

Eric Fontana '86

Arts Award

The Arts Award is presented to an individual with a passion for the arts who has made significant contributions to the fine and performing arts programs at Bishop Hendricken High School. This year's honoree is Mr. Eric Fontana from the class of 1986.

Eric was an accomplished member of Hendricken's Jazz Ensemble, the New Orleans Heritage Jazz Festival and a gold medal winner at the New Orleans National High School Band Competition in 1984. The Hawk lead guitarist continued his music career at the prestigious Berklee College of Music in Boston where he earned a Bachelor of Music Degree.

From Berklee he can boast a vast array of musical accomplishments: He toured with Steve Smith and the Naked's, including performing on-stage with Clarence Clemons and Nils Lofgren of Bruce Springsteen and The E-Street Band, and Steve Cropper of Booker T and The MG's, Otis Redding, and The Blues Brothers.

As a solo artist and singer-songwriter Eric has multiple nominations in both the Providence Phoenix and RI Motif Best Music Polls for Best Male Singer and Best Album. He has opened for Ben Folds, They Might Be Giants, Jason Mraz, Josh Ritter, Melissa Ferrick, and Tanya Donnelly to name a few. His impressive list of recording studio credits includes Barbra Streisand, No Doubt, Dropkick Murphy's, The Mighty Mighty Bosstones, as well as many TV, commercial, and film soundtrack credits.

Eric has also released four CD's of his own original songs available on iTunes and most music platforms. His musical theater credits as a guitarist include Trinity Rep's *Thunder Knocking On the Door* and *Nickel and Dimed* where he also composed and performed the underscore music for solo guitar. He also lists Perishable Theater's *Year of the Baby* and Courthouse Center for the Arts *The Full Monty*, *Rocky Horror Show*, *Violet*, *Rent*, and *Buddy*; *The Buddy Holly Story* in which he played the lead role of Buddy Holly. He was also incredibly proud to perform "Buddy Holly's Winter Dance Party" at Bishop Hendricken in 2011 for the Stephen Libera Memorial Scholarship Fund Station Nightclub Fire Benefit Concert. Not surprisingly, in 2013 Eric was inducted into the Rhode Island Music Hall of Fame.

Eric is also very active in the community and is an Advocate in Action Leadership Series Graduate- a state wide self-advocacy group supporting adults with

disabilities. Since 2013, Eric has been working in Human Services at Avatar Residential, Inc, an agency that provides services to adults with disabilities, and was recently promoted to the position of Employment Coordinator. He is directly involved with job development, job searches, job placement, and job coaching with adults with disabilities who are seeking meaningful community based integrated employment. He proudly professes “I love my day job very much!”

Eric continues to write, record, perform, and give private music lessons and is honored to be a guest speaker at Bishop Hendricken’s Alumni Career Day – both for Performing Arts & Music students and the Options Program.

He is the proud father of two beautiful little girls-Evelina Jane and Cecilia Charlotte.

Please join us in celebrating Eric Fontana who would like to dedicate his award to all of his fellow class of '86 brothers who have passed including Pete McFarland, Anthony Evengelista, and Paul Elliott, as well as Eddie King '84, a fellow guitar player and '91 Iraq Gulf War veteran who passed away in 2000 shell fishing.