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Starlight Announces the Winners of the 2019-20 Blue Star Awards



Starlight's Blue Star Awards is one of the largest high school musical theatre awards programs in the country and serves 5,000 Kansas City-area students annually.

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – In its first-ever virtual awards ceremony, Starlight revealed the winners of the 18th annual Blue Star Awards in a live premiere on Facebook Friday, July 31. Fifty-three of 54 schools were able to stage their 2019-20 Blue Star Awards musicals throughout the past school year, leading to 179 nominations in 23 categories. On Friday, hundreds of Blue Star Awards students celebrated the much-anticipated Blue Star Awards ceremony virtually.

“While the past few months have been anything but normal, we are thrilled to still be able to celebrate the outstanding accomplishments of these talented high school students,” Andy Pierce, Starlight’s community engagement manager, said. “Although we couldn’t be together in person, the virtual Blue Star Awards ceremony allowed participants to invite friends and family from across the country to tune in and celebrate the Blue Star Awards in real-time—even from afar.”

Modeled after Broadway’s Tony Awards®, Starlight’s Blue Star Awards annually recognizes achievement and excellence in high school music theatre and is one of the largest programs like it in the country. All high schools within 60 miles of Starlight are invited to participate. Each year the program serves 5,000 area students who contribute either on the stage or behind the scenes to their schools’ musical theatre productions.

A panel of adjudicators, who are theatre professionals, performing artists, designers and theatre arts educators, attend each participating school’s musical and provide evaluations and commentary to

MORE

Starlight's community engagement department. Their comments are also compiled and shared with each school's theatre teacher and students prior to the Blue Star Awards ceremony each spring.

In this year's virtual event, Liberty North High School took home the most awards of the evening with five for its production of *Cinderella (Broadway Version)*. Olathe North High School took home the coveted Outstanding Overall Production award for its presentation of *Bright Star*, and Hannah Guzman won Outstanding Actress in a Lead Role for her portrayal of Alice Murphy in the production. Cooper Carr of Lee's Summit West High School won Outstanding Actor in a Lead Role for his portrayal of Buddy in *Elf The Musical*. A full list of winners can be found below.

Traditionally, the winners of Outstanding Actor and Actress in a Lead Role travel to New York City and represent Starlight and Kansas City at the National High School Musical Theatre Awards, also known as the Jimmy Awards. The Broadway League previously made the decision to cancel the 2020 Jimmy Awards, but Starlight will still honor these winners with scholarships to continue their performing arts training.

The annual Blue Star Awards are generously supported by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas City, CommunityAmerica Credit Union, Southwest Airlines and Chicken N Pickle.

For information regarding all of Starlight's community engagement programs, visit kcstarlight.com/engage.

Follow Starlight on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter @kcstarlight.

2019-2020 Blue Star Awards Winners

Outstanding Overall Production

Olathe North *Bright Star*

Outstanding Artistic Contribution by a Student

Liberty Kendall McMullen and Paige Saluri for Direction – *Into the Woods*

Outstanding Actress in a Lead Role

Olathe North Hannah Guzman as Alice Murphy – *Bright Star*

Outstanding Actor in a Lead Role

Lee's Summit West Cooper Carr as Buddy – *Elf The Musical*

Outstanding Actress in a Supporting Role

Olathe East Willa Walberg as Sandra – *All Shook Up*

Outstanding Actor in a Supporting Role

Raymore-Peculiar Denton Meehan as Nicely-Nicely Johnson – *Guys and Dolls*

Outstanding Actress in a Featured Role

Liberty North Ava Wolesky as Charlotte – *Cinderella (Broadway Version)*

MORE

Outstanding Actor in a Featured Role

Olathe East Jeremiah Valenzuela as Jim Haller – *All Shook Up*

Outstanding Actress in an Ensemble Role

Blue Valley Olivia Wells as Havana Dancer/Hot Box Dancer – *Guys and Dolls*

Outstanding Actor in an Ensemble Role

Grandview Rowell Yniguez as Fender – *Hairspray*

Outstanding Ensemble

Liberty North *Cinderella (Broadway Version)*

Technical Achievement Award

Olathe West Summer Sperke for Stage Management – *Xanadu*

Outstanding Orchestra

Lee's Summit West *Elf The Musical*

Outstanding Scenic Design and Construction, Tier I (\$0 - \$1,999)

Leavenworth *Disney's Descendants*

Outstanding Scenic Design and Construction, Tier II (\$2,000+)

Olathe East *All Shook Up*

Outstanding Lighting Design

Olathe West *Xanadu*

Outstanding Technical Crew

Liberty North Deck/Set Crew – *Cinderella (Broadway Version)*

Outstanding Costume Design and Construction, Tier I (\$0 - \$1,199)

Olathe West *Xanadu*

Outstanding Costume Design and Construction, Tier II (\$1,200+)

Liberty *Into the Woods*

Outstanding Hair and Makeup Design

Liberty North *Cinderella (Broadway Version)*

Rising Star Scholarship

Ruskin Nikéla Reed

Rising Star Scholarship

Leavenworth Thomas Yambo-Rios

Community Impact Award

Liberty North *Cinderella (Broadway Version)*

MORE

About Starlight

Opened as a theatre in 1950 and a nonprofit organization in 1951, Starlight is the largest and oldest performing arts institution in Kansas City and provides inspiring, one-of-a-kind experiences to its patrons. Starlight presents and produces Broadway musicals, concerts and Indoors shows in addition to offering extensive community outreach and educational programming, including classes, scholarships and Starlight's Blue Star Awards, one of the largest high school musical theatre award programs in the nation.

Located on 16 acres in Swope Park, Starlight's historic, city-owned venue is the second-largest outdoor producing theatre in the country and includes rehearsal halls, a museum, club area for dining, concessions, gardens, fountains and a 10-story, climate-controlled stage. For more information, visit kcstarlight.com.

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