



Media Release

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Marion Cultural Alliance Applauds the 2019 Arts Awards Recipients

Marion Cultural Alliance established the Arts Awards three years ago to honor individuals or organizations making an impact in our community through the arts. The 2019 Art Awards were presented by Duke Energy and the awards sponsored by BJ Trophies and awarded at Applaud the Arts on Thursday, October 19, 2019.

2019 EDUCATION AWARD: Recognizes an arts educator who utilizes the arts as a tool for achieving excellence. Awarded to: **Suzanne Schmittling**

2019 VISION AWARD: Recognizes an individual or organization in Ocala/Marion County for their outstanding advocacy of the arts. Awarded to: **Olivia Ortiz**

2019 SERVICE: Recognizes an exceptional individual for their dedicated volunteerism in the arts and contribution to the arts community as a whole. Awarded to: **Jim Ross**

BIOS

Suzanne Schmittling, the 2019 Educator Award recipient, is the current music educator at Maplewood Elementary she has found her dream position working with over seven hundred regular education students and over one hundred special needs students every week.

Suzanne lives up to the motto of Maplewood, which is "Side By Side for Success," by encouraging, preparing and producing musical performances showcasing all students' musical abilities. All students can learn to develop their music abilities and be proud and respected for their accomplishments.

Her accomplishment are many and impactful. She's instituted a school wide ceremony for Maplewood family veterans, formed the Mustang Chorale, and the Maplewood Chiminators.

The 2019 Service Award was presented to a strong advocate for the arts, **Jim Ross**, who has volunteered locally in the arts for the past 11 years.

Since 2008, Jim has volunteered backstage with the Marion Ballet Theatre for the Nutcracker and the Spring Ballet. He builds props and is on the load in, load out team.

As a member of the Ocala Civic Theatre board since 2014, he served as president and has done everything from shucking corn at the volunteer picnic to starring in a cameo role in Kitchen Witches.

Jim also performs as “James the Butler” to raise money for the Marion County Literacy Council

The 2019 Vision Award was presented to the ‘energizer bunny of the arts’, **Olivia Ortiz**. Crafting the vision nearly two year ago, she founded Couch Sessions a unique arts immersion experience combining art and music performance in a historic setting.

Each Couch Session features an artist and musical pairing in an intimate setting. The setting provides a ‘talk back’ with the artist and musicians compelling the guests to become even more engaged in the arts and our community.

She is a constant champion of arts events using her personality and social media channels to engage an even wider audience in the arts. She and her band, Left on Broadway, often support the work of not for profits.

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