

MEDIA ADVISORY:

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MEDIA CONTACT: Allison Alvarez Hedrick
Vice President of Communications
P: 800.354.9338 ext. 2240
E: ahedrick@wedu.org

***Winners of the 11th Annual WEDU Be More Awards
Announced at Tropicana Field***

West Central Florida's nonprofits and volunteers received honors during the commemorative annual luncheon and ceremony



Tampa, FL — WEDU PBS held the 2016 WEDU Be More Awards on Thursday, February 4th to a crowd of 500 guests at Tropicana Field in St. Petersburg. Continuing the tradition of honoring West Central Florida nonprofit organizations, the annual community event began at 11:00 a.m. with the Hall of Heroes followed by an inspiring luncheon and awards ceremony on the baseball field.

The WEDU Be More Awards was created by WEDU PBS to help raise awareness for local nonprofits and their service to West Central Florida. Annually, the program helps introduce new donors, volunteers, and those in need of services to the worthy nonprofit organizations.

Utilizing a panel of impartial judges who spent weeks reviewing applications and nominations, WEDU, West Central Florida's primary PBS station, recognized nonprofit organizations and individuals who applied or were nominated for honors in a variety of categories - culminating with one organization being named the WEDU Be More Unstoppable, Nonprofit Organization of the Year (2015).

To help commemorate the 11th year of the community event, guest presenters included: Brian Auld, Tampa Bay Rays Team President; Matt Silverman, Tampa Bay Rays President of Baseball Operations; Dalia Colon, Host of WEDU Arts Plus; Heather Barrow, Founder of last year's Be More Unstoppable Nonprofit of the Year, High Risk Hope; and Mason Dixon of Q105. The ceremony was emceed by Cathy Unruh, Lissette Campos, and Jack Harris.

The winner of this year's Be More Unstoppable Nonprofit of the Year Award will be featured on an upcoming episode of Up Close with Cathy Unruh and was presented with a \$2,500 Community Investment Grant from WEDU.

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The winners include:

BE MORE ENTERTAINING

Special Events Award | This award recognizes the uniqueness and effectiveness of a special event and the success in achieving outlined objectives. *Examples may include:* A related series of events, single original event, or fundraiser to recognize, salute, assist, celebrate people or businesses, brand your organization and/or build/strengthen relationships with supporters.

Winner: Quantum Leap Farm, Inc.

Quantum Leap Farm helps people of all ages and abilities grow strong, achieve therapeutic goals and overcome challenges through equine-assisted therapies. Quantum Leap's Stirrup Hope event, with a goal of raising \$100,000, with the help of 400 guests actually raised \$300,000 - the organization's largest event! Quantum Leap has been able to add 4 part-time and 1 full time staff members to help enhance the quality of care and services they offer.

BE MORE BRILLIANT

AT&T Innovation Award | This award recognizes initiatives, projects, and/or services that are unique, creative, or innovative and will be presented to the organization responsible for the development, coordination, delivery, and results of the project. *Examples may include:* Resourcefulness when challenged with a limited budget; superior utilization of collaborative community partnerships; or ingenious staffing options by mobilizing members and/or volunteer support.

Winner: Wheels of Success

Wheels of Success discovered a need of credit score relief for the working poor. With that in mind, Wheels of Success partnered with GTE Financial to create the ABC-GTE Financial 0% Financing Program to help provide clients a means to improve their transportation options when credit history eliminated financially reasonable options. The impact of this new program has enabled Wheels of Success to be more impactful by assisting more clients get on the road.

BE MORE KNOWLEDGABLE

Bank of Tampa Educational Outreach Award | This award will recognize the organization that through a specific project offered guidance, knowledge, emotional or physical support, and/or a mentorship program aimed at improving specific aspects of community life. The project should introduce and/or conducting programs to enrich and empower the community. *Examples may include:* Outreach or educational programs that effectively raised awareness or brought a new audience to an organization or cause. **Sponsored by Bank of Tampa**

Winner: Florida Holocaust Museum

The Florida Holocaust Museum honors the memory of millions of innocent men, women and children who suffered or died in the Holocaust. The museum is dedicated to teaching all races and cultures the inherent worth and dignity of human life. In partnership with the Anti-Defamation League and US Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Florida Holocaust museum is presenting for the first time in Florida, "Law Enforcement and Society: Lessons of the Holocaust."

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BE MORE INFORMED

Nielsen Marketing Campaign Award | This award recognizes the execution of creative and results-driven original marketing campaigns using multimedia platforms including, but not limited to, broadcast, print, social media and/or grassroots awareness campaigns. The applicant should demonstrate direct impact to established goals. *Examples may include:* A support element or collection of elements developed to promote, publicize, introduce, or create an identity or brand for a specific organization, service, program, or idea. **Sponsored by Nielsen**

Winner: Metropolitan Ministries

Metropolitan Ministries wants to show us that anyone can Be Hope through their Hello My Name Is Hope campaign. The concept was developed in collaboration with community partners and works to shine a light of Hope on the dark issue of poverty and homelessness.

BE MORE ENRICHED

Greenberg Traurig Arts & Culture Award | This award recognizes culturally-based organizations that contribute to the spirit of adventure and exploration through education in the arts and culture by creating an exciting and engaging museum experience to visitors. *Examples may include:* Programs or experiences related to the arts, performance, historic, or zoological; programs that provide cultural experiences to audiences who might not otherwise have opportunities to witness or be an active participant. **Sponsored by Greenberg Traurig**

Winner: Great Explorations, Inc.

Great Explorations Children's Museum stimulates learning through creativity, lay and exploration. That is especially true for the museum's Express Yourself Art Mobile, a traveling exhibit that brings art experiences to Pinellas County schools allowing students to visit a mobile hands-on mini art museum without ever leaving their school campus.

BE MORE HUMBLE

Warren Averett People's Choice Award | This award is driven by an online poll with votes from the general public in the WEDU viewing area. **The poll automatically includes a listing of all organizations that submitted an application.** This prestigious award exhibits the connection and relationship the organization has with the community and the people it serves by allowing area citizens to honor the nonprofit that they feel most exemplifies the spirit of the community. **Sponsored by Warren Averett CPAs and Advisors**

Winner: The Early Learning Coalition of Pasco and Hernando Counties

The Early Learning Coalition of Pasco and Hernando Counties, Inc. influences successful outcomes in early education. We accomplish this by ensuring quality programs that positively impact every child and how early learning is viewed in our community, supporting parenting outreach and education, and by building strong connections with our community.

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BE MORE RELEVANT

Best Use of Video Award | Awarded to the organization that tells a compelling story through video that has the power to compel someone to seek services, volunteer time, or support an organization financially. The winner is chosen by majority vote.

Winner: The Auto Club Group Traffic Safety Foundation, Inc.

The Auto Club Group Traffic Safety Foundation's winning video shared personal stories from staff and others impacted by distracted and drunk driving. These powerful personal accounts shown in the video encouraged donations to the Auto Club Group Traffic Safety Foundation in support of community outreach that raises awareness about distracted driving and the impact it has on lives.

BE MORE INSPIRING

Florida Hospital Rising Star Award | This award will recognize an individual, under the age of 21, who has distinguished himself or herself in the community directly accredited to their inspiration, dedication, motivation, or acts of kindness. Nominees represent up-and-comers whose accomplishments in, and contributions to, our community make them stand out among their peers and position them as future leaders. The top candidates that achieved the most votes via an online poll will be further researched by an impartial judging panel to decide the ultimate winner. **Sponsored by Florida Hospital.**

Winner: Leigh Dittman, Shriner's Hospitals for Children

As an infant, Leigh was diagnosed with brittle bone disease. OI is a genetic disorder characterized by bones that break easily, often from little or no apparent cause. Leigh has been a patient at Shriners Hospitals for Children – Tampa since she was a baby. She had 14 surgeries and 36 breaks that the hospital has casted, and has received medication that helps strengthen her bones. But this has never held Leigh back.

For 12 years, Leigh has been on a quest to raise \$1 MILLION DOLLARS for Shriners Hospitals for Children – Tampa. In September, at an event attended by hundreds of supporters, she achieved her goal. Leigh plans to continue helping the hospital, where she hopes to work as a nurse after college. For many children, birthdays are about themselves. For this extraordinary teen-ager, her birthday is an opportunity to change the world.

BE MORE ENTREPRENEURIAL

Engaged Philanthropist Award | This award will recognize an individual who has distinguished himself or herself in the nonprofit community by engaging entrepreneurial skills to build a successful nonprofit endeavor. *Examples may include:* Utilizing a keen business sense to build a new nonprofit serving our community; providing the driving force for a unique and successful fundraising campaign to support an existing nonprofit organization's initiative. The top candidates that achieved the most votes via an online poll during the voting period will be further researched by an impartial judging panel to decide the ultimate winner.

Winner: John Auer, American Strategic Insurance (ASI)

American Strategic Insurance (ASI) under the leadership of CEO John Auer has invested in the community in a creative, thoughtful way that should be a standard bearer for businesses across the Tampa Bay area. By partnering with R'Club Child Care, Inc., a non-profit child care provider, ASI provides their employees with high level professional child care in a state of the art facility-built from the ground up by ASI as part of their own building. However, ASI has decided not to offer such a resource to their employees alone. Instead, this unique childcare setting is open to the community, thanks to the generosity of ASI.

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BE MORE EMPOWERED

Small Nonprofit Award | This award will recognize the small nonprofit that best demonstrates the truth in statement that “big things come in small packages.” This award will recognize organizations with a budget under \$500,000 and despite its modest size, has a major positive impact on our community. The top candidates have achieved the most votes via an online poll during the voting period will be further researched by an impartial judging panel to decide the ultimate winner.

Winner: Julie Weintraub’s Hands Across the Bay

Hands Across the Bay prides themselves that the donations from their supporters are going directly to assist families and other small organizations in the community. With donated office space and supplies, Julie also personally guarantees that her time and efforts at Hands Across the Bay are 100% volunteered. Despite being a very small organization, Hands Across the Bay assists and mentors hardworking families in need, advocates for change and supports other organizations. Through their work, they hope to inspire the community to become more compassionate, empathetic, and charitable.

BE MORE INVOLVED

Mason Dixon Award for Volunteerism | One person can make an extraordinary difference. These award finalists were culled from an online poll driven by votes from the general public in the WEDU viewing area. Local radio personality and philanthropist, Mason Dixon, will ultimately choose and present the award to the most-deserving recipient from nominees that receive the most online support during the voting period.

Winner: Lisl Shick, The Florida Holocaust Museum

Lisl Schick was born in Vienna, Austria in 1927. In 1939, at age eleven, she and her seven year old brother escaped Nazi-occupied Austria on a Kindertransport train for England, where they lived for six years before being reunited with their parents in New York. This life-defining experience has led Mrs. Schick to volunteer hundreds of hours speaking at schools and with tour groups at The Florida Holocaust Museum. She translates staggering numbers into an individual story, situating it in historical context for audiences and emphasizing how we all have the potential to make a positive difference through upstander behavior.

BE MORE Outspoken

Voice of Tampa Bay Award | This honor will be bestowed upon the individual, family, or organization that has lent a unique voice to bring awareness, credence, support, or action to an issue or cause faced by our citizens and thus making a tremendous impact in our community.

Winner: Melissa Dohme, Julie Weintraub’s Hands Across the Bay

In January of 2012, Melissa Dohme’s high school ex-boyfriend brutally attacked her by stabbing her 32 times in the neck, face, arms, and hands in an attempt to take her life. It is a true miracle that she is alive today after flat-lining four times and suffering a stroke from a massive amount of blood loss. Following that horrific night, Melissa felt the conviction to become an advocate and speak out against domestic violence. She has shared her story with thousands by speaking at various domestic violence events. Her deepest passion is speaking to high school and college students because she met her abuser in high school.

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BE MORE POSITIVE

ABC Action News Positively Tampa Bay Award | This honor will be bestowed upon an individual or group of people whose simple act of kindness made a tremendous impact on someone's life. The winner will be selected based on the selfless giving of time, treasure or talents. Nominees and finalists will be selected by ABC Action News. The semi-finalists and ultimate winner will be chosen by ABC Action News' Positively Tampa Bay and The Ryan Nece Foundation – the inspiration for this award.

Winner: Andrew Lumish

As a self-employed carpet cleaner, Andrew Lumish of Land 'O Lakes gets only one day off a week. And on most of those Sundays he uses his cleaning skills to honor veterans and their families- anonymously. Until now. Andrew, a history buff, spends his free time honoring service members by cleaning their headstones.

BE MORE ENCOURAGED

Judges' Choice Award | The Judges' Choice Award is given to an organization demonstrating an overall appeal due to its original and extraordinary approach to its respective. Not necessarily driven by an organization's measurable results, this award is decided entirely by the WEDU Be More Award judges based on majority vote and consensus.

Winner: Sunrise of Pasco

Sunrise of Pasco is a catalyst for change through a commitment to ending domestic and sexual violence by providing prevention and intervention services.

BE MORE UNSTOPPABLE

Nonprofit of the Year Award | This award is the most coveted and is determined through extensive research. It is ultimately decided by an independent judging committee and given to one organization that, through a superior level of service, helps their constituency be more. Selected from all submitted applications, the criteria to win this award consists of overall organizational excellence; fulfillment of the Four Commitments to the Community, including service to the organizations' constituency, level of community impact, financial viability and embodiment of overall community goodwill. In addition to many other benefits, the organization recognized with this award receives a \$2,500 WEDU Community Investment Grant.

Winner: Auto Club Group Traffic Safety Foundation, Inc.

For more than a century, AAA has been a leader in the efforts to make our roadways safer and help reduce the numbers of people who are killed or injured in traffic crashes. The Traffic Safety Foundation is committed to reducing traffic crashes, injuries and deaths.

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BE MORE HERO AWARD

Selected by WEDU, the WEDU Be More Hero Award honors the individual or organization that truly epitomizes everything that the WEDU Be More Awards honor. Our Be More Award Hero is Informed and Knowledgeable; Brilliant and Humble; Involved and Entrepreneurial. And often times Entertaining, the WEDU Be More Awards Hero Enriches and Inspires everyone they connect with to Be More in support of a worthy cause.

Winner: Linda Osmundson, former Executive Director of CASA

Linda Osmundson was a well-known figure in the St. Petersburg area, dedicating her time to many organizations, but most renowned for her work to end domestic violence and assist its victims. Linda co-founded the state's clemency movement for battered women, for which she received the Florida Governor's first "Peace at Home" Award. She was a strong voice on the task force for battered women and children, working with prosecutors, law enforcement, judges and health care professionals. Osmundson also furthered the battered-women's movement in other cities and countries including Bogotá, Prague, Russia, China, India, Cyprus, Japan, Singapore, Myanmar, and Australia. Her dedication to community extended far beyond the boundaries of her own town. Linda was perhaps as well known for her personal bravery as she was for her passionate work. Over the decades, Linda spoke openly about her personal experience as a survivor of domestic violence and how it propelled her to do the work she did, becoming a leader in a movement that began more than 40 years ago. That movement led Osmundson to CASA, where she became Executive Director in 1989. Under her leadership, CASA grew from a 22-bed domestic violence shelter into a 100-bed center serving all of southern Pinellas County. But CASA also became more than a shelter, offering support groups, a 24-hour domestic violence hotline, outreach services, training for law enforcement and other community members, and youth programs such as the Peacemakers, teaching violence prevention in Pre-K through 8th grade classes. Last summer, Linda reflected on what may have been her proudest achievement, the creation of a brand new 100-bed domestic violence center, which opened in July last year before she retired.

The 2016 WEDU Be More Awards are sponsored by:



And the Bernard F. and Mary Ann Powell Foundation

ABOUT WEDU PBS

WEDU is West Central Florida's leading PBS station reaching 16 counties through media platforms including on-air programming and online experiences that broaden horizons, transport and transform and open gateways to new ideas and new worlds. Financially supported by the community, the organization offers a wealth of award-winning inspirational, educational and enlightening content over a variety of multi-media platforms including: television programming, station website, www.wedu.org and various social media platforms, monthly member magazine *Premiere*, educational outreach activities and a myriad of special events. WEDU's focus on the local community has resulted in the station being regarded as a beacon of trust for men, women and children of every walk of life no matter their age, ethnicity or socio-economic status. WEDU is a treasured community resource; a window to the world for the homebound and a vital educational source for the youngest members of society. WEDU prides itself on its position in the Tampa Bay community as a leader, partner, informed citizen and a member of PBS, the most trusted institution in America (ORC International's DualFrame CARAVAN, January 2016). For more information, program schedules or to support WEDU visit www.wedu.org; WEDU Public Media on Facebook and Twitter (@wedupbs) or call (813) 254-9338.

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