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## **WILSON CENTER ANNOUNCES 2024 BIG EVENT HONOREES**

*Gary and Judy Jorgensen, and Tony and Andrea Bryant; and Milwaukee Rep. to be Honored as Award Recipients*

**Brookfield, WI (January, 2024)** At [The Big Event](#) on Saturday, June 1, 2024, the **Sharon Lynne Wilson Center for the Arts** (Wilson Center) will recognize **Tony and Andrea Bryant, and Gary and Judy Jorgensen, and The Milwaukee Rep** as this year's recipients of the **EDDY Award** and **Educational Excellence Award** (respectively). The evening will also include honoring [Betsy Corry](#), former Managing Director of **First Stage**, for her extensive impact and leadership of the children's theater.

Endowed by Wilson Center supporters Kathryn Murphy Burke and John Burke, the **EDDY** is presented annually by the Wilson Center's Bridge Committee to an arts organization, corporation, or individual(s) whose philanthropic commitment to regional collaboration has created a higher standard of excellence in arts and arts education. In presenting the 2024 EDDY Award, the Wilson Center will celebrate the commitment of the Bryants and the Jorgensens for playing an integral role in nourishing the roots of the Sharon Lynne Wilson Center for the Arts. They are philanthropic leaders, building community and exemplifying generosity, with a special attention to providing community access to the arts.

**Judy Jorgensen**, a lifelong educator, and **Gary Jorgensen**, a successful Milwaukee business owner, are passionate about investing in their community. In 1994, Gary Jorgensen was one of a five-person steering committee to work through the importance of a performing arts center in Brookfield. With his role in the inception of the Wilson Center, and as principal at VJS Construction, it was a natural choice for VJS Construction Services to be retained as construction manager for the project. Gary Jorgensen offered his expertise while on the boards of Mt. Mary University for over 30 years, and Rogers Memorial Hospital for over 20 years. He has offered his voice with the Milwaukee Symphony Chorus, a volunteer chorus and one of the finest in the country, and during that time performed with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Past accolades include receiving the Greater Milwaukee Foundation's Frank Kirkpatrick Award in 2016, which recognizes individuals whose efforts have led to significant physical improvements in the community. Judy Jorgensen is a sustaining member on the boards of the Milwaukee Rep, Cornell College, Women's Philanthropy Council at the University of Wisconsin, and former board chair with the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra and the Greater Milwaukee Foundation. Gary and Judy are role models within the philanthropic community and have been generous throughout the Milwaukee area. Their fund with the Greater Milwaukee Foundation has provided support to the Salvation Army, the Humane Animal Welfare Society of Waukesha County, Milwaukee's Urban Ecology Center, and Feeding America Eastern Wisconsin.

**Tony and Andrea Bryant** are devoted philanthropists in Waukesha and Milwaukee County, and specifically the Wilson Center. The success of Century Fence, a 107-year-old and 4th Generation family business, has offered the opportunity to give back to their community. The couple has been a key contributor to the growth of the United Way of Waukesha County, Waukesha Family YMCA, Waukesha Civic Theatre and the Waukesha County Community Fund and SHARP Literacy, a nonprofit that offers programs to youth with the idea that art has the power to inspire student achievement. In addition to their support of the Waukesha community, the Bryants offer support to the Milwaukee Art Museum, Milwaukee Ballet, and Milwaukee Public Museum. They are dedicated to providing access to the performing arts and arts education and have been key philanthropic leaders with the Wilson Center.

Tony and Andrea Bryant, and Gary and Judy Jorgensen will join a distinguished list of past EDDY Award honorees, including Kathryn "Murph" Burke (2022), Jodi Peck (2015), Donna and Donald Baumgartner (2016), Claire and Glenn Hackman (2017), Sue and Bud Selig (2018), Kate and Don Wilson (2019), Mary Ellen and Scott Stanek; and Baird (2020/21).

The 2024 Big Event will mark the ninth year of the **Educational Excellence Award**, which recognizes organizational achievement of a nonprofit that exemplifies collaboration in the arts. The Wilson Center Bridge Committee has selected [Milwaukee Repertory Theater](#) as this year's recipient of the award, in recognition of Milwaukee Rep's significant contribution to theater arts education opportunities throughout Greater Milwaukee. Milwaukee Rep is the largest performing arts organization in Wisconsin, serving over 300,000 people including 20,000 students annually in their three unique performance venues in the Associated Bank Theater Center. For over seven decades, Milwaukee Rep has been a centerpiece

of Milwaukee's vibrant arts and cultural scene with productions ranging from Broadway musicals to Shakespeare to American Classics and New Works that are entertaining, inclusive, and impactful. **Milwaukee Rep Education & Engagement** aims to use theater as an agent of cultural and positive change in the communities and schools by eliminating barriers and dismantling assumptions about what the theater art form can do. Collectively Milwaukee Rep creates positive change in the city through its unique position as a cultural organization that has the capacity to bring people together in a creative way. On stage, in schools, behind the scenes, in the lobby or across the table, through the power of theatre, Milwaukee Rep is able to celebrate, enrich and strengthen the region propelling it to its full potential.

Past recipients of the Educational Excellence Award have included Latino Arts, Inc. (2023), Florentine Opera Company (2015), First Stage (2016), Milwaukee Youth Symphony Orchestra (2017), Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra Arts in Community Education/ACE (2018), and Milwaukee Ballet and Artistic Director Michael Pink (2019), and Next Act Theater and Producing Artistic Director David Ceccarini.

**First Stage** – The evening will also include honoring **Betsy Corry**, former Managing Director of First Stage. Corry has served as managing director for the organization since 2012, having held the role previously from 1996 – 2003. During her tenure, Corry's leadership led to programming expansion, ticket sales growth and the groundwork for what would become the Milwaukee Youth Arts Center (MYAC), where First Stage is housed today. "Betsy has had a significant impact on growing First Stage into the organization it is today – one of the most acclaimed children's theaters in the country, serving thousands of young people and their families every year," said Chris Marschka, Board President, First Stage and Head of Commercial Banking in Wisconsin for The PNC Financial Services Group.

#### **ABOUT THE SHARON LYNNE WILSON CENTER FOR THE ARTS AND THE BIG EVENT**

The Wilson Center is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization situated in a beautiful 400-acre park in Brookfield, Wisconsin. The Wilson Center's vibrant outdoor artistic landscape—the Lynn Chappy ArtsPark—joins nature and art in ways that are designed to educate and inspire. Recognized as a cultural anchor in the greater Milwaukee community, the Sharon Lynne Wilson Center for the Arts serves as a catalyst for lifelong discovery and exploration of the arts. This nonprofit serves more than 55,000 people annually, including 10,000 students. The Wilson Center focuses on three main disciplines: performing arts, arts education, and visual arts. In addition to year-round performances, the organization promotes lifelong learning through arts education programs, art classes and art exhibitions. For more information visit [www.wilson-center.com](http://www.wilson-center.com).

The Big Event is an all-inclusive evening featuring cocktails, a reception, live entertainment, art experiences, dinner on the stage, a voice auction, award presentation and a wrap party with music, dancing and more. Proceeds from The Big Event support the mission of the Wilson Center to be a vibrant destination expanding, inspiring, and delivering a lifetime of arts education and experiences. Tickets will go on sale Spring of 2024. Sponsorship opportunities are available now and inquiries can be directed to Ben Brzeski at 262-439-5684 or email [bbrzeski@wilson-center.com](mailto:bbrzeski@wilson-center.com)

#### **ABOUT THE WILSON CENTER BRIDGE COMMITTEE**

The Bridge Committee, comprised of regional arts and community leaders, is committed to supporting the Wilson Center's efforts to strengthen the impact of regional collaboration for the long-term viability of the arts in Southeastern Wisconsin. Andy Nunemaker, CEO, *Groupware Technologies, Inc.*, and Sarah Smith-Pancheri, *President & CEO, Milwaukee World Festival, Inc.*, are co-chairs of the Bridge Committee. The Bridge Committee was created by Kate Wilson, of the Sharon Lynne Wilson Center for the Arts. Kate Wilson's vision for the Bridge Committee was to bring supporters of the arts together from the lakefront to the lake country - to form a 'bridge'. Bridge Committee members can be found on the Wilson Center [website](http://www.wilson-center.com).

*For photography assets of the awardees, please contact Jen Moran at [jmoran@wilson-center.com](mailto:jmoran@wilson-center.com)*

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