

Arts and culture lead the way in Lafayette award

Staff report 11:54 a.m. CDT April 11, 2014



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Arts and culture have made huge strides over the years in downtown Lafayette, but it was the past year that got the notice of Lt. Gov. Jay Dardenne and the Louisiana Office of Cultural Development.

Lafayette was named winner of the 2014 Cultural District Award for the state for its best efforts "to highlight and cultivate our state's rich cultural resources," according to Dardenne.

"Downtown has become a well-rounded cultural center," said Kate Durio, Downtown Lafayette's director of marketing and events. "It's not just live music. It's not just visual arts. It's not just food. It's not just theater and

dance."

Acadiana had three total awards with Opelousas' Goldman Thibodeaux earning the Folklife Heritage Award; and Ville Platte's Sen. Eric LaFleur won Le Prix de La Franco-Responsabilite.

In 2013, Downtown Lafayette reported new initiatives of 2nd Saturday ArtWalk, public art and art demonstrations, the addition of the ArtWalk Bandstand, arts outreach, local music, creative business collaboration and community partnerships, food and other cultural contributions that garnered the award.

"It was highlighted the most," Durio said of the new additions to ArtWalk. "Downtown Alive! and great live music venues are located here, and great events like Festival International, Southern Screen Film Festival, all of the Acadiana Center for the Arts' events, live theater – all those things combined all contributes to our cultural identity here.

"But ArtWalk was the biggest change from 2012 to 2013, which was kind of the reasoning for the award," she said. "The award is for groups that have made efforts to highlight and cultivate the cultural resources that are in their community."

The arts have grown in different dimensions downtown.

"You never know what you're going to see or what you can experience here," said Durio. "So that's what contributed the most. But I think it's a good benchmark for us because now we know what sets us apart; what we can work toward."

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