

**CONTACT:**

Rina Thaler

The Art League of Ocean City

Ocean City Center for the Arts

[rthaler@artleagueofoceancity.org](mailto:rthaler@artleagueofoceancity.org)

410-524-9433

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Art League of Ocean City announces honorees of 4<sup>th</sup> Annual SHEro Awards and awards ceremony on Oct. 29**

**OCEAN CITY, MD — Oct. 19, 2021** — The Art League of Ocean City announces the honorees of the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual 2021 SHEro Awards, honoring Delmarva women who have shown courage in facing adversity and turned that around into something positive. The Art League will present the awards at a special event on Friday, Oct. 29 from 5-7 p.m. at the Ocean City Center for the Arts, 94<sup>th</sup> St. bayside. The public is welcome to attend the free event.

The SHEro Awards are part of the October-long art exhibition at Arts Center entitled “I Am: Embracing Identity through Art.” The award winners were nominated by local community members. “The SHEro Award winners are strong Delmarva women who passionately give back to our community,” Rina Thaler, executive director of the Art League, said. “The awards are a recognition of the unsung SHEros who have shown courage in facing adversity and dug in to thrive and persevere.”

The Art League will honor 12 nominees from across the Delmarva peninsula on Oct. 29.

**Atlantic General Hospital SAFE (Sexual Assault Forensic Exam)**

**Team: Lisa Wood, Nettie Widgeon, and Sarah Esh** was nominated by AGH's Senior Leadership and Care Givers. Andi West-McCabe, Director of Emergency Services at the hospital, said, "These ladies serve the victims of all ages who have endured sexual assault and/or domestic abuse. Doing this type of work is a true calling, a passion. These nurses are true heroes. They diligently listen to the story, collect the evidence, console the victims and family, ensure they are referred for support and to a safe place to live if necessary, and then they go to court to testify ... to ensure the victims feel justice is being served."

**Jean Browne of Cambridge, Md.** was nominated by her daughter, Lynne Browne, also of Cambridge. "My mother earned her bachelor's degree in microbiology in the 1950s ... an amazing accomplishment because she had to endure overwhelming discrimination based on her gender. Many university professors refused to teach her, and others verbally abused her during class. Yet she persevered. She inspired me to enter a male-dominated field. Without her example and support, I would never have thought I could obtain a law degree and advance my career to my current position as an Administrative Patent Judge for the United States Patent and Trademark Office."

**Barbara Buford of Nassau, De.** was nominated by Art League staff members Kacie Neeb and Katrin Huber, both of Berlin. Barbara leads free, donation-based classes at the Arts Center every month called "heART & Soul" for those dealing with stress, trauma, or grief, and Free Family Art Days for families to make art together. "A student of hers once proclaimed that Barbara was a living angel right here in front of us, and I believe her," Neeb said. Barbara also works with the Worcester Co. Developmental Center teaching adults with intellectual disabilities, at the Salvation Army, and at the Art League's summer children's camp. A mantra Barbara shares with her students and peers is, "Don't let anyone steal your joy."

**Michele Ennis of Salisbury, Md.** was nominated by actor and producer Ilyana Kadushin. “As Executive Director of Tri Community Mediation, Michele has been a leading force in the community mediation movement in Maryland. She has also spearheaded the Lower Shore Vulnerable Populations Task Force, in response to the need and disparity exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. She has supported people from all walks of life in having tough conversations [about] personal relationships, workplace disputes, to prisoner reentry and more. Michele is the mother of six children, three of whom are trained mediators.”

**Kim Klump of Bishopville, Md.** was nominated by Donna Gleckler of Girdletree, Md. “In 2009, when 17-year-old Jesse Klump took his own life, his mother Kim chose to use the tragedy to create the Jesse Klump Memorial Fund. Twelve years later, the fund serves those seeking mental health care, teaching suicide prevention first aid, and supporting underserved members of our seaside community.” The main goal of the fund is to stem the rate of suicide loss, and that includes teaching suicide prevention in Worcester Co. schools, training healthcare professionals, and providing support groups, among others. “Kim’s contribution to the community, driven by her loss and her passion, has indeed saved lives and brightened futures.”

**Gwen Lehman of Ocean Pines, Md.** was nominated by Laura Bren of Ocean City, Md. “My relation to her is that of a student, having been an aspiring thespian at Stephen Decatur High School in the early 1990s. I have first-hand knowledge of her grit and perseverance as she poured her soul into developing the minds and, more importantly, the character of the young people she taught. Gwen gave 110% and expected that in return. She was often in the back row of the auditorium counseling a student in crisis. Years after graduation, Gwen remained an important ‘person’ in the lives of so many ... creating ‘The Gwen Lehman Foundation’ [awarding theater arts scholarships to SDHS grads].”

**Melissa Reid of Berlin, Md.** was nominated by Tamara Mills, instruction coordinator for Worcester Co. Schools. “Melissa Reid, an art educator at Buckingham Elementary School, began teaching in 1999. She has spent her entire career at that one school. When I first met Mrs. Reid, I fell in love with her ability to connect with children. For over 20 years, she has given our community children the gift of the arts, personal self-expression, and a foundation of kindness to one another. Melissa also gives of herself and her time.” She is the president of the Board of Directors at the Calvin B. Taylor House Museum, has worked with the Worcester Co. Education Foundation, assisted with food deliveries to students during the pandemic, and is working on her doctorate degree. “I am proud of her hard work, her insightful process, and her tenacity to reach this goal.”

**Deborah Rolig of Berlin, Md.** was nominated by Cindy Leiner, Diane Gray and Art League gallery director Katie Brown, and executive director Rina Thaler. Rolig is co-founder of the SHEro Awards, started in 2018, and a visionary artist whose compassion has touched many. Her vision can be seen not only in her own artwork but in exhibits she curated such as “The Divine Feminine,” “SHE,” “RISE,” and “VISION” at the Ocean City Center for the Arts, shows that empowered women through art. These exhibits expanded beyond art on the walls to include artist talks, healing workshops, and interactive installations. Rolig is also a teacher in visual art and yoga, both of which connect the mind, body, and soul. “Deb’s impact can be seen in how the community rises up around her in times of hardship,” Brown said. “Through loss and health challenges, she continues on with an incredible strength and grace. Deb is a true SHEro.”

**Terry Smith of Berlin, Md.** was nominated by Laura Jenkins and Robin Tomaselli, both of Berlin, Md. Now retired from teaching and as vice-principal of Buckingham Elementary School, Smith was named Teacher of the Year for Worcester Co. and also earned the National Milken Award. Her passion for giving has called her back to the county schools

to mentor girls she calls “at potential” whom she guides to make good life decisions. Within her church, The Tyre AME Church in Berlin, she assist with programs dealing with domestic violence awareness, financial literacy, food drives and distribution, college book scholarships, and after school opportunities. “She radiates joy,” Jenkins said. “More important to Terry are her children ... She shared with me the tragic loss of her son in 2020. Through that loss, she has found strength to give some more.”

**Debbie Smullen of Salisbury, Md.** was nominated three times, by Worcester Youth and Family of Berlin, by Tamara Mills and by Katrin Huber. Smullen, Worcester Connects Program Coordinator and the face of Worcester Goes Purple, wears many hats. She is a hard worker, an advocate, a mentor, a helper, a mother, a grandmother, and a sister. She has a heart and the passion to support others and see them succeed. At the start of 2021, Debbie had a series of health problems arise that she faced head on, silently and gracefully. She continued working from home and returned to work earlier than expected. After Debbie’s daughter became ill, she stepped in to help. Debbie understands the impact that the arts can have on the whole person, and has provided art opportunities to county youth, including the impactful Healing through Arts workshops.

*The Art League of Ocean City is a nonprofit organization dedicated to bringing the visual arts to the community through education, exhibits, scholarship, programs and community art projects. Funding for this event is in part provided by the Worcester County Arts Council, Maryland State Arts Council and the National Endowment of the Arts, organizations dedicated to cultivating a vibrant cultural community where the arts thrive.*

###

Elaine Bean

Art League of Ocean City  
Publicity & Marketing Director  
[elaine@artleagueofoceancity.org](mailto:elaine@artleagueofoceancity.org)  
cell 443-944-3398