

Press Release – January, 2023
**“SPOTLIGHT ON TALENT” COMPETITION -
CELEBRATING 40 YEARS!**

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It's that time of year again – all talented young people who want to shine onstage, and vie for great cash awards and trophies, need to “get their act together” and get their application in for the “Spotlight on Talent” performing arts competition.

This year the Heritage Arts Center Association will be celebrating 40 years of producing the popular competition. Even when COVID shut down practically everything, the H.A.C.A. Board managed to put on the contest – minus a stage and an audience, but still awarding brave student performers for their dedication, talent and hard work. Now, thankfully, the competition will again be in the huge Center for the Arts at Wesley Chapel High, and large audiences will be welcome to enjoy the amazing performances of these gifted kids.

Informational packets have been sent to all area public and private schools, music studios, and chambers of commerce. Applications are available on our website at heritagearts.org, and the deadline is February 9. At the auditions on February 25 hundreds of contestants will perform in front of a panel of paid, professional judges. They will receive valuable feedback from those judges. Those chosen as finalists will again share their talent with another panel of judges and an excited audience of community friends and family, either at a noon show or at a 7 pm show on Saturday, March 25. At those finals we will again 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.

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, both solos and groups. Several hundred students compete each year, with the judges evaluating about 100 performances. Participants are judged primarily on talent with additional points for stage presence and appropriate appearance.

The competition is conducted in a professional atmosphere with judges from central Florida who are outstanding in their respective fields. Every year as word of the excitement and quality talent spreads, more and more young people participate coming from as far away as Tampa, Brooksville, St. Pete, and West Pasco. Vocalists, dancers, instrumental musicians, piano players, baton twirlers, bands, gymnasts and other forms of entertainment are welcome to participate. There are several age categories for solos and one or more group categories. A student may enter as a solo and with a group.

Community sponsors have always allowed us to generously reward these young people for their hard work in developing their talents. This year we are not increasing the application fee, so 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 352-424-0135, and our website has a "donate now" button.

For the past 40 years, gifted young people have been eager each spring for this chance to shine as a true star! Many of our former contestants have gained valuable experience and confidence, and have gone on to receive college scholarships and positions with professional performance organizations. One just performed in Tampa in the “Hamilton” Broadway musical! It is indeed a rewarding event for all – sponsors, producers, and performers! We look forward to again having an enthusiastic audience for the experience this year. Put March 25 on your calendar!