

PRESS RELEASE

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

ORLANDO – February 22, 2019 – United Arts of Central Florida, in partnership with Orange County Public Schools (OCPS), hosted more than 230 Orange County arts, education and community leaders at the 13th Annual Principals Arts Appreciation Breakfast on Thursday, February 21, 2019 at the Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts. This yearly breakfast celebrates the achievements of OCPS principals in retaining certified arts teachers in every school and continually expanding access to arts education for all students. Remarks were made on the how the arts in education engender creative thinking, engage students with overall learning, and increase both academic and test scores by both, OCPS Board Chair, Teresa Jacobs and Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Barbara Jenkins.

The highlight of the breakfast was the Arts Principal Award, which 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 developed to correlate with their students' learning experience.

The program included remarks from Teresa Jacobs and Dr. Barbara Jenkins, before the presentation of awards. The winners were chosen by a panel of arts education professionals, including Orange County Public Schools administrators, cultural organizations, and arts-supporting businesses. The winning principals each received a \$1,000 cash award for their school's arts programs, two tickets to a Broadway Series production, courtesy of 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. Guests were welcomed to the Dr. Phillips Center by the Wekiva High School Color Guard. The event also featured a performance by the Freedom High School Jazz Band, and performances by Anyae Reed of Winter Park High School and Abby Marotta of West Orange High School.

"All children should have access to arts education and it is principals who lead the charge. Participation in the arts gives students the creative skills they need to succeed in school and in life," said Flora Maria Garcia, President & CEO, United Arts of Central Florida. "From budgeting and hiring decisions, to scheduling of arts activities within the school day, to their own personal involvement, principals are essential to arts in education. 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 skills necessary to succeed in school and in life."

The 13th Annual Principals Arts Appreciation Breakfast was presented by United Arts of Central Florida and funded by Wells Fargo, Orange County Arts & Cultural Affairs, Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts, Universal Orlando, MSL CPAs & Advisors, OUC, Premiere Show Group, Rollins College, Valencia College, and Jennifer Quigley, a member of United Arts' Executive Committee.

The following awardees are being honored for the expansion of their arts programs while maintaining standards of high academic achievement.

Suzanne Knight – Dr. Phillips High School: Dr. Suzanne Knight was named the first female Principal of Dr. Phillips High School in 2014. Under Dr. Knight's leadership, the school has experienced an increase in fine arts enrollment resulting in a total of 37 fine arts courses now being offered. To keep Dr. Phillips High School a state-of-the-arts learning environment, she provides funding for equipment and facility updates, teacher professional development, encourages teacher participation in professional arts organizations, and the attendance of state and national arts conferences. Dr. Knight is a passionate advocate for the fine arts programs on her campus and makes it a priority to personally promote school arts events. With her arts-for-all approach, Dr. Knight supports programs that provide arts opportunities for exceptional education students such as the recent partnership with the Dr. Phillips Center and the world renowned Pilobolus Dance Company.

Rob McCloe – Eagle Creek Elementary School: Mr. Rob McCloe believes that the visual and performing arts are foundational to the creation of a healthy school climate. The support for the arts is clearly visible from the muraled hallways to the community funded outdoor stage. Mr. McCloe works to create a well-rounded fine arts program that motivates his students to achieve at a higher academic level and provide balance in their lives. He encourages and supports the success of his fine arts program by providing quarterly planning days for each of his arts teachers, he provides full funding for professional conferences and membership fees, and has also added additional arts teachers and support staff to maintain manageable class sizes that best fit the needs of the arts curriculum. He frequently attends performances at his school and ensures that Eagle Creek Elementary has a strong fine arts department to match the Lake Nona Middle and High School fine arts models.

John McHale – Cypress Creek High School: Dr. John McHale places the upmost value on the arts, believing that the arts directly impact not only the academic success of his students, but improves the quality of his students' school experience. One recent graduate had the opportunity to experience this first hand. Savohn, a 2018 graduate and homeless student, found his "home" in the theater department at Cypress Creek and earned a full scholarship to The American Musical and Dramatic Academy (AMDA). He credits Dr. McHale with keeping him focused on graduating while encouraging him to stay engaged in the theater department. Dr. McHale is an avid promoter of the school arts programs and not only attends arts events, but has also starred in several productions. During his time at Cypress Creek High School, he has invested in the arts by adding additional teachers and expanding arts courses. Through his leadership, Dr. McHale works to ensure equitable access to all of his students by providing funding for his students to attend arts events both in and outside of his school.

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 \$150 million in Central Florida's arts and culture.

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