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Contact: Barbara Reed

Public Information Officer

334-242-5153

barbara.reed@arts.alabama.gov



EIGHT SPECIAL ALABAMIANS TO BE HONORED AT CELEBRATION OF THE ARTS AWARDS ON MAY 22

MONTGOMERY, ALA. - The Alabama State Council on the Arts will honor eight outstanding Alabamians at the "Celebration of the Arts" awards ceremony on Wednesday, May 22, 2019 at 7:30 p.m. The event will take place at the Alabama Shakespeare Festival, located at 1 Festival Drive, Montgomery. A coffee and dessert reception will immediately follow the awards ceremony in the lobby of the theatre. The event is FREE and open to the public, but reservations and tickets are required.

The Council's "Celebration of the Arts" award program shines a spotlight on the arts in Alabama and on individuals who have made important contributions to our state's rich cultural landscape. Elliot Knight, Executive Director of the Council stated, ***"These individuals represent the state's immense artistic talent, leadership, and generosity that are an integral part of the cultural landscape of Alabama."***

This year ASCA will be presenting awards to: A Motown recording legend; an acclaimed and prolific author; an educator/poet/prison arts innovator; a story quilt-maker; a visionary mayor; an Indian Classical Dancer and two long-time patrons for the arts. This year's recipients are:

Martha Reeves, *Eufaula/Detroit, MI* – Alabama's Distinguished Artist Award

Jim and Elmore Inscoc, *Montgomery* – Jonnie Dee Riley Little Lifetime Achievement Award

Frye Gaillard, *Mobile* – Governor's Arts Award

Kyes Stevens, *Waverly/Auburn* – Governor's Arts Award

Yvonne Wells, *Tuscaloosa* – Governor's Arts Award

Sudha Raghuram, *Montgomery* – The Alabama Folk Heritage Award

Mayor Tommy Battle, *Huntsville* – The Council Legacy Award

The Alabama Distinguished Artist Award honors a professional artist who is considered a native or adopted Alabamian and who has earned significant national acclaim for their art over an extended period. The 2019 Distinguished Artist Award recipient is **Martha Reeves**. Martha Reeves is the lead singer of the Motown group Martha Reeves and the Vandellas. The group's most memorable hits include: *Come and Get These Memories*, *Nowhere to Run*, *Heat Wave*, *Jimmy Mack*, and their signature song, *Dancing in the Street*.

Martha Reeves was born into a large family in Eufaula, Alabama. While she was still a toddler, her family moved to Detroit, Michigan where her grandfather, Reverend Elijah Reeves was a minister at Detroit's Metropolitan Church. Reeves' love of music was due to her family, church and the nurturing and encouragement received from her high school vocal coach, Abraham Silver.

In the early 1960s, Reeves held several day jobs and at night sang jazz and blues at Detroit's respected nightclubs. She was spotted by Motown A&R director Mickey Stevenson who asked her to come to the Motown offices to audition. When she arrived at Motown, failing to call ahead and schedule her audition, Stevenson asked her to answer phones while he took care of other business. She quickly became Stevenson's trusted right-hand person. One day, when Mary Wells couldn't make a session, Reeves stepped up to the mic and Martha and the Vandellas were born. The Vandellas also provided backup vocals for Marvin Gaye's hit *Stubborn Kind of Fellow*, as well as other hits for him.

Her sassy and gospel-inspired vocals helped Martha and the Vandellas quickly ascend from background singers to hit-makers.

The Jonnie Dee Riley Little Lifetime Achievement Award, named after the late Jonnie Dee Riley Little, represents recognition for an individual who has devoted significant leadership, service, and support to the arts in Alabama. The 2019 Jonnie Dee Riley Little Award recipients are **Jim and Elmore Inscoe** of Montgomery. The Inscoes are known for their establishment of the Jasmine Hill Arts Council, their community leadership and arts patronage across the state. In 1984, Jim Inscoe was appointed by Governor George C. Wallace to serve on the Alabama State Council on the Arts. He served on the Council from 1984-1989, and was Council Chairman from 1988-1989.

Jim and his wife Elmore are known for the beautifully managed Jasmine Hill Gardens in Wetumpka and the outdoor musical productions mounted on the grounds of its amphitheater. Since 1971, Jasmine Hill Gardens and Outdoor Museum has been nurtured and supported by the Inscoes. The Olympian Centre of the gardens was built to replicate the Temple of Hera. It is the world's only full scale reproduction of the Temple. The paths of the gardens are crafted from native stone harvested from neighboring valleys.

Elmore's love of gardens comes naturally to her due to many happy childhood visits at Bellingrath Gardens in Mobile County. She is a granddaughter of William Bellingrath, the older brother of Walter Bellingrath. Mrs. Inscoe served as a trustee on the board of the Bellingrath Morse Foundation aiding in the preservation of Mr. Bellingrath's vision and wishes for the home and gardens.

The Governor's Arts Award honors individuals who have made unique contributions to the arts in Alabama. **Three awards will be given this year: Frye Gaillard, Mobile; Kyes Stevens, Waverly/Auburn; and Yvonne Wells of Tuscaloosa.**

A 2019 Governor's Arts Award recipient is **Frye Gaillard**. Gaillard is an award-winning journalist with over 20 published works on Southern history and culture, including *Watermelon Wine*; *Cradle of Freedom: Alabama and the Movement that Changed America*; *The Books That Mattered: A Reader's Memoir*; *Journey to the Wilderness: War, Memory, and a Southern Family's Civil War Letters*; and, most recently, *Go South to Freedom*. Writer-in-residence at the University of South Alabama, he is also John Egerton Scholar in Residence at the Southern Foodways Alliance at the University of Mississippi. He is the winner of the Clarence Cason Award for Nonfiction Writing, the Lillian Smith Book Award, and the Eugene Current-Garcia Award for Distinction in Literary Scholarship.

A 2019 Governor's Arts Award recipient is **Kyes Stevens**. Stevens is a published poet, educator and founder and director of the Alabama Prison Arts + Education Project at Auburn University. Starting in 2001, she has worked to design and build an innovative and sustainable outreach program that works with the adult prison population in Alabama. Stevens oversees all aspects of APAEP programming. Stevens has used the APAEP model to help build the national Alliance for Higher Education in Prison. She met several times with members of the Obama administration at the White House to discuss the role of higher education in criminal justice reform. This spring, she was invited to a conference at Harvard University to help the administration envision what higher education in prison could look like for the institution.

She is the fourth generation of her family to work in Outreach at Auburn University and was awarded an Auburn University Young Alumni Award for her efforts building APAEP. She was also an inaugural recipient of the Lillian E. Smith Writer in Service Award and continues to publish poems.

A 2019 Governor's Arts Award recipient is **Yvonne Wells**. Wells tells stories through her handmade quilts. Wells originally made her quilts out of necessity, but she soon discovered that she had an ability to tell stories with appliqued images.

Her story quilts express her spirituality, humor, and life experiences in cloth. She is self-taught in quilt construction and this lack of formal training created opportunities for her individual expressions. Her quilts often contain religious and sociopolitical themes with imagery ranging from African American art, religious art, folk art, patriotic art, baseball, and the Civil Rights Movement. They range in tone from reverent to whimsical, and they push the boundaries of quilting as a visual art into a dynamic relationship with the performance art of storytelling.

Wells' quilts have been exhibited in galleries with many purchased and held in museum collections. Her quilts are acquired and celebrated by folk art collectors. Her work has been featured in the Georgine Clarke Alabama Artists Gallery in the offices of the Alabama State Council on the Arts. She was selected to travel to Vence, France with other Alabama artists and exhibit her quilts during the Alabama Art 2000 Exhibition. Hallmark Cards were so taken by her quilts that they incorporated some of her designs into greeting cards.

The Alabama Folk Heritage Award was established to recognize master folk artists who have made outstanding contributions in the arts in Alabama. The 2019 Folk Heritage Award recipient is **Sudha Raghuram** of Montgomery. Raghuram is a committed Bharatanatyam instructor, dancer and choreographer based in Montgomery. She is known for her command of the traditional technique of Bharatanatyam, while at the same time effortlessly embracing Kathak, contemporary dance and folk dances of India. Several of her dance students have completed their dance debuts and she has directed and choreographed a Bharatanatyam dance drama, *Cinderella*, which was well received by audiences. Since 2000, she has been awarded the Folk Arts Apprenticeship grant eight times by the Alabama State Council on the Arts. In 2013, she was awarded a Dance Fellowship by the Council and was selected in the Alabama Touring Artist Program to perform Indian classical dance in schools across Alabama.

The Council Legacy Award was established to recognize individuals who are not necessary artists or from the arts world, but have had a great impact on the arts in Alabama and leave a significant legacy as a result of their contributions. The 2019 Council Legacy Award recipient is **Mayor Tommy Battle** of Huntsville. Battle is now in his third term as mayor and is dedicated to creating jobs and diversifying Huntsville's economic base. Through his leadership, the Mayor has assembled a coalition of regional leaders committed to recruiting industry, workforce development and high quality education. As a result, Huntsville leads the state in new jobs and economic investment. This environment enables the community to present robust performing arts programming and offer an assortment of shops, restaurants and entertainment venues.

Mayor Battle directed the City's planning department to enjoin the community in a comprehensive master plan shaping the city's future for decades to come. This progressive vision has addressed planning and quality of life decisions regarding neighborhood revitalization, urban redevelopment, recreation, transportation, design standards, and code and zoning changes.

A recent study conducted by Americans for the Arts documented that the arts mean big business in Huntsville/Madison County. The study found the nonprofit arts and cultural industry generated \$89.9 million in annual economic activity, expanding its employment base and providing quality of life for all its citizens.

The Alabama State Council on the Arts promotes Alabama's diverse and rich artistic resources while highlighting excellence and educational experiences. Complimentary tickets are limited and are available on a first come, first serve basis. To reserve tickets, please contact: The Alabama Shakespeare Box Office at 334-271-5353.

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