CWEA names Kevin Brennan and Pass the Past Coffee as 2026 Award Winners

By Abby Wojcik

The Central West End Association hosted the annual Awards Party to celebrate the achievements of this year's Polk and Renaissance Award winners. Established in 1991 and 1993 by the CWEA Board of Directors, the awards recognize an individual or organization's consistent, long-lasting contributions to the CWE. The Renaissance Award was inspired by its inaugural recipient, Leon Strauss, who spearheaded numerous revitalization projects in the City, including the development of DeBaliviere Place and Kingsbury Square. The Polk Award is named after the late William Julius Polk, who was devoted to improving the CWE throughout his life.

The Polk Award: Kevin Brennan

Kevin Brennan owns and operates several gathering places in the CWE that have a way of evoking the vibrant aesthetics found in major hubs like New York or Chicago. His restaurant, Brennan's on North Euclid Avenue, and Maryland House overlooking the fountain on Maryland Plaza are neighborhood standouts that patrons consistently return to with friends.

Brennan recently opened The Noble Crown, 300 N. Euclid Ave., a partnership with the Saint Louis Chess Club, housed in the long-vacant former Culpepper's space. Beyond its first-floor dining room, the restaurant operator is excited to utilize the basement layout to host an intimate chef's counter. Here, local, national and international chefs will cook directly in front of guests while explaining their culinary processes for an unforgettable dining experience.

Across the street, the Marvel S. Fox Sports Tavern and FunHouse is scheduled to open in the former Coffee Cartel space. This atypical sports bar pays homage to the great-grandmother of two of its partners, named Marvel Amanda Fox. She would joke that her true middle initial was S, so she could call herself the "Marvel 'S' Fox." Fittingly, the tavern's tagline promises, "It's not your grandmother's bar."



CWEA President Lindsey Tsvetanov presents the Polk Award to Kevin Brennan.

Brennan has been a resident and business owner in the CWE for over 20 years alongside his wife, Deni.

"It's an unbelievable honor to receive this [award]," Brennan stated. "We're obviously working on a lot of different projects for the neighborhood. We're excited for the neighborhood."

The Renaissance Award: Pass the Past Coffee, Erica and Eugene Tsimerman

Partners Erica and Eugene Tsimerman initially opened Pass the Past as a vintage clothing boutique at 4740 McPherson Ave., but were forced to pivot to online sales after the devastating June 2022 fire that displaced several businesses. Demonstrating true neighborhood resilience, they reopened in 2025 at their original location as a combined coffee shop and vintage store.

But the mission at Pass the Past Coffee extends beyond providing unique retail and quality espresso. The Tsimermans intend to create a beautiful, safe and distinctly familiar destination.

"Through the process of operating Pass the Past Coffee we have learned that even the smallest amongst us can be a very influential contributor to necessary change," said Erica Tsimerman. "We aren't architects or developers, but we're optimistic that we are building something that is undeniable."

They initiated a new Sunday farmers market in the CWE, known as Market on McPherson, featuring story time with Left Bank Books, an outdoor yoga class with Central West End Yoga, and more from local creators. They also partner with Rushmore Boutique, Studio Poulos and STL Run Crew. The final market of the year takes place from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Nov. 29.

Market on McPherson is an extension of what the Tsimermas hope to achieve with Pass the Past Coffee, which is to uplift the surrounding area, support the local business ecosystem and encourage neighbors to connect.



Erica and Eugene Tsimerman accept the Renaissance Award.

"We are honored to be in the company of Leon Strauss and so many other impactful local businesses," Erica Tsimerman said. "Lastly, thank you, Eugene, for sharing your dream with me."



Gallery presents exhibition of St. Louis Artist Edward Boccia

Philip Slein Gallery, 4735 McPherson Ave., presents Edward E. Boccia: An American Modernist, on view through Dec. 19.

Bringing together over 30 paintings spanning more than five decades, the exhibition includes never-before-exhibited works alongside the multipanel paintings for which Boccia is best known, many of which are represented in major museum collections.

Drawn primarily from the Edward E. Boccia Artist Trust, the exhibition traces Boccia's career from the powerful expressionist paintings of the 1950s through the ambitious symbolic compositions of his later years.

Edward E. Boccia (1921–2012) enjoyed a distinguished career as an artist, educator and writer. Recruited to Washington University in St. Louis in 1951, he taught there for more than three decades while influencing generations of artists. Earlier, he served as the founding dean of what is now the Columbus College of Art & Design. During his lifetime, Boccia exhibited extensively throughout the United States and internationally, and his work was acquired by major public and private collections. Among his most significant patrons was St. Louis collector Morton D. May, whose support helped establish one of the country's leading collections of modern art. Today, Boccia's work is represented in more than 600 public and private collections, including major museums worldwide.



Boccia painting Mr. Tibbit from 1987.



Long admired for paintings that draw upon mythology, literature, religion and the history of art, Boccia developed a deeply personal visual language that defies easy categorization.

The exhibition coincides with the publication of *Edward E. Boccia: Painter of Nightmares and Dreams*, published by Hirmer Publishers. The first major scholarly monograph devoted to the artist, the volume brings together new research, essays by leading scholars, and extensive illustrations, offering the most comprehensive examination of Boccia's life and work to date.

Photos courtesy of The Edward E. Boccia Trust