

Press Release – “Spotlight on Talent” Competition - Finalists Chosen

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The “Spotlight on Talent” performing arts competition is continuing a 42-year history. On Saturday, Feb. 8, over 150 talented students K – 12 auditioned to be in one of the two final shows on Saturday, March 15. The 12 noon show will be younger performers – soloists and groups, and the 7 pm show is older solos and groups. Both entertaining shows are open to the public and held at the beautiful theater at the Wesley Chapel High School on Wells Road. Heritage Arts Center Association is the non-profit arts group that produces this regional competition.

The group annually presents a \$1,000 “Pasco Heritage Scholarship” which goes to the graduating Pasco County senior who receives the highest judges’ scores. This year because of a generous grant from Suncoast Credit Union, there will be two \$1,000 scholarship winners named! Last year's recipient was pianist Kasey Lang.

The performing arts competition includes two final shows because of the huge numbers of applicants and quality of the talent. The top 63 scoring acts, 115 students, were chosen to perform. Our emcees will be Rotarian David West and lawyer Clint Roberson. Tickets for adults will be \$15 or both shows for \$25, students through high school are \$7 or both for \$12 (under 5 is free). Tickets can be purchased ahead at heritagearts.org, or at the door.

This competition is a regional one, with contestants coming from east Pasco and beyond – Tampa, Odessa, central Pasco, Bushnell, and Thonotosassa. 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 greatly in style. The audiences will enjoy piano music from Chopin to ragtime; songs Broadway to Billie Eilish; all styles of dance; drama performances; an elementary school rock band; violin; and a guitarist shredding Van Halen!

With its long history, this competition has now come “full circle”. Spotlight “alums” are now in positions of responsibility for the production. One is President of the Heritage Arts Board of Directors, several are now judges, and a regular dance contestant now owns her own studio and is sending her students! The Spotlight competition costs over \$18,000 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 352-424-0135.