

September 13, 2006

2006 Diamond Award Winners Announced*

(*The Peninsula Arts Council was formerly called ARTshare)

Belmont, CA—Each year ARTshare presents the Diamond Awards to recognize individuals and organizations for their artistic achievements and contributions to the arts in San Mateo County. **Awards are given in eight categories**, and on October 5, 2006 Diamond Awards will be presented to **Ballet Folklorico Alma de Mexico**, **South San Francisco High School** (*Arts Organization*), **Kawika Alfiche** (*Individual Artist*), **Amy Marie Briones** (*Young Artist*), **Doris Stirm** (*Arts Educator*), **Joyce Barron Leopardo** (*Volunteer in the Arts*), **Charles Homer** (*Individual Donor*), the **San Mateo City Council** (*Government Support*), and **Kepler's Books** (*Corporate/Foundation Support*).

Ballet Folklorico Alma de Mexico, **South San Francisco High School**, a model for a school-community learning partnership, was created by coordinators Patricia Martinelli and Martin Cruz in 1991. It now offers students three sections of Ballet Folklorico class. Over the years hundreds of students have been introduced to the indigenous dances of the various states of Mexico. In addition to daytime classes on the campus, an evening class was created to invite the community to share and participate in the learning of Mexican Folkloric dance and the stories and cultural history imbedded in it. Ballet Folklorico Alma de Mexico also has performed for universities, conferences, and business affairs and has performed internationally.

Kawika Alfiche, a gifted songwriter, singer, and musician, has brought Hawaiian hula and culture to the community through his role as the teacher and director of the renowned Hawaiian dance troupe Halau 'o Keikiali'i. He and his troupe have performed at numerous Bay Area events, such as the San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival and the annual Aloha Festival. Last year he released a music CD entitled "Na Lei" which received a Grammy nomination as well as recognition at the Hawaiian Hoku Music Awards.

Amy Marie Briones, a 16-year-old ballerina from San Mateo, participated in the USA International Ballet Competitions in Jackson, Mississippi, this past summer, an event considered the Olympics of dance, with 121 competitors from 27 countries. Briones won a one-season contract to Ballet San Jose Silicon Valley through that competition. She was named "Female Dancer of the Year" in 2006 competitions at the Santa Clara Convention Center. She has studied at the Ayako School of Ballet in Belmont since the age of 5. In 2002 she was named "Dancer of the Year" by the American Dance Association; she also won the Hope Award in 2001, and the Grand Prix Award from Youth America in 2000.

Doris Stirm, a painter, has nurtured and inspired many artists over the decades. Her colleagues call her "an institution" for her 40 years teaching art through the Burlingame Recreation Department. Currently she teaches children and adults for free in her home. Former and current students have expressed admiration for the way Stirm shares her knowledge and experience in a caring way, showing respect and attention to those just learning to express themselves through art or reaching to improve their technique. She is a past president of the Burlingame Art Society and the Society of

Western Artists and is a frequent judge, including the approximately 15 years as a judge at the San Mateo County Fair.

Joyce Barron Leopardo started and has been a volunteer artist for five years with the Arts from the Heart program at the Ronald McDonald House for critically ill children. The program goal is to help families acquire creative skills during their stay and then apply what they've learned to enrich their lives. She is described as "an angel" and has won an award for her work there. Leopardo has served on the Board of Directors and Board of Trustees for the Society of Western Artists and has donated many hours of her time to them, doing demonstrations, helping hang shows, and more. She also is active with the California Watercolor Society. She has volunteered for 10 years at the Corpus Christi Monastery in Menlo Park, teaching art to the nuns.

Charles Homer, a resident of the Peninsula Regent in San Mateo, donated \$1,000,000 to launch the Building Fund for the Peninsula Museum of Art this past December. His donation was made with the desire to leave a legacy to the community, a donation that would truly make a difference. He has donated smaller amounts to numerous organizations over the years, but with this large gift he could help "grow" a single cultural facility that will serve San Mateo County for years to come.

San Mateo City Council unanimously approved the "Art in Public Places" ordinance on June 20, 2005, under the Mayorship of Jan Epstein. The City Council (and former Council Member Sue Lempert) has been very supportive of the arts. The "Art in Public Places" measure will provide ongoing funding for public art in the City of San Mateo. The Council also has provided support for the non-profit City Arts of San Mateo and cultural activities such as the Central Park Music Series.

Kepler's Books, an independent bookstore, has been very supportive of local authors. It also provides encouragement for aspiring writers and activities for families to encourage involvement in literature. Kepler's also brings in nationally known authors for readings and has been an important part of the creative life of the community for more than half a century.

As part of the celebration of **October as National Arts and Humanities Month**, the Diamond Awards will be presented at a luncheon on October 5, 2006 at the Coyote Point Yacht Club, 1820 Coyote Point Drive, in San Mateo. California State Assemblymember Gene Mullin is the Honorary Chair and will speak at the event. Tickets are \$50. Space is limited; the reservation deadline is Sept. 27. Call ARTshare at (650) 591-2101 or e-mail info@artshare.org.

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