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

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The preliminary competition for the 36th 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 103 acts, a total of over 200 students! It was a 12 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. One of the 5 judges drove from Sarasota to be there at 7:45 am!

 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. Last year's recipient was dancer Victoria Neukom, who has then choreographed a dance for one of this year's contestants.

The performing arts competition includes 2 final shows because of the huge numbers of applicants and quality of the talent. The top 58 scoring acts, 166 students, were chosen to perform on Saturday, March 9, 2019. The Matinee show at 12 noon will be younger solos and groups, and the Evening show at 7 pm will be older solos and groups. Both shows will be at the Center for the Arts at Wesley Chapel. Our emcees will be Ben Alexander and Clint Roberson. 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 Tampa to Port Richey 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 8 different categories. The finalist performances vary in style from jazz to classical and Broadway to rock. The audiences will enjoy piano music from Chopin's "Revolutionary Etude" to jazz; songs from “Mary Poppins" & "Greatest Showman; vocal styles of Sinatra, U2, Adele and Lady GaGa; and all styles of dance. There is a electric rock guitar solo, and a steel drum band.

"Spotlight" is definitely a family affair. There are 2 sets of brothers and sisters, one family has 3 siblings in the contest, husbands and wives volunteer together, and the producers are mother/daughter.

With a 36 year history, this competition has now come “full circle”. Spotlight “alums” are now in positions of responsibility for the production. One sits on the Heritage Arts Board of Directors, and the two assistant producers, Michael Roberts and Rebecca Friedman Groomes, were annual contestants from the age of 5. The Spotlight competition costs over $17,000 to produce and would not be possible without wonderful sponsorship 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.