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Photo captions:

2021 Arts Champion Corine Pearce

2021 Arts Champion Larry Wagner

**The Arts Council of Mendocino County Announces 2021 Arts Champions**

The Board of Directors of the Arts Council of Mendocino County is pleased to announce the 19th Annual Mendocino County Arts Champion Award recipients. Arts Champions, nominated each year by community members and selected by the Arts Council board, will be formally recognized with a proclamation by the Board of Supervisors on November 9<sup>th</sup>.

The 2021 Arts Champions in the following categories are: Artist Category: **Corine Pearce**; Arts Organization: **Gualala Arts Center**; Business: **Black Oak Coffee**; Educator: **Blake More**; Individual: **Larry R. Wagner**; Honorable Mention: **MEDIUM Gallery**.

**Corine Pearce**, Arts Champion in the Artist category, is a basket weaver, herbalist, dancer, storyteller and cultural who has taught classes on basket weaving, traditional uses of native plants, land stewardship, fire ecology, and traditional ecological knowledge for over 25 years. She authored *Pomo Cradle Baskets: An Introduction*, and her basketry has been featured in numerous media articles, art galleries and museum exhibits, including an upcoming collaborative show at the San Francisco de Young Museum (see [www.corinepearce.com](http://www.corinepearce.com)).

**Gualala Arts Center** is honored for its years of diverse arts programming, and for rising to the challenges of the pandemic with grace, never abandoning its mission to support and encourage arts in the community of the South Coast. In the words of its nominators, "Gualala Arts implemented online exhibits, outdoor concerts, and kept art alive in our community even during the pandemic," and "with COVID raging and art centers closing their doors, reimagined itself using low-cost tools to create an online platform, ... dedicated resources to assist artists with the transition to online, (and) shared this acquired knowledge and experience with other arts organizations."

**Black Oak Coffee**, the 2021 Business Arts Champion, is an award-winning locally-owned coffee roaster that has supported more than 100 community organizations making a difference in Mendocino County and beyond. In the words of their nominator, "They offer an inviting and well-visited gallery space free of charge to local artists (and) have hosted gallery shows for Advanced Art students from Ukiah High School. This is a place that feels like it belongs to the youth as much as anyone else in our community."

**Blake More**, honoree in the Education Category, elevates teaching art and poetry to rock-star status for her students. She radiates energy and skill in a head-spinning number of categories: literary arts, digital media, performing arts, fashion design, clothing construction, and more. She might arrive to lead a Poetry Out Loud workshop in a bedazzled art car, dressed in a hand-made costume. She ignites a passion for poetry recitation at the high school level year after year, calling forth the dreams, hopes, and feelings of students in classrooms throughout the county in original poetry.

**Larry R. Wagner**, this year's Arts Champion in the Individual Patron category, "lives and breathes supporting the arts" according to his nominator. He has been a major donor, supporter, and volunteer for the arts since moving to Fort Bragg in 1993. Larry has donated thousands of hours over many years as a professional photographer for numerous local not-for-profit organizations including **Symphony of the Redwoods**, **MeCCA** (Mendocino Center for Circus Arts), **Flynn Creek Circus**, **Winesong!**, **Mendocino Music Festival**, and the **Mendocino Film Festival**. He has published three volumes on *Artists of the Mendocino Coast*, and just completed the design of *Lost and Found: Assemblage Artists of Northern California*, presenting the work of eight Mendocino County assemblage artists. He assisted in the development and formation of the Mendocino Promotional Alliance, consulted with the Mendocino Art Center Leadership Team in assuring its survival through the pandemic, and teaches photography classes for MAC and the Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens.

**MEDIUM Gallery**, a new exhibition space in Ukiah that presented its first exhibit, *Prologue*, in July 2021, was awarded an Honorable Mention for the grit, determination, and inclusive vision of its three founders: Chris Pugh, (an APMC board member) Lillian Rubie, and Meredith Hudson. In the words of their community nominator, "This group of Inland Mendo locals worked to achieve their goal of a new community space for artists of all levels and styles to share their work free of charge.... They are engaging the community with thought-provoking calls for entry, and it is great to have a fresh place for more art in Ukiah. The more voices we hear and see, the better!"

The Mendocino County Arts Champion Awards are annually announced in October to coincide with National Arts and Humanities Month a coast-to-coast celebration of culture in America. For more information about the Mendocino County Art Champion Awards and other Arts Council of Mendocino County programs and services, visit [www.artsmendocino.org](http://www.artsmendocino.org) or call 707-463-2727.

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