**Press Release – “Spotlight on Talent” Will Shine on These Finalists**

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The preliminary competition for the 37th annual “Spotlight on Talent” contest was held recently. Once again it was a whirlwind of talented students, all primed to compete to be named a finalist. This year the audition saw 77 acts, a total of over 130 students! It was a 12 hour day for the producers, the Heritage Arts Center Association, and a most challenging job for the judges. A great variety of performing arts were displayed - both solos and groups.

 Heritage Arts will again be presenting the $1,000 “Pasco Heritage Scholarship” which will go to the graduating Pasco County senior who receives the highest judges’ scores. Last year's recipient was singer Zachary D'Onofrio, who just recently sang at the "Moonlight and Ivory" concerts.

The performing arts competition includes two final shows because of the huge numbers of applicants and quality of the talent. The top 57 scoring acts, 107 students, were chosen to perform on Saturday, March 7, 2020. The Matinee show at 12 noon will be younger solos and all groups, and the Evening show at 7 pm will be older solos. Both shows will be at the Center for the Arts at Wesley Chapel. Our emcees will be Kurt Browning, Pasco School Superintendant, and Mike Rom, popular retired educator. Tickets for adults will be $12 or both shows for $20, students through high school are $6 or both for $10 (under 5 is free). Tickets can be purchased ahead at heritagearts.org.

 This competition is a regional one, with contestants coming from all of Pasco County and the surrounding areas including Tampa, Pinellas Co., Brandon and Webster. There will be many different teachers and studios represented, who have been working with these students all year in preparation. All of the final performances will be awarded a trophy, and two professional panels of judges will have the task of selecting winners for cash prizes. In total over $4,000 in cash, trophies, and ribbons will be presented to winners in eight different categories. The finalist performances vary in style from jazz to classical and Broadway to rock. The audiences will enjoy piano music from Chopin and Mozart to jazz; songs from “Pocahonas" & "Greatest Showman"; vocal styles of Demi Lovato and Ed Sheeran; and all styles of dance. Guitar solos are classical Maleguena and hard rock, and we have a girls barbershop quartet and violin performance this year.

"Spotlight" is definitely a family affair. There are two sets of brothers and sisters, one family has four siblings in the contest, and husbands/wives and mothers/daughters volunteer together.

With a 37 year history, this competition has now come “full circle”. Spotlight “alums” are now in positions of responsibility for the production. Two sit on the Heritage Arts Board of Directors, and assistant producer Michael Roberts was an annual contestant from the age of five. The Spotlight competition costs over $16,000 to produce and would not be possible without wonderful sponsorship from generous area businesses and individual supporters. Executive producer, Barbara Friedman invites all from our area who love the arts and young people to attend these most exciting and inspiring shows. She will be glad to answer any questions at spotlight@heritagearts.org or 352-567-1720.