chosen by majority vote of the Board.

Kerr, a year-round Douglas resident by way of Chicago, became a member of the History Center in March of 2019, and immediately went to work on the installation of the History Museum's Then and Now exhibit. Tackling the job of museum gift shop merchandise manager, he coordinated the design, purchase, and sales of new products that brought in much needed revenue for the SDHC, including the Root Beer Barrel holiday ornament, which became a sellout success.

John joined the SDHC board of directors in June of 2019, served on its collections committee, and was part of the pop-up history team greeting passersby in SDHC's yellow tent at the Old School House in July. He also played a key role in the research and planning for the Century of Progress LGBTQ History Timeline exhibit, scheduled to open next summer.

The S-D History Center was founded as the Historical Society in 1986 with seventy Charter members "to discover, procure and preserve whatever may relate to the civil, religious, social, cultural and natural history of Saugatuck, Douglas and surrounding area". As a volunteer-based, not-for-profit 501(c)3 organization with membership open to all, the Center now exceeds 700 individual, family and corporate members. Activities are funded by contributions from members, friends and grants, and from the proceeds of special events. For more information about the History Center and its many volunteer opportunities, visit www.MySDHistory.org.

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TWO PHOTOS ATTACHED SEPARATELY (see jpegs "Sweeney" and "Kerr")

Caption/Sweeney:

Accepting SDHC's Lorenz Award posthumously for Michael Sweeney are his former wife Spring and their son Peter.

Caption/Kerr:

John Kerr accepts SDHC's Volunteer Of The Year Award.