



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

FOR RELEASE, FEBRUARY 9, 2018

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UNITED ARTS RECOGNIZES ORANGE COUNTY PRINCIPALS FOR THEIR COMMITMENT TO ARTS EDUCATION

ORLANDO – February 9, 2018 – United Arts of Central Florida, in partnership with Orange County Public Schools, hosted more than 250 arts, education and community leaders at the 12th Annual Principals Arts Appreciation Breakfast on Wednesday, January 31, 2018 at the Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts. This yearly breakfast celebrates the achievements of Orange County Public Schools principals in retaining certified arts teachers in every school and continually expanding access to arts education for all students.

The highlight of this breakfast is awarding one principal from elementary, middle, and high school with the *Arts Principal Award*. This award recognizes principals who continuously lead the way in supporting and promoting arts education and arts participation in their schools. During a panel discussion, the three award winners discussed their support of arts education programs, which they have found to correlate with their students' learning experience.

Award winners were chosen by a panel of arts education professionals, including Orange County Public Schools administrators, cultural groups, and arts-supporting businesses. The award-winning principals each received a \$1,000 cash award for their school's arts program, two tickets to a Broadway Series production courtesy of the Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts, and a *United ArtsCard*, a buy-one-ticket-get-one-FREE and discount card to arts performances and exhibits throughout Central Florida. The event also featured performances by the Winter Park High School Jazz Band, by junior Sam Marzella of Windermere High School, and freshman Siggy Bijou of Dr. Phillips High School.

"Principals play a pivotal role in dictating the level of importance placed on arts programs in their schools and in the local community," explained Flora Maria Garcia, President & CEO, United Arts of Central Florida. "We are extremely fortunate to live in a county with such supportive and engaged principals who invest their time and energy in providing the future generation with the creative skills necessary to succeed in school and in life."

The 12th Annual Principals Arts Appreciation Breakfast was presented by United Arts of Central Florida and funded through Wells Fargo, Orange County Arts & Cultural Affairs, Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts, Universal Orlando, City of Orlando, City of Orlando Commissioner Robert F. Stuart.

Here are the descriptions of the award winners:

Arts Principal Award – Elementary Division

Presented by Commissioner Robert F. Stuart, sponsor

Debra Vereen – Ventura Elementary School: Principal Vereen has a passion to teach the whole child through the arts. From drama and violin, to choir and visual art, Mrs. Vereen has created a well-rounded arts program throughout the curricular day. Her support for the arts can be seen on the walls of Ventura, proudly displaying students' artwork throughout the school. She is a regular audience member for their school shows. She ensures funding is available for professional development, as well as performance costs. Principal Vereen extends her support from the classroom to the community, encouraging students to participate in an array of community events and competitions.

Arts Principal Award – Middle School Division

Presented by Diane O'Dell from sponsor Universal Orlando

Caroll Grimando – Wolf Lake Middle School: Principal Grimando, affectionately known as Mama G, is a zealous champion of the arts at her school and can regularly be seen at their performances. She has increased the number of performing arts teachers under her leadership and has hired a dedicated arts secretary for band, choir, orchestra, guitar, piano and the visual art programs. Mrs. Grimando has provided generous funding to the arts, and supports participation at arts-specific workshops, such as the Midwest Clinic in Chicago. She ensures an atmosphere where both teachers and students can thrive in the arts.

Arts Principal Award – High School Division

Presented by Audra Walters from sponsor Wells Fargo

Jose Martinez – Colonial High School: Dedicated to bringing out the very best in every student, Principal Martinez is exemplary in his efforts to provide quality arts education for all. His scheduling allows students to participate in leveled visual and performing arts courses, maximizing their learning. His decision to supply funds in order to eliminate student fees has resulted in significant growth of the arts programs. He prioritizes recognizing students for their artistic achievements and is an active member of the arts marketing team. Mr. Martinez regularly attends Colonial High School's arts events. It is evident that he views music, theater and art as important assets to the school and his students.

Other Arts Principal Award Nominees were:

Dr. Yvette Irizarry, Camelot Elementary
Christie Ray, Tangelo Park Elementary
Robert McCloe, Eagle Creek Elementary *honorable mention
Jessica Swain, Lake George Elementary *honorable mention

Trevor Honohan, Glenridge Middle
Tracy Webley, Windy Ridge School K-8
Raymond "Chuck" Yockel, Southwest Middle *honorable mention

Michele Erickson, Wekiva High
Guy Swenson, Olympia High
Dr. Suzanne Knight, Dr. Phillips High *honorable mention

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 enrich communities by investing in arts, science and history. United Arts serves residents and visitors in Lake, Orange, Osceola and Seminole counties through more than 60 local arts, science 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 more than \$145 million in Central Florida's arts and culture.

United Arts Celebrates The Arts In Education

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