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**Act One Celebrates Inaugural Tancer Arts in Education Award**

**Winner with In-Person Presentation at Her School**

*Taryn Tidwell of Shepherd Junior High School in Mesa Wins First Award*

MESA, Arizona (October 13, 2021) — It was a special day for one Mesa teacher as her work in arts education was celebrated with her students and her peers on Tuesday.

Act One today presented the first winner of its Tancer Arts in Education Award, given to an Arizona teacher dedicated to sharing a love of the arts with their students. Taryn Tidwell, the choir and musical theatre director of Shepherd Junior High School in Mesa, was the inaugural winner of the Tancer Award.

Her award was presented in a special ceremony in front of students, colleagues and Act One representatives at Shepherd Junior High on Tuesday morning.

Tidwell is a powerful voice across the state for the importance and impact the arts have on the overall learning and social emotional well-being of students. Her mission as an educator is to provide meaningful and memorable musical experiences and opportunities to students in order to empower them to gain confidence, create lasting friendships, and become active members in their future ensembles, careers, and communities.

“We are very pleased to present the first-ever Tancer Arts in Education Award to Taryn for her inspirational story and her passion for the arts,” said Bernadette Carroll, Act One Executive Director. “It was very rewarding for us to see her personal reaction at receiving the award and to see first-hand her impact on her students and school.”

The Tancer Arts in Education Award was scheduled to be presented at a September 17 event, but the event was postponed due to increased Covid rates.

"I am beyond honored to be selected as the Act One Inaugural Tancer Award Winner,” Tidwell said. “The arts are such a meaningful and important part of my life, and I am thrilled to be able to continue to advocate for the importance of the arts in education. I had the honor of working with Bob Tancer before he passed, and it means the world to be able to carry on his legacy and love for the arts."

Tidwell was one of five finalists for the award. The other four finalists were:

* Katherine Fizz, English Language Arts teacher at Pinnacle High School in Phoenix.
* Steve Wallgren, Theater teacher at Willow Canyon High School in Surprise.
* Michael De Alba, Art teacher at Dobson High School in Mesa.
* Maria Henry, Resource teacher at Justine Spitalny Elementary School in Phoenix.

Act One is a nonprofit founded in 2011 to provide children in Title 1 schools in Maricopa, Pinal, and Pima counties with the opportunity to experience arts performances and exhibitions through field trips to professional theaters and museums.

The award received its name in memory of Robert "Bob" Tancer, local art advocate extraordinaire, who passed away in March 2020. Bob was an active member of the Act One Board, believing in the organization's mission and working on the committee to expand the educational depth of the field trip experience.

Tancer believed that the classroom teacher had the opportunity and responsibility to build on the field trip experience both before and after the field trip, tying it to current life, talking about what was happening at the time of the performance, and why the message of the performance was important and relevant to today's world. Bob saw the tremendous role the teacher played in making the experience rich and educationally rewarding.

Arizona teachers who are full-time, certified pre-kindergarten through 12th-grade general education, special education, or arts education teachers were eligible to apply or be nominated. The prize includes a $1,000 monetary award, a gift certificate from Changing Hands bookstore, an original piece of art, and much more.

Act One provides meaningful arts experiences that enhance the academic and creative potential of children and families in Arizona. It envisions a time when all Arizonans acknowledge the value of creative arts experiences as a significant component of educational advancement and personal well-being. For more information on Act One, visit [www.act1az.org](http://www.act1az.org).

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