



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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COCA Honors Baer Charitable Foundation, Bill Carson at FLAME

COCA Celebrates Donors with Annual Awards

(ST. LOUIS, MO) – On Thursday, January 14, 2016, COCA hosted FLAME, an appreciation event for more than 300 Members of the Richard Baron Leadership Circle at COCA and invited guests.

The event, presented by Regions Private Wealth Management, also provided a forum for COCA to announce the 2016 Neiman Marcus Community Arts Awards. This year, The Arthur & Helen Baer Charitable Foundation received the COCA Ferring Award for Philanthropy and COCA Board Member Bill Carson received the Newell S. “Jim” Knight Service Award at COCA.

Also honored that evening were the 2016 winners of the the COCA Distinguished Alumni Awards, which included Joanna Dee Das, PhD, Dance Scholar and Educator; Cornethia “Rio” Henderson, Professional Dancer and Choreographer; Kelly Marsh IV, Professional Dancer, Complexions Contemporary Ballet; Lauren Morrow, PR Associate, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater; Christina Ramirez, Professional Actress; and Kameron N. Saunders, Professional Choreographer.

And, Holden Thorp, Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs at Washington University in St. Louis, was on hand to announce a new collaboration between the university and COCA to offer an MFA in Dance, launching this fall.

Audiences were treated to performances of “Bohemian Rhapsody” choreographed by COCA alumnus Kameron N. Saunders and performed by COCA vocal ensemble Allegro and COCA alumni Shacura Wade and John Swapshire and “Redd Riddin’ Thru The Hood” choreographed by Anthony “Redd” Williams and performed by the COCA Hip-Hop Crew

The highlight performance of the evening was “Love Stories” performed by COCADance. The piece was choreographed by Robert Battle, Artistic Director of The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. Battle “gifted” it to Antonio and Kirven Douthit-Boyd, COCA’s Co-Artistic Directors of Dance to set on the COCA dancers.

HONOREES: **Arthur and Helen Baer Charitable Foundation:** 2015 Ferring Award for Philanthropy
The Arthur and Helen Baer Charitable Foundation has sponsored exhibitions and programming in COCA’s Millstone Gallery for 15 years. The Foundation’s generous support enhances COCA’s commitment to offering multidisciplinary arts experiences for our community. The Millstone Gallery is an entry point for many of our own students and features diverse contemporary art from regional and nationally recognized artists. We are sincerely appreciative of the Foundation’s dedication to making the visual arts accessible to all at COCA. A special thanks to the Foundation’s trustees: Pat Stark, Dan Sullivan and Richard T. Fisher.

COCA established the Ferring Award for Philanthropy in honor of Alison and John Ferring. Throughout the years, the Ferrings have shared their vision, time and resources as exemplary leaders at COCA and in the larger community. COCA is grateful for their passion and generosity.

Bill Carson: 2015 Newell S. “Jim” Knight Service Award
Bill Carson is deeply involved with COCA, tirelessly helping us to advance our mission and work in the St. Louis community. He has served as a COCA partner through the Vashon Education Compact (2003–06), COCA Board Member since 2005, Vice-President of COCA’s Executive Board since 2007, and leader of COCA’s Interchange and Outreach Committee since its inception in 2006. Beyond these official roles, Bill has served as a passionate COCA supporter and community advocate. He has been steadfast in his commitment to advance the arts, education and community in St. Louis, providing countless hours of service to COCA’s efforts. We are grateful for Bill’s continued commitment and involvement with COCA. Bill is the Vice President of Community Impact Strategy for the infUse Group at U.S. Bank CDC. Bill’s wife Amy Drummond and their five children also often can be found in COCA’s hallways.

COCA established the Newell S. "Jim" Knight Service Award to honor Jim Knight's diligent and extraordinary service to the organization as a member of COCA's founding Board of Directors, a leader of its Endowment Committee and a member of the COCA Advisory Board.

2016

FlameStarters:

Rhonda Adams
Barbara Archer
Nancy Barnes-Ault
Lisa Boyce
Lisa Caplan
Molly Danforth
Pamela Dern
Hazel Donald
Shereen Fischer
Carolyn Gold
Susan Goldberg
Diedre Gray
Cheryl Holman
Linda Hunter

Suzanne Johnson
Peggy Kaplan
Karen Kotner
Aisling Leonard
Sheila Little-Forrest
Laurie Lock
Gayle Palmer
Lynne Parriott
Jane Peacock
Stephanie Randall
Jarona Stevens
Caryl Sunshine
Susan Werner

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Neiman Marcus
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ABOUT RBLC: COCA was founded on the belief that all St. Louis children and adults should have access to high-quality arts education. 30 years later, COCA is now the nation's fourth largest community arts center, impacting people of all ages and backgrounds. Named for COCA's founder, whose foresight and perseverance created a unique cultural resource in St. Louis, the Richard Baron Leadership Circle is a visionary group of COCA's most generous supporters who have committed to helping COCA accomplish its ambitious work of fostering potential into reality.

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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.

We provide meaningful arts experiences in our own 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. To ensure diversity and inclusion in all of our programs we are committed to eliminating economic and social barriers to participation in the arts.