



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JANUARY 22, 2017

PHOTOS AVAILABLE

Mary Mack, Media & Communications Coordinator

mmack@COCAstl.org, 314.561.4878

COCA HONORS BOEING, LONGTIME SUPPORTERS AND DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI

Arts Organization Celebrates Donors with Annual Awards

ST. LOUIS, Jan. 22, 2018— COCA-Center of Creative Arts honored The Boeing Company, Cathy and Jim Berges, and Kent Turner at FLAME, along with three new distinguished alumni at the arts organization's annual appreciation event on Friday (Jan. 19).

Over 300 members of COCA's [Richard Baron Leadership Circle](#) and invited guests attended the event, which was supported by lead sponsors Anheuser-Busch and the Moneta Group with additional support from Neiman Marcus and Touchwood Creative.

COCA presented the Art Is Education Award to The Boeing Company in recognition of over two decades of support for arts education programming. Boeing's partnership with COCA has been critical in advancing STEM-to-STEAM programming in the area's schools, adding the arts to science, technology, engineering and math. The Boeing-COCA partnership also has provided professional development to teachers, helping them to reinvent lesson plans by using the arts as a teaching tool across all subjects.

COCA honored Cathy and Jim Berges with the Ferring Award for Philanthropy in recognition of the couple's significant financial investment in the organization. The Berges Family Foundation last year donated \$5 million—the Foundation's largest gift to date—to COCA's [Create our Future Campaign](#), a \$40 million fundraising initiative to renovate and expand COCA's University City location and service to the St. Louis community. In November, COCA announced that the gift, which was offered in the form of a dollar-for-dollar challenge, [was matched by \\$5.2 million from 83 individual and corporate donors](#).

Board Member Kent Turner was presented the Newell S. "Jim" Knight Service Award. Turner stepped into the role as COCA's vice president of facility planning in 2015 and drawing on his 40-plus year career in architecture and design has provided a vital link between all partners involved in the development of COCA's new facility.

"It is an honor to recognize and celebrate the extraordinary generosity of this group," said Kelly Pollock, COCA's Executive Director. "COCA is grateful to entire Richard Baron Leadership Circle who understand the critical importance of annual giving and help COCA continue to provide scholarships, achieve artistic excellence and build community engagement across St. Louis. The additional support we have received through the Create Our Future Campaign is helping shape the COCA of tomorrow."

FLAME also serves as an opportunity to recognize the achievements of former students. The COCA Distinguished Alumni Award was presented to Ronald Belger, a NYC-based freelance dance professional; Will Bonfiglio, a St. Louis-based professional actor; and Jo Firestone, a comedian and writer for "The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon."

FLAME attendees were treated to several performances including "St. Louis Blues," choreographed by Kameron N. Saunders and performed by Antonio Douthit-Boyd, Alicia Graf Mack and Denise Thimes; "Torch," choreographed by Ronald K. Brown and Arcell Cabuag and performed by COCA dance and "Janatic," choreographed by Anthony "Redd" Williams and performed by the COCA Hip-Hop Crew. The Adaron "Pops" Jackson Trio and Miss Jubilee and the Humdingers also performed.

About COCA

Founded in 1986, COCA is the fourth largest multidisciplinary community arts center in the country and a national leader in innovative arts education. With a mission to enrich lives and build community through the arts, COCA serves 50,000 people of all ages and skill levels, from enthusiastic amateurs to emerging professionals—all taught by a faculty of distinguished arts educators. COCA provides meaningful arts experiences in its University City studios, gallery and theatres as well as in schools, community centers and corporate settings in order to build a vibrant St. Louis that is creative, connected and inclusive. Visit www.cocastl.org to learn more.