



The Greater Bluffton Chamber of Commerce and Society of Bluffton Artists (SOBA) announced two new art contests for Bluffton-area artists. One contest will tie into the Bluffton Business Awards and the other will support the Bluffton Boiled Peanut Festival this September. Artists of all ages and skill levels are encouraged to compete.

The rapid expansion of the Bluffton business community prompted the creation of the Greater Bluffton Chamber of Commerce in 2012. Three years later, the chamber is prepared to honor local businesses, and exceptional individuals in its first annual Bluffton Business Awards. Honorees do not have to be a chamber of commerce member, and only need to live or work in 29909, 29910, 29927, or 29936. Up and coming local artists have been asked to design the 2015 award symbolizing “Growth.”

More details regarding the business awards will be available in intervening weeks. A variety of awards are planned to include entrepreneurs, small businesses, non-profits, civic and community leaders, and young and seasoned professionals. Executive Director Shellie West said, “We are pleased to bring new awards to the business community. It is exciting to promote the businesses of the Greater Bluffton area. I’m especially pleased the committee decided to honor any business, regardless of affiliation with our chamber or any other group.”

To commemorate the initiative, Award Chair Ron Gray is seeking original works by artists to become the physical representation for the 2015 awards. “We want this to be more than a plaque. Bluffton has such a vibrant community of artists it makes sense to have them submit award concepts.” The concepts must represent the area, either in material or theme, with

attention to be paid to the ability to economically create approximately 10 awards. 2015's theme is "Growth."

For mature artists, Gray issued another challenge. "The Bluffton Business Awards needs its own brand! We would like to turn to our local designers and artists to come up with a creative brand. Our goal is to have an interesting theme each year and request submissions for award concepts from emerging artists in years to come." The first five established creators who submit viable concepts will be included on next year's jury to select the award winner with SOBA.

In addition to this contest, the Bluffton Boiled Peanut Festival will include commemorative t-shirts in 2015. They are calling on local artists to create a design. "We will have a category for grade school children, middle and high school students, established artists and even one titled 'nuttiest'" noted Maria Kramer, a Meeting Planner at PlannerNet and 2015's nut fest chair. "Our committee will narrow the field and then allow everyone to vote online. We think this will go nicely with our 'Naming of the Nut' social media promotion this year."

The Greater Bluffton Chamber of Commerce and SOBA partnered on these contests to promote Bluffton and its vibrant art community. "Bluffton has many talented artists, everyone from photographers to sculptors and getting them exposure is important to our community," said Marian Sanders, President of SOBA. "We have many local events promoting art, but our chamber thinks there is an opportunity to really focus on our local artists," added West.

Pamela Brown, head of art instructors at SOBA, said, "We are always looking for ways to help our kids discover and embrace the arts. Children love to express themselves creatively. The Bluffton Peanut Festival is a wonderful family oriented event that SOBA is thrilled to be a part of!" SOBA plans to give their students of the 2015 Youth Summer Art Camps an opportunity to create cartoons and other designs that could land on the official Bluffton Boiled Peanut Festival t-shirt in the fall.

"We never could have imagined an event so quintessentially Bluffton would become so popular over the years," commented John Burton, Director of Hampton Hall's private member publication - Lowcountry Living and 2014 peanut fest chairman. Kramer expects from 5,000 to 8,000 individuals to attend - with 25 to 35 percent coming from outside the Bluffton area. "I'm hoping that my estimate is conservative and we see more than ten thousand in 2015," added Kramer. "That would be nuts!"

Local advertising, marketing, and technology company Nosoco has offered a cash prize of \$100 to the winner of both contests. All finalists for the Awards contest will be honored at the award gala in January 2016 and all participants of the Boiled Peanut Festival T-Shirt Contest will be honored onstage during the event in September.

Additional details on awards, submissions, and banquet are available via the Greater Bluffton Chamber of Commerce and Boiled Peanut Festival's Facebook pages, and online. For more information, please contact [info@blufftonchamberofcommerce.org](mailto:info@blufftonchamberofcommerce.org) or visit [blufftonchamberofcommerce.org](http://blufftonchamberofcommerce.org)

, and

[boiledpeanutfestival.com](http://boiledpeanutfestival.com)

. Those interested in SOBA and its summer camps can visit [sobagallery.com](http://sobagallery.com)