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For Immediate Release  
September 21, 2015

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## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Alameda County Arts Commission announces six recipients of the 2015 Alameda County Arts Leadership Award**

#### **Alameda County Board of Supervisors to Commend the Award Recipients on Tuesday, September 29, 2015**

(Oakland, CA) – The Alameda County Arts Commission is pleased to recognize six individuals for their achievements and contributions impacting the arts community and residents of Alameda County. The following individuals are the recipients of the **2015 Alameda County Arts Leadership Award: Bernice R. Bates, Sarah Crowell, Susan Dunn, Chris Johnson, Judy Lam, and Paul Ruma.**

The Alameda County Board of Supervisors will commend these six individuals during the Board's public meeting on Tuesday, September 29, 10:45am at the Alameda County Administration Building, Board Chamber, 1221 Oak Street, 5th Floor, Oakland. This event is also presented in conjunction with the County's celebration of California Arts Day and National Arts and Humanities Month of October.

**2015 Alameda County Arts Leadership Award** recipients' achievements and contributions are listed in the order of the five Districts of the Alameda County Board of Supervisors:

**Judy Lam** of Fremont, representing Supervisorial District One: Ms. Judy Lam is the founder and director of Virtuoso International Flute Ensemble in Fremont. She has directed various flute ensembles, chamber groups, choruses, and musicals, many of which featured her original ensemble arrangements for flutes, strings, and chorus. For the past 7 years, through Virtuoso International Flute Ensemble, she has dedicated over 15 concerts to support and benefit over 10 local nonprofit organizations and numerous community events. She serves as a band consultant for the Advanced Elementary Band at Hopkins Junior High School in Fremont. She conducts free lessons for members of Fremont's Friends of Children with Special Needs. Ms. Lam also serves on the board of directors of the Citizens for Better Community celebrating Fremont's Chinese American community and culture.

**Paul Ruma** of Union City, representing Supervisorial District Two: Mr. Paul "Paulskee" Ruma is the founder and director of Mighty4 Arts Foundation, an organization dedicated to preserving history, advancing artistry, and empowering youth through Hip Hop cultural arts. Since 1998, Mr. Ruma has had international impact in over 40 cities worldwide by providing education about Hip Hop culture through community-based events, classes, workshops, and documentary productions. Mr. Ruma is an accomplished "B-Boy" dancer who led his group Rock Force Crew to the Battle of the Year world championship of Breakdancing in 1998 representing the

USA taking first place and continues to receive numerous international awards. He continues to educate communities and inspires young people to get involved in social action, civic service, cultural creativity, and self-education.

**Susan Dunn** of the City of Alameda, representing Supervisorial District Three: Ms. Susan Dunn is a community leader who devotes her time to supporting and providing arts and cultural community activities with a special emphasis on the City of Alameda. In the past two years Susan has held leadership positions with three arts organizations in the City of Alameda. She served as the staff historian for the Altarena Playhouse. During the theater company's recent 75th anniversary, Ms. Dunn coordinated a major gala fundraiser and exhibition about the organization's long history. Ms. Dunn served as the development director for the Virago Theatre which is an eleven year old theater company. And, Ms. Dunn is the founder, development director and a board member for Island City Opera founded in 2014. She has been a major force in the success of Island City Opera's first season at the Elks Lodge in Alameda. Ms. Dunn has a broad theater background which has given her many artistic connections and has enabled her to contribute local resources to productions, as well as build a strong volunteer base.

**Bernice R. Bates** of Oakland, representing Supervisorial District Four: Mrs. Bernice Bates is the choir director of the East Oakland Senior Center Performing Arts Choir. The choir members range in age from 55-95 years of age. They love performing at the Senior Center, City of Oakland events, local rest homes & rehabilitation facilities, the Alameda County Healthy Aging Fair, and other programs throughout the year. Mrs. Bates has performed throughout her life, singing at countless churches, schools, prisons, rest homes, hospitals and various other venues. After 28 years of service, Mrs. Bates retired from AT&T and returned to college to finish her second degree which she had started over 40 years ago. As a model example of her commitment to the arts and life-long learning, Mrs. Bates graduated in June 2015 with a Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance as a Mezzo-Soprano from Cal State University East Bay in Hayward.

**Chris Johnson** of Oakland, representing Supervisorial District Four: Mr. Chris Johnson is the founder of Question Bridge: Black Males, an organization that provides a forum for dialogue among black men and new opportunities for understanding and healing. This project is the 2015 winner of the International Center of Photography's Infinity Award. Mr. Johnson is a professor of photography at California College of the Arts, Oakland and San Francisco. From 1999 – 2005 he served as chair of the City of Oakland's Cultural Affairs Commission, and from 1997 to 2000, he was director of the Mother Jones International Fund for Documentary Photography. As a member of the Public Art Management Team for the Port of Oakland, Chris Johnson was project manager and originator of the concept for the 8 by 20 foot Media Wall that was installed in 2007. The Media Wall's images and videos are seen by all visitors to the baggage claim area of the Oakland International Airport.

**Sarah Crowell** of Oakland, representing Supervisorial District Five: Ms. Sarah Crowell is currently the artistic director for Destiny Arts Center, a nonprofit organization focused on providing dance, theater and martial arts programs with the mission to end isolation, prejudice and violence in the lives of young people. She has worked at the organization for 25 years as a dancer teacher, workshop facilitator, program director and lead staff trainer. She served as the organization's executive director from 2002-2007. Additionally, Ms. Crowell co-founded the Destiny Arts Youth

Performance Company in 1993. The Company's group of teens perform original dance and theater productions for up to 20,000 audience members each year and have been the subject of two documentary films. During the last 25 years, Ms. Crowell has taught dance, theater and violence prevention to youth and educators locally and nationally in schools and community centers. And, during the last 10 years, she has led professional development courses for classroom teachers, school administrators and arts educators.

The Members of the Alameda County Arts Commission selected these individuals from a group of nominees whose names were submitted by the public. Award recipients were selected based on their achievements within the arts field and their contributions to the community. This annual program recognizes individuals or teams from each of the five supervisorial districts. This year, there are two recipients in District Four because of a tie-vote during the selection process. For more information about the program or the award recipients, please contact the Alameda County Arts Commission at (510) 208-9646 or by email at [artscommission@acgov.org](mailto:artscommission@acgov.org)

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