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Medal of Honor in the Arts Recognizes Creativity in All Its Many Forms

Winthrop University

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Medal of Honor in the Arts Recognizes Creativity in All Its Many Forms

Quick Facts

- The event includes an evening of performances and a reception in Johnson Hall, all honoring this year's recipients: Karen Collins, Brookgreen Gardens, Larry Barnfield and Jerry Helton.
- The prestigious award has been granted by the College of Visual and Performing Arts since 2001. It acknowledges and recognizes the unique roles of individuals and organizations who have made significant contributions to the arts as well as those who have positively impacted the quality of the cultural life in communities across the Carolinas.

*Karen Collins*

ROCK HILL, S.C. - During the eleventh annual **Medal of Honor in the Arts** ceremony on April 12, Winthrop University will celebrate the creativity of a nationally known sculpture garden, an acclaimed college voice instructor, a visionary S.C. educator and an Emmy nominated alumna who produces and directs.

The 8 p.m. event includes an evening of performances and a reception in **Johnson Hall**, all honoring this year's recipients:

*Brookgreen Gardens*

- **Karen Collins**-- an Emmy nominated alumna who produces and directs for film and television
- **Brookgreen Gardens**--a nationally known museum and sculpture garden located in Murrells Inlet, S.C. which boasts a collection of over 1,400 works by over 350 world-famous artists
- **Larry Barnfield**-- a visionary S.C. arts educator and Elizabeth O'Neill Verner Governor's Award for the Arts recipient
- **Jerry Helton**-- an acclaimed college voice instructor and performer who has received Winthrop's Kinard Award for Excellence in Teaching

*Larry Barnfield*

A **Medal of Honor scholarship** also will be presented during the evening to **Rhiannon Bode**, a junior in the graphic design program. Her work is consistently 'top-notch', has strong hand-rendering and illustrative abilities, is reliable in class and respected by her peers. In addition to being a design student, she also is a **Winthrop Ambassador**, working to deport the school and the program to prospective students on preview and Winthrop days, and she also works in the RVRC computer lab.

*Jerry Helton*

The Medal of Honor awards have been granted by the **College of Visual and Performing Arts** since 2001. It acknowledges and recognizes the unique roles of individuals and organizations who have made significant contributions to the arts as well as those who have positively impacted the quality of the cultural life in communities across the Carolinas.

More on the honorees:

* **Karen Collins**, a Rock Hill resident and Winthrop alumna, has worked on numerous documentaries and special projects as a producer/director and as an assistant director for films and television. She has worked with such directors as Terrence Malik, Edward Zwick, David

Mamet, John Gray and Allan Arkush.

Collins earned a bachelor's and master's degree both in history from Winthrop. Whenever possible, she has hired Winthrop students to work as interns on films sets, including for the 2008 horror movie "Asylum" shot on campus. Her 2006 documentary "Laugh at Us" was nominated for three regional Emmys and received a nine-year run on PBS as it followed the struggles of an acting troupe of adults with developmental disabilities.

She served as producer for "Crossroads Charlotte: The Movie" on WTVI which offered four plausible stories about Charlotte's future response and action by people and organizations. Shot on location in eight days with a 41-person cast, it received two regional Emmy nominations.

More recently, Collins has taken up photography and has had photos accepted in three juried competitions. She is the festival director for both the Underexposed Film Festival 2013, an international independent short film festival, and the Underexposed Film Series director for the Arts Council of York County. The festival was founded in 2012 by the Arts Council staff, Terry Rouche and Collins.

* **Brookgreen Gardens**, located at Murrells Inlet, S.C., became America's first public sculpture garden when Archer and Anna Hyatt Huntington founded it in 1931. Designated as a National Historic Landmark, it contains more than 1,400 works spanning the entire period of American sculpture from the early 1800s to the present.

In recent years, Brookgreen has expanded its mission to include the interpretation of the history and culture of the Lowcountry on the four former rice plantations that make-up what is now known as Brookgreen Gardens. Through interpretation of the archeological sites along the Lowcountry Trail and the Oaks Plantation History and Nature Trail, Brookgreen tells the story of the European settlers of enormous wealth who owned plantations and the enslaved Africans who worked the land.

Brookgreen also contains a garden with more than 2,000 species and subspecies of plant life native to the Southeast United States, as well as plants which have adapted to this climate. It has an accredited zoo with indigenous animals and birds, along with a butterfly area and house.

Named a S.C. Governor's Cup Tourism Award recipient, Brookgreen has won other tourism and sculpture awards and a S.C. Arts Commission Elizabeth O'Neill Verner Award.

* **Larry Barnfield** has been the director of fine arts since 1999 at Dorchester School District Two in Summerville, S.C. During his time there, he has worked to increase the number of arts opportunities and arts faculty in South Carolina schools and earned the district national recognition. The Kennedy Center Alliance for Arts Education has recognized Barnfield's work in District Two on three occasions.

He is a recipient of the 2010 Elizabeth O'Neill Verner Governor's Award for the Arts, led two schools which were recognized as Arts Schools of Distinction, earned Lifetime Achievement Award from the S.C. Art Education Association and won a Disney American Teacher Award and Teacher of the Year honors for Dorchester School District Two and Berkeley County School District, and made a South Carolina Honor Roll teacher.

Beginning in 2010, he created, produced and hosted annually six programs during the Spoleto Festival titled "Rising Stars," that presented artistically gifted youth from S.C. He also brought in more than \$3 million in funds for arts programs for District Two and the district earned a U.S. Department of Education grant to create a neighborhood arts-focused middle school.

Barnfield earned a bachelor's degree in art and music and a master of science degree in art education, both at Eastern Illinois University, in addition to postgraduate work at five other higher education institutions. He is nationally board certified for early adolescence through young adulthood art.

* **Jerry Helton** discovered his knack for teaching while studying at the Academy of Vocal Arts in Philadelphia from 1964-69. While he had many of his own successes – singing with such American greats as Beverly Sills, Franco Corelli, Richard Tucker and Jerome Hines. with various opera companies in Charlotte, Cincinnati, Brooklyn, Boston, New Orleans, Philadelphia and Barcelona Spain and winning awards – Helton found teaching equally rewarding.

He started teaching voice performance at Winthrop in 1970 and groomed many students to sing in major opera companies around the world, including the Metropolitan Opera, the New York City Opera, the San Francisco Opera, and the Newberry Opera Company. Helton has had numerous students place or win in district and regional voice competitions including the Metropolitan Opera and San Francisco Opera auditions.

Helton, who remains in demand as a teacher of voice, is now professor emeritus of music at Winthrop. The Van Lear, Ky. native, a tenor, studied voice at the Cincinnati College Conservatory of Music and privately in New York and Europe.

More on the Medal of Honor medallion:

Plural Studios is a design collaboration between husband and wife team, **Michael Gayk** and faculty member Courtney Starrett. They create unique wearable and sculptural objects inspired by nature and architecture on a micro-level, with a focus on transitions, connections, intersections and details.

Starrett is originally from Kansas, while Gayk hails from upstate New York. Starrett joined the faculty at Winthrop University in 2006 and is currently associate professor of jewelry and metals. Gayk is currently instructor of digital design at York Technical College. They have been in numerous exhibitions; juried, invitational and solo.

For more information about Medal of Honor in the Arts contact **Joanna Key**, **Office of Development**, at 803/323-2153.

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