

THE BEST OF BUFFALO TWOTHOUSANDANDSIX

This appears to be a remarkable year for Buffalo. We elected Byron Brown mayor; hockey is back and the Sabres are having a thrilling season; waterfront development is finally getting traction; Marv Levy returned to the Bills; Studio Arena sent a play to Broadway and appointed a promising new artistic director; Congressman Brian Higgins won his mega-million-dollar fight for us against the New York Power Authority; City Honors High School was ranked fourth in the country among public schools by *Newsweek*; and, probably most important, a majority of people are beginning to realize that a casino in downtown Buffalo would be about as smart as eating rat poison for dinner.

This is also a remarkable year for the Artvoice Best of Buffalo survey. Between our mail-in paper ballots and the spiffy online ballot (designed by our clever IT guru Dave Kleinschmidt), we found ourselves tallying more than 75,000 entries. In fact, the response was so overwhelming that we had to move the issue back a week so that we could continue tabulating all the votes. We've finished the counting and the top nominations are printed here for all to read. While most categories have five nominees, you will notice that some have more. In those categories that have more than five nominees, there were just such an incredible number of votes cast, and the races were so tight, that we felt the nomination list had to be expanded to recognize the strength of those named.

I would like to commend the Artvoice staff and interns for making sense of some of the ballots. We always have voters who misunderstand the concept of Best of Buffalo, voters who tell us Green Day or U2 are their favorite band and Angelina Jolie is their favorite actress. Forget those. Understanding what a voter has written on a legitimate entry can be more challenging than one might think, too. For example, someone, perhaps fond of bellybuttons, chose the Navel Park as the Best Tourist Attraction.

Names are often butchered almost beyond recognition. Channel 7 newscaster Keith Radford showed up as Keith Bredford, Keith Radcliff, Keith Rathman, Kieth Radston and "Keith the-guy-with-the-tan on 7." Talking Leaves Books received a great number of votes. However, many of those votes appeared as Falling Leaves, Turning Leaves, Counting Leaves, Reading Leafs and so on. Similarly, Rust Belt Books appeared as Rusted Root Books or Rusty Belt Leaves.

Perhaps, since I'm talking about book stores, this would be a good time to make it clear that while Barnes & Noble and Borders both received a great number of votes, the Artvoice survey is not intended to highlight national chains. Rather, it is to bring attention to places, people and businesses that are unique to Buffalo. While Barnes & Noble is an excellent store, and Starbucks has decent coffee, and many people like McDonald's fries, these chain stores offer the exact same product whether you're in Albuquerque, Seattle or Rochester. Apparently some people missed the notice printed on the ballot in all caps: "NO CHAIN STORES—VOTE LOCAL."

Please take note that the finalists are listed in reverse alphabetical order, not in the order they finished in the balloting. Winners will be announced at the **Artvoice Best of Buffalo Party** this Monday, May 8, 6-9pm at the Town Ballroom. Admission is free, so is the food, and music will be provided by Babik and the Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus. Come one, come all.

—jamie mores

BEST OF BUFFALO PEOPLE & POLITICS

: NOMINEES ARE LISTED IN RANDOM ORDER :



RYAN GARKO

PHOTO BY ROSE MATTREY

Well, well—people and politics. If it weren't for the Sabres, what else would there be to talk about? There is hardly a politician in Western New York who did not receive at least one vote for **Best Politician**, which proves that every public servant has a mother collecting press clips somewhere. On the other hand—or maybe this is the same hand—there is hardly a politician in Western New York who did not receive a vote for **Worst Politician**, which proves that after every election there is a sore loser. The city's new mayor, after just 100 days in office as of the closing of the Artvoice polls, had managed to land on both lists—which proves that everyone is watching **Byron Brown** closely. It's worth noting that, excepting perennial finalist **Sam Hoyt**, the finalists for Best Politician are all new to their offices. Optimism?

Kevin Gaughan lived up to both his reputations—good citizen and gadfly—by finishing as a finalist on three lists: **Best Community Activist**,

Best Unelected Public Servant and **Most Eccentric Citizen**. If only he'd placed in **Best Buffalo Sabre** and **Best College Sports Team**, Gaughan would be the Mark Spitz of the People & Politics category.

Best Buffalo Sabre, of course, is a work in progress—the post-season continues and there is plenty of opportunity for new heroes to emerge. But we think our finalists, all except Martin Biron who did not play, had a good series against Philadelphia, and the winner...well, let's just say he made Artvoice's national team.

It's a little early in the spring to ask our readers to name a Best Buffalo Bison, it's true, but the Artvoice staff was chagrined that Buster—valuable as he is—was a finalist in this category. We suspect it means that too few people take advantage of the cheap seats at Dunn Tire Park. Really, Buffalo—take an afternoon off this summer, buy a bleacher seat, a hot dog and a beer and get to know your hometown team.

Finally, our **Drag Queens**—a furious contest this year, so close and rife with ties that we list the top eight finishers instead of the top five. This race is far too close to call. Who will emerge victorious: **Vanity Vogue?** **Vicky Vogue?** The indefatigable **Chevon Davis?** **V?** You'll have to attend the **Artvoice Best of Buffalo Party** on Monday, May 8 to find out.

Best Buffalo Bill

Willis McGahee
Takeo Spikes
Marv Levy
JP Losman
Brian Moorman

Best Buffalo Bison

Torey LoVullo
Tim Laker
Ryan Garko
Coco Crisp
Buster the Bison

Best Buffalo Sabre

Ryan Miller
Maxim Afinogenov
Martin Biron
Daniel Briere
Chris Drury

Best College Sports Team

University at Buffalo men's basketball
Niagara University men's basketball
Medaille College women's basketball
Canisius College women's basketball
Canisius College men's basketball

Best Community Activist

Tim Tielman
Robert Kresse
Michele Johnson
Kevin Gaughan
Harvey Garrett
Eugene Abrahamson
Camille Hopkins
Ani DiFranco

Best Drag Queen

Vicky Vogue
Vanity Vogue
Malibu
Jayme Coxx
fanta-see island
Chevon Davis
Armani
V

Best Entertainer

Tom Stahl
The Stripteasers
Terry Buchwald
Malibu
Lance Diamond



PHOTO BY ROSE MATTREY

Most Eccentric Citizen

The lady wrapped in white who walks Elmwood
The deer lady
Kevin Gaughan
Jimmy Griffin
Eric Starchild

Best Patron of the Arts

The Knox family
M&T Bank
Charles Penney
Cecile and Stephen Bilttehoff
Ani DiFranco

Best Politician

Satish Mohan
Sam Hoyt
Mark Poloncarz
Byron Brown
Brian Higgins

Worst Politician

Tony Masiello
Tom Reynolds
Joel Giambra
George W. Bush
Byron Brown

Biggest Waste of Taxpayer Dollars

Joel Giambra
Every other overpaid politician
Endless feasibility studies for Peace Bridge, traffic on Main Street, waterfront development, etc.
Bass Pro
Any money spent on a casino in Buffalo

Best Unelected Public Servant

Michele Johnson
Kevin Gaughan
Judy Einach
James Williams
B. Thomas Golisano

Best Use of Taxpayer Dollars

Waterfront development and greenway
Streets maintenance and repair
Police and fire departments
Buffalo school reconstruction
Arts funding