**Press Release – “Spotlight on Talent” Will Shine on These Finalists**

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The preliminary competition for the 31st annual “Spotlight on Talent” contest was held recently. Once again it was a whirlwind of talented students, all primed to compete to be named a finalist. This year the audition saw 100 acts, a total of over 200 students! It was a 14 hour day for the producers, the Heritage Arts Center Association, and a most challenging job for the judges. A great variety of performing arts were displayed - both solos and groups.

 Heritage Arts will again be presenting the $1,000 “Pasco Heritage Scholarship” which will go to the graduating Pasco County senior who receives the highest judges’ scores the night of the finals. Last year's recipient was Shelby Martin, a longtime "Spotlight" participant, who is now continuing studies at FSU.

The performing arts competition has expanded to 2 final shows because of the huge increase in the numbers of applicants and quality of the talent. The top 64 scoring acts, 126 students, were chosen to perform on Saturday, March 29, 2014. Act I will start at 12:00 noon and will feature students ages 6 - 13 and younger groups. Act II, at 7:00 p.m. will showcase older students and groups. Both shows will be at the Center for the Arts at Wesley Chapel. Tickets for adults will be $12 or both shows for $20, students through high school are $6 or both for $10 (under 5 is free). The large theater has plenty of general admission seating, so tickets are only available at the door.

 This competition is a regional one, with contestants coming from Pasco County and the surrounding areas from St. Pete to Hudson to Spring Hill. 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 10 different categories. The finalist performances vary in style from jazz to classical and Broadway to rock. The audiences will enjoy piano music from the great masters to "Pirates of the Caribbean"; songs from “Frozen” to "South Pacific," Ave Maria to pop; and dances this year are ballet, acrobatic, pointe and lyrical. Instrumental music will include a rock band, a harp, a marimba, classical guitar and violin, and there will be an authentic Scottish bagpipe performance. The most unusual is a bubble performance. Really!

With a 31 year history, this competition has now come “full circle”. Spotlight “alums” are now in positions of responsibility for the production. Three sit on the Heritage Arts Board of Directors, and the two assistant producers, Alicia Polk Guanio and Rebecca Friedman Groomes, were annual contestants from the age of 5. The Spotlight competition costs over $14,000 to produce and would not be possible without wonderful support 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 352-567-1720.