

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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## ***Area Nonprofits and Volunteers Announced as Finalists for 11<sup>th</sup> Annual WEDU Be More Awards***



**Tampa, FL — WEDU PBS** announced today the finalists for the 2016 WEDU Be More Awards. The eleventh annual **WEDU Be More Awards** will take place on **Thursday, February 4, 2016** at Tropicana Field in St. Petersburg. The annual community event will begin at 11:00 a.m. with the *Hall of Heroes* followed by an inspiring luncheon and awards ceremony starting at 12:00 p.m. Tickets are available online at [www.wedu.org/bemore](http://www.wedu.org/bemore).

Utilizing a panel of impartial judges who spent weeks reviewing applications and nominations, **WEDU**, West Central Florida's primary PBS station, will recognize 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)*.

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.

The finalists 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.

**Creative Clay, Inc. ● Early Learning Coalition of Pasco and Hernando Counties, Inc.  
Habitat for Humanity of Pinellas County ● National Society to Prevent Blindness  
Quantum Leap Farm, Inc.**

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### **BE MORE BRILLIANT**

***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.

**Alpha House of Tampa ● Champions for Children, Inc. ● Coexistence, Inc. (Embracing Our Differences ● Gulf Coast Dental Outreach, Inc. ● More Health, Inc. ● R'Club Child Care The Junior League of Tampa ● Wheels of Success**

### **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**

**CASA (Community Action Stops Abuse, Inc.) ● Cresnet of Hernando, Inc. Florida Holocaust Museum, Inc. ● Girl Scouts of West Central Florida, Inc. Planned Parenthood of Southwest and Central Florida ● Project Prosper, Inc. Starting Right, Now**

### **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**

**Auto Club Group Traffic Safety Foundation, Inc. ● Metropolitan Ministries Senior Connection Center, Inc. ● The Arc Tampa Bay Foundation**

### **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**

**Art Center Sarasota, Inc. ● Florida Holocaust Museum ● Great Explorations, Inc. Sarasota Contemporary Dance ● The American Stage Company, Inc.**

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### **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**

**The Arc Tampa Bay Foundation • Cypress Initiative, Inc. • Dress for Success, Inc.  
Early Learning Coalition of Pasco and Hernando Counties, Inc. • Freedom to Walk Foundation  
Girl Scouts of West Central Florida, Inc. • Habitat for Humanity of Pinellas County  
Jesus Cares, Inc. • Planned Parenthood of Southwest and Central Florida  
R'Club Child Care**

### **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.

**Auto ClubGroup Traffic Safety Foundation, Inc. • Buddy Baseball • R'Club Child Care, Inc.  
Southeastern Guide Dogs • The Source Theatre**

### **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.**

**Jesse Stokes, The Pink Magnolia Charities • Kaitlin Greenough, Girl Scouts of West Central  
Florida • Leigh Dittman, Shriner's Hospitals for Children - Tampa  
Madison Maya Jayanna, Giving Foundation for Children • Melissa Baldino, LiFT Academy  
Study Buddies • Selena Schulz, A Bed A Buck A Buddy**

### **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.

**John Auer, American Strategic Insurance (ASI) • Nancy Harris, Academy Prep Center of Tampa  
Jesse Stokes, The Pink Magnolia Charities**

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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.

**Answered Prayer Project ● Girlstories Theatre ● Heart Gallery of Pinellas and Pasco  
Julie Weintraub’s Hands Across the Bay ● Marine Families ● Random Acts of Flowers  
Service Club of Manatee County ● The Cypress Initiative, Inc. ● The Kind Mouse Productions**

## **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.

**Kevin Bakewell, Prevent Blindness Florida ● Janet Ettleman, Gulf Coast Dental Outreach  
Dr. Gerard Hubell, Vision USA ● Christina Norcia, SOURCE Productions  
Russ Oberbrecklin, Buddy Baseball ● Lisl Schick, The Florida Holocaust Museum  
Nicole Stokes, Northwestern Mutual ● Thomas VanAntwerp, Toastmasters International**

## **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.

**Jesse Stokes, The Pink Magnolia Charities ● Melissa Dohme, Julie Weintraub’s Hands Across the Bay ● Niki Cross, STAAR Ministry ● The Florida Holocaust Museum**

## **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.

**Andrew Lumish ● Brian Sullivan ● Michelle and Todd Schnitt  
Javel Kenty ● Mia Lopez**

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## **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.

**Are You Safe, Inc. • Freedom to Walk Foundation • Sunrise of Pasco  
The Arc of Tampa Bay Foundation • The Children's Museum of Tampa**

## **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.

**Auto Club Group Traffic Safety Foundation, Inc. • Early Learning Coalition of Pasco and  
Hernando Counties, Inc. • Great Explorations, Inc. • Metropolitan Ministries  
Quantum Leap Farm • Starting Right, Now • Wheels of Success**

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](http://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 2015). For more information, program schedules or to support WEDU visit [www.wedu.org](http://www.wedu.org); WEDU Public Media on Facebook and Twitter (@wedupbs) or call (813) 254-9338.

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