

SARASOTA COUNTY ARTS COUNCIL'S 21st Annual Meeting and Reception

The Sarasota County Arts Council celebrated 21 years of serving Sarasota County's arts and cultural community at its annual meeting held at the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall.

This year's event honored two area arts champions: arts patron and Embracing Our Differences co-chair, **Graci McGillicuddy**, and arts education advocate, **Nancy Roucher**.

Chuck Vollmer, managing director of the Stanford Group Company, presented Graci McGillicuddy with the **Stanford Group Special Award** for her tireless efforts in fostering community support for Embracing Our Differences, an annual art exhibit and event showcasing positive ways in which diversity enriches the human experience.

The highlight of the afternoon came when renowned pianist and composer **Dick Hyman** paid a special musical tribute to Nancy Roucher. After Hyman serenaded her with two musical selections, including Frank Sinatra's timeless, "Nancy with the Laughing Face," Roucher was paid tribute to by four community leaders: **Bruce Rodgers**, the executive director of The Hermitage Artists Retreat; **Cindy Balistreri**, fine arts specialist for the Sarasota public school system; **Jerry Roucher**, Nancy's husband; and **Debra Jacobs**, president and CEO of the William G. Selby and Marie Selby Foundation.

Outgoing Sarasota County Arts Council board president, **Dr. Larry Thompson**, and incoming board president, **Marjorie Peter**, presented Roucher with the first **Nancy Roucher Arts Education Award**, which will be



Embracing Our Differences Co-Chair Graci McGillicuddy with Chuck Vollmer, Managing Director of The Stanford Group Company

Photos by Bert Morris

awarded on an annual basis to an individual who has demonstrated an exceptional dedication to advancing the cause of arts education in our area.

"We're thrilled to have this opportunity to celebrate Nancy for her outstanding work in our arts and education community," said Martine Meredith Collier, Sarasota County Arts Council's executive director. "Her passion as an advocate for arts education is unrivaled."

Collier also delivered the Arts Council's annual State of the Arts Council report, reminding the audience that the Sarasota County Arts Council turned 21 this year, and that this right of passage "serves not just as recognition of our maturity, but also as a reminder of an increased expectation that we will act responsibly and be good stewards of our community."

"This has been a year of significant transition for the Arts Council," said Collier who came on as executive director in November of last year, "and the board of directors is to be commended for realizing that with great change comes great opportunity. A recent board retreat launched the beginning of a strategic planning process designed to ensure that this Arts Council's programs and activities are truly aligned with community needs—particularly those of artists and cultural organizations. And the recently completed arts assessment commissioned by the Gulf Coast Community

Foundation of Venice comes at the ideal time to assist us in this process.

"For me, what this all really comes down to is rededicating this organization to provide exemplary customer service. We are, at our core, a service organization, and we cannot forget this. And who are our customers? Every cultural organization, every artist, every parent and child wanting high quality arts education, every individual member, every corporate member, in short, every citizen of Sarasota County—north and south."

Outgoing board president Larry Thompson welcomed Marjorie Peter as the new president of the board. He also welcomed new board members Michael Chokr, Audrey Coleman, Jeff Moredock, Ina Schnell, Louis Schultz, and Warren Simonds.

Guests enjoyed a catered reception following the program of events. The fare was provided by **Michael's on East**, **Canvas Café** and **Turtles Restaurant**.

The event was underwritten by the Stanford Group Company, a member of the Stanford Financial Group, a global network of financial services companies founded in 1932.

Established in 1986, the Sarasota County Arts Council has a mission to create an environment where the arts flourish. It is a membership-based, private, nonprofit organization that serves the public, artists and arts organizations throughout the county.



Martine Collier presenting the Volunteer Recognition Award to Betty and Bert Morris



Dr. Larry Thompson, and Marjorie Peter presenting Nancy Roucher with the Nancy Roucher Arts Education Award