

San Diego's Champion for The Arts™

For Immediate Release

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2020 Champion for the Arts Announcement

Five years ago, North Coast Repertory Theatre announced the creation of *San Diego's Champion for the Arts® Award*, a community-wide effort to honor individuals who have made a difference in the Arts. The award will be presented at North Coast Repertory Theatre's 2020 Spotlight Gala, to be held on March 22nd at the Fairmont Grand Del Mar. Proceeds from the event benefit the North Coast Rep, a professional theatre located in Solana Beach.

The *San Diego's Champion for the Arts Award* is presented to individuals who have given an extraordinary measure of their time, talents and treasure to benefit the visual and performing arts in the greater San Diego region.

Recognizing the value that visual and performing arts bring to the lives of those in the community and nurturing the arts with time, effort and support, are the hallmarks of the recipients of *San Diego's Champion for the Arts Award*.

This year's award will be bestowed upon a two worthy recipients, Jay and Julie Sarno.

Jay and Julie subscribe to 11 San Diego-area theatres. In addition to generous annual contributions to many theatres, Jay and Julie devote much of their time to theatre-related projects. Last year Jay and Julie were the Honorary Chairs for the San Diego Performing Arts League's Star Awards. Jay and Julie have been honored for their volunteer efforts at North Coast Repertory Theatre by the North County Philanthropy Council (NCPC) in 2001.

The Carlsbad couple was recognized for their efforts by the San Diego Performing Arts League in 2004. Jay was again honored for his volunteer efforts by NCPC in 2007. In 2016, Jay was recognized with a national award by Actors Equity. He received the "Lucy Jordan Award" for efforts "above and beyond to improve the lives of actors." For many years, Jay and Julie have prepared dinners at their home for as many as 25 actors, crew and directors and designers during arduous tech rehearsal weekends, involving two 12-hour work days.

Julie continues to chair the annual San Diego Theatre Critic's Circle Awards, a February event which brings nearly 500 people together each year. Jay provides the sound for the event. In 2009,

Julie was recognized for her efforts for chairing the Patté Awards, an awards show for San Diego Theatre put on by Critic Pat Launer. Julie was honored as a Women of Dedication in 2012, recognizing her efforts on behalf of many charities and for serving as the chair of many fund-raising galas. Julie also mentors a number of development staff at local arts organizations.

Jay has served for 24 years on the board of North Coast Rep during two periods. He was President for three years beginning in 1986. Jay played a major role in designing and building the current 194-seat space that has served NCREP for 32 years. Jay is also a member of TCG's Trustee Leadership Network.

Jay has helped many theatres with technical problems, has provided stage light safety cables to a number of theatres, and devoted much time to small repairs such as replacing burnt-out house light and Exit sign bulbs. He devotes time and equipment to providing sound for fund-raising events held by many of the area's smaller theatres. He also has conducted board training and board retreats for a number of the region's performing arts organizations.

Julie is active with many non-profit organizations, serving on the board of The Charter One Hundred; is an active member and former board member of Patrons of the Prado; is a committee member for Rendezvous in the Zoo (better known as RITZ) and the Salvation Army's Women of Dedication luncheon. She is also a College Bound mentor for former foster youth who are now in college for Just In Time for Foster Youth. Julie is president of a national genealogical organization and involved with several local genealogy-based groups. While working as a department head for the race track, Julie started the Opening Day Hats Contest in 1995, now a Southern California tradition.

The first winner of the award in 2015 was Jessie Knight, Jr., who with his wife, Joye Blount, have been involved in the arts for years, serving on the boards of many arts organizations. In 2016, the second winner was Leonard Hirsch, who have given generously to the arts in San Diego since he and his late wife, Elaine, moved to Coronado years ago. In 2017, the winners were Sheila and Jeffrey Lipinsky, both homegrown San Diegans who have supported arts and arts education for years. Last year's recipient was The Mandell Weiss Charitable Trust, overseen by trustee Joseph Satz and his wife, Linda. Mandell. This year, Jay and Julie Sarno will be the fifth recipient of this award.

As those who have been past recipients of the award understand, the visual and performing arts revitalize the imagination and transport us from our daily lives. The arts enrich our lives and our community. Arts and arts education are a catalyst to creativity in children, teens and adults.

Through years of tireless effort and generosity, the individuals receiving the prestigious *San Diego's Champion for the Arts Award* have improved the quality of life in San Diego.

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