



## Polk Arts & Culture **HALL OF FAME GALA**

After nine years, the Polk Arts & Culture Hall of Fame Induction ceremony is getting a makeover. Historically held at venues honoring individual inductees, the 2023 ceremony will debut the new Polk Arts & Culture Hall of Fame Gala. This ticketed event is set for October 17 at Bonnet Springs Park. Bonnie Parker, a longtime local arts advocate, and member of the original Polk Arts Hall of Fame Committee recognizes the importance of honoring the work of Polk's arts and cultural icons. "It's just right that we honor those who have committed so much of themselves to the arts scene, as they've made all of our lives better because of their contribution," she noted.

Dr. Daryl Ward, the Executive Director of PACA, also believes that the hall of fame ceremony is worthy of a county-wide celebration. "We do such a good job of celebrating other achievements in our county. It's only right that we set aside a night to celebrate all things arts and culture," he said. The event will feature a catered dinner, live music, local art, while the evening will be highlighted by special recognitions of the arts and cultural community.

Years ago, the Polk Arts Alliance honored arts organizations and individuals with a series of awards known as the Community Arts Recognition Program. Though the program eventually evolved into the Polk Arts & Culture Hall of Fame Ceremony, this year the awards are making a comeback. "It's really important to recognize and honor the hard work that our arts organizations and arts supporters do for our community," Ward said. The awards are separated into six categories: Volunteer of the Year, Philanthropic Organization of the Year, Arts/Cultural Organization of the Year, the Rising Star award, the Art for Good award, and the Arts Educator of the Year award. The finalists have already been named and the winners announced the night of the Gala. "We took nominations from the community, and quite frankly, all of the nominees are deserving," Ward said. "The applications revealed just how much work is going on in our arts and cultural sector," he continued.

The Hall of Fame Induction ceremony will be the crowning event of the evening. This year's class features six individuals who have all made their mark on Polk County and beyond. The Gala, which kicks off at 6pm with a social hour, is open to the public and tickets can be purchased at [polkarts.org](http://polkarts.org). There is a \$10 discount for PACA members and those interested in purchasing a table or other sponsor opportunity should contact Ward at [pacahof@polkarts.org](mailto:pacahof@polkarts.org).

### 2023 ANNUAL AWARDS FINALISTS



ARTS/CULTURAL  
ORGANIZATION  
OF THE YEAR

**Bartow Art Guild**  
Lakeland Arts Association  
Lake Wales Arts Council  
Theatre Winter Haven



PHILANTHROPIC  
ORGANIZATION  
OF THE YEAR

**Citizens Bank & Trust**  
CORE Wealth Advisors  
Frost Law Firm  
Githens Insurance



ARTS/CULTURAL  
VOLUNTEER  
OF THE YEAR

**Troy Dalsimer**  
Lake Wales Arts Council  
**Lauren Jensen**  
Florida Children's Museum  
**Tom Johnson**  
Theatre Winter Haven  
**Chris Walsh**  
Haines City Comm. Theatre



ARTS/CULTURAL  
EDUCATOR  
OF THE YEAR

**Jim Beck**  
Florida Southern College  
**Shelby Montgomery**  
Polk County Public Schools  
**Samuel Ortiz**  
Polk County Public Schools  
**Holly Scoggins**  
Polk State College



THE  
RISING STAR  
AWARD

**Dominick Burkett**  
Emporium Art Collective  
**Ellen Chastain**  
Art Crowl / Polk Museum of Art  
**Sara Jones**  
ART/ifact Studios  
**Elizabeth Burton Lyons**  
Broadway Beginnings



THE  
ART FOR GOOD  
AWARD

**Arts in Medicine**  
Watson Clinic Foundation  
**Kid's Tag Art**  
Polk County Tax Collector's Office  
**Out of the Box**  
Lakeland Community Theatre  
**Play It Forward**  
Play It Forward

## PACA To Induct Six New Members Into Hall of Fame

The Polk Arts & Cultural Alliance has unveiled the six newest members of the Polk Arts & Culture Hall of Fame. Created in 2014 to recognize the lifetime achievements of Polk's arts and cultural icons, the Hall of Fame currently has eight members but will nearly double with this year's class. "We likely won't induct six members every year," said Dr. Daryl Ward, the Executive Director of PACA, "but due to COVID and other logistics, we're playing a bit of catch-up."

This year's cohort includes two "Cultural Champions" in addition to four artists – two of which have already been inducted into national halls of fame. Bobby Braddock, from Auburndale, is an accomplished songwriter and member of the Country Music Hall of Fame, while Nat Adderley, a legendary jazz trumpeter, is in the Jazz Hall of Fame. The rest of the Class of 2023 have all made significant contributions to Polk's arts and cultural communities. In addition to Adderley and Braddock, also being inducted this year are: Clifton Lewis (Bartow), Milford Myhre (Lake Wales), Rick Olivo (Lakeland), and Harriet Rust (Davenport). Cindy Rodriguez, a PACA board member, and member of the Hall of Fame selection committee noted that the list of worthy candidates is long. "It's inspirational to see how many talented folks across so many artistic genres have very specific ties to Polk, and it was a happy dilemma to have so many deserving nominees from which to select our 2023 Polk Artists Hall of Fame inductees," Rodriguez said.



**Clifton Lewis**, who moved to Bartow in 1989, was instrumental in saving the historic L.B. Brown House in Bartow from demolition. He formed the Neighborhood Improvement Corporation to develop Bartow neighborhoods, and to champion the preservation of the historic home. The L.B. Brown House was designed and constructed in 1892 by Lawrence Bernard Brown who was born into slavery in 1856 and had limited formal education. He overcame those limitations and became one of Polk County's most successful businessmen and community leaders. Lewis and his team recognized the significance of saving the structure and even worked to get it exhibited in the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, D.C.



**Milford Myhre**, a long-time Lake Wales resident, was the carillonneur of Bok Tower Gardens for 36 years, until his retirement in 2004. During that time, he played daily concerts at the tower, greeted thousands of visitors to the area, hosted world-renowned composers, established the first International Carillon Festival and the Music at Pinewood concert series. He is also a founding board member of the Lake Wales Arts Council, the Lake Wales Museum

Commission, and founder and director of the Lake Wales Chorale. He continues to volunteer for the Lake Wales Arts Center and attends and promotes arts events around Lake Wales.

**Rick Olivo**, who moved to Polk County from New York and passed away in 2022, has long been recognized as one of Lakeland's art icons. He founded Pied Pipers Children's Theater (Lakeland Community Theatre) and was also one of the founding members of Explorations V Children's Museum (Florida Children's Museum) where his giant dragon remains on display. Olivo completed numerous other art projects, including the creation of the swan prototypes for the Lakeland Junior League's public sculpture project, "Swansation," which celebrated Lakeland's famous swans. He also taught in many area schools, particularly Rochelle School of the Arts and spent time teaching art to the neediest of populations in Polk County's migrant camps.



**Harriet Rust**, a Polk County native, founded the Davenport Historical Society with then-Mayor Peter Rust (her late husband). The DHS founded the Quilts and Tea Festival that brought together the Davenport School of the Arts, many sewing organizations, local churches, and even visitors from Africa to participate in the artisan event. In addition, DHS also supported the Plein Air initiative that has expanded throughout the county. She and her late husband pioneered the Highwaymen Arts Festival that began in Davenport in 2011 and continues to this day. She also worked closely with Myrtice Young at the Polk History Center to start the Citrus Label Tour.



**Bobby Braddock**, who left Auburndale for Nashville as a young adult, gained notoriety for writing such country music classics as "D-I-V-O-R-C-E," performed by Tammy Wynette and the song, "He Stopped Loving Her Today," popularized by George Jones. Additionally, Braddock was instrumental in launching the careers of many country music artists, most notably with his discovery of Blake Shelton.

Jazz icon, **Nat Adderley** made Lakeland his home in the eighties and is credited with being a founding member of Florida Southern College's Child of the Sun Jazz Festival, eventually serving as Artist-In-Residence for the school. Adderley, who passed away in 2000, penned the jazz classic, "Work Song" and was frequently partnered with his legendary brother, Cannonball Adderley in numerous jazz bands.



The inductees will be recognized at the inaugural Polk Arts & Culture Hall of Fame Gala at Bonnet Springs Park on October 17. The event, sponsored by CORE Wealth Advisors, will also recognize local arts individuals and organizations via a series of annual awards. Tickets are available at [polkarts.org](http://polkarts.org).

