Press Release – January 2021

**38th “SPOTLIGHT ON TALENT” COMPETITION -**

**the COVID VERSION**

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 **Heritage Arts Center Producers want to make sure that talented students and their families in the area know that** the popular "Spotlight on Talent" competition will indeed happen in 2021, just in a different form. Because of the COVID virus a one day competition will be held on Saturday, March 6. Applications have been sent out and are still available online at heritagearts.org. The deadline for applications is Jan. 28, 2021. Participants will still be able to prepare and perform their acts in front of a panel of paid, professional judges. They will receive valuable feedback and scores from those judges. We will still award $4,000 in cash and trophy prizes, and a $1,000 scholarship to the high school senior from Pasco County with the highest judges scores. The important difference is that there will be no large audience, only immediate family members may attend, social distancing and masking will be required, and the contestants will only come for their age category performances and awards, and then leave.

 As in the past, this is our area's version of "America's Got Talent", a regional performing arts competition for students up through high school seniors. All types of talents are welcome. There are several age categories for solos and one or more group categories. A student may enter as a solo and with a group. Application fees are $40 for a solo, and $5 for each addition group contestant, to a group cap of $85. Participants are judged primarily on talent with additional points for stage presence and appropriate appearance.

 Community sponsors have always allowed us to generously reward these young people for their hard work in developing their talents. This year because we won't have income from audience tickets, and we are not increasing the application fee, it is more important than ever for generous sponsors to step forward. If you are interested in becoming a sponsor, please email Barbara Friedman at spotlight@heritagearts.org or call 352-567-1720, and our newly launched web site will have a "donate now" button.

 **The application deadline of January 28 is approaching, please don't miss this opportunity to let your talent shine!!**