

# PRESS RELEASE

FOR RELEASE WEDNESDAY, MAY 11, 2016



**Contact:**

Flora Maria Garcia  
President & CEO  
407-628-0333 x225  
[Erica@UnitedArts.cc](mailto:Erica@UnitedArts.cc)

## ***UNITED ARTS CELEBRATES ARTS EDUCATION IN OSCEOLA COUNTY***

**ORLANDO, Fla.- May 11 2016** – United Arts of Central Florida hosted more than 130 Osceola School principals, school board members, outgoing and incoming superintendents, Osceola county commissioners, Kissimmee city officials and other community leaders all supporting the arts at the county’s 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Principals Arts Appreciation Breakfast last Thursday morning at the Embassy Suites in Kissimmee. The Osceola breakfast, sponsored by Tupperware Brands, was themed for Cinco de Mayo and included performances by students, teachers and administrators and community arts groups. “I was incredibly heartened and amazed by the amount of arts talent coming out of the Osceola schools,” said Flora Maria Garcia, United Arts president & CEO.

The keynote celebrated major achievements of Osceola School District (here are *just* a few):

- Over the past 8 years, 88 new arts programs have been added... in only 47 schools!
- Superintendent Melba Luciano was honored by Florida Alliance for Arts Education as the 2015 Arts Education Superintendent of the Year.
- District Fine Arts Resource Teacher Debbie Fahmie was honored by the Florida Music Education Association with the 2016 Leadership Award.
- Two Osceola schools, Poinciana Academy of Fine Arts and Osceola County School for the Arts have been recognized by Florida Alliance for Arts Education as Florida Arts Model Schools.
- Arts students have gone on to high profile arts careers such as Nike ad design, Yahoo app design, Broadway, TV and musical groups that tour internationally.

“I was thrilled to hear retiring superintendent, Melba Luciano state that never during her tenure had the arts budget been cut,” continued Flora Mara Garcia. “The long list of arts student successes in Osceola is a testament to the district’s commitment to the arts.”

This celebratory event follows four years of new funding provided by United Arts of Central Florida for arts enrichment programs in Osceola School District. This means ALL 5<sup>th</sup> graders in Osceola County may attend the Young People’s Concert with the Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra, many for the first time in their young lives. Other funded programs included jazz instruction for middle and high school bands, in-school Shakespeare presentations, and more.

Another model program is the stART program – a summer arts intensive created by Osceola School District with Juilliard-trained teaching artists to stimulate students to think BIG through the arts. This program has proven to be a phenomenal pathway to careers for the students and has paved the way for many to get accepted (with scholarships) at some of the finest arts colleges in the country. The stART program is now being emulated by other school districts.

Ultimately, part of any school district's job is to prepare students to be "career-ready." Non-profit arts and culture are a \$3.1 billion industry in Florida – supporting approximately 90,000 jobs. Right in Osceola County, Walt Disney World is the largest for-profit employer of arts workers in the world! Because of this, Osceola School District has designated the new Osceola high school, formerly a STEM school, into a STEAM school – including the A for arts. This change will provide for unique course offerings to prepare students to go into high demand back-of-house arts and entertainment jobs. This transition was motivated through work with United Arts, which shared insights from the similar "Career Pathways to Creative Sector Jobs" program already in progress at Evans High School in Orange County.

**About United Arts of Central Florida**

United Arts is a collaboration of individuals, businesses, governments and school districts, foundations, arts and cultural organizations, and artists. Its mission is to unite, strengthen and inspire the Central Florida community through the arts and culture. United Arts serves residents and visitors in Lake, Orange, Osceola and Seminole counties through more than 50 local arts, sciences and history organizations. It raises and distributes funds for these cultural groups and provides management, administrative and advisory services. Since 1989, United Arts has invested over \$136 million in Central Florida's arts and culture.

More information is available at [www.UnitedArts.cc](http://www.UnitedArts.cc) or by calling 407-628-0333. Please email [Flora Maria@UnitedArts.cc](mailto:FloraMaria@UnitedArts.cc) for comments or inquiries.

###