



P R E S S R E L E A S E

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UNITED ARTS CELEBRATES THE ARTS IN EDUCATION

ORLANDO – February 15, 2016 – United Arts of Central Florida hosted more than 250 arts, education and community leaders at the 10th Annual Principals Appreciation Breakfast last Thursday at the Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts. This yearly breakfast celebrates the achievements of Orange County Public Schools principals in supporting exemplary arts programs, retaining certified arts teachers in every school and working to make sure every student has access to quality arts education.

The highlight of this year’s breakfast was the Arts Principal Award, which recognizes principals who lead the way in supporting and promoting innovative, high quality, arts programs and arts instruction in their schools. Three award winners (one each from elementary, middle and high school levels) were featured in a panel discussion. Attendees were eager to learn how, in an atmosphere of budget cuts and increasing requirements, these principals managed to keep the arts a strong part of their students’ learning experience.

Award winners were chosen by a panel of arts education professionals, business representatives and Orange County Public Schools officials. The winning principals each received a \$1,000 cash award for their school's arts program, \$500 worth of art supplies and a *United ArtsCard*, a buy-one-ticket-get-one-free and discount card that connects donors to cultural offerings throughout Central Florida. The cash awards were supported by premier sponsors Wells Fargo and Bright House Networks Business Solutions; the art supplies were provided by sponsor Crayola, and the *United ArtsCard* was provided by United Arts of Central Florida. The event also featured a performance by the Ocoee High School Jazz Knights and an art exhibit in the lobby by Advanced Placement visual arts students from Orange County public schools.

This annual event recognizes that principals are key leaders in arts education, even though they may never conduct an orchestra or demonstrate an art technique. "From budgeting and hiring decisions, to scheduling arts activities within the school day, to personal involvement and encouragement, principals play an essential role in ensuring that all children have access to arts education," said Flora Maria Garcia, President & CEO, United Arts of Central Florida. "Their support gives students the creative skills they need to succeed in school and in life."

The 10th Annual Principals Appreciation Breakfast was presented by United Arts of Central Florida and funded through Orange County Arts and Cultural Affairs, Bright House Networks Business Solutions, and Wells Fargo. The Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts donated the event space for the second year in a row as an ongoing partnership with United Arts to support the arts in education.

The Arts Principal Award winners were:

Elementary Division

Presented by Christine Moore on behalf of sponsor Crayola

Kathy Petersen: Waterford Elementary School is highly arts oriented, thanks to Mrs. Petersen. In her three years as principal, she has made distinct changes that allow students to receive a well-rounded education. Implementing a schedule that includes PE every day, one might think Mrs. Petersen would eliminate arts, but instead she increased them, adding a theatre/drama teacher. Waterford Elementary features Art, Music AND Drama as part of students' weekly schedules, plus PE includes dance elements. First graders also participated in a winter musical that was a huge success.

Middle School Division

Presented by Julie Wolf from sponsor Wells Fargo

Dr. Christopher Camacho: Principal Camacho has made fine arts a vital component of students' learning experience at Westridge Middle School. Approximately 74% of the students participate in the arts program that includes Band, Chorus, Musical Theatre, Orchestra, and Visual Arts. Dr. Camacho expanded the music program, adding a full-time orchestra teacher, resulting in growth from two to six orchestra classes and more than 600 students in music classes. He spearheaded a schoolwide mural project promoting education and technology, painted with the students! Dr. Camacho is also known to play "a mean trumpet" with the school's jazz band.

High School Division

Presented by Giselle Llanos from sponsor Bright House Networks Business Solutions

Margaret Nampon: Mrs. Nampon is a fierce advocate for arts education. In her four years as principal, Lake Nona's arts program has grown significantly; band increased 50% in the past two years, the orchestra program nearly doubled, and the combined arts programs now involve more than 50% of the student population. Mrs. Nampon hired an additional chorus teacher and a full-time orchestra director to develop the thriving program. She has assigned the arts department to herself as the assessing administrator, and converses with students about their progress or performance. She supports her students by attending all performances, allowing performances during the school day, and chaperoning trips.

Other Arts Award Nominees Were:

Seth Daub, Castle Creek Elementary
Anna Ferratusco, Audubon Park Elementary
Diana Greer, Windermere Elementary
Dr. Randall Hart, Dover Shores Elementary
Robert McCloe, Eagle Creek Elementary
Diondra Newton, Tangelo Park Elementary
Robert Shreffler, Wyndham Lakes Elementary
Margarete Talbert-Irving, Orange Center Elementary
Debra Vereen, Ventura Elementary
Allison Kirby, Lockhart Middle
Michael Martucci, Howard Middle
Douglas Guthrie, Apopka High

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,

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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 or by calling 407-628-0333. Please email FloraMaria@UnitedArts.cc for comments or inquiries.

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