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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**THE ART LEAGUE OF OCEAN CITY
NAMED THE CHAMPION OF THE ARTS**

OCEAN CITY, MD — *APRIL 22, 2026* — The Art League of Ocean City held Night at the Colosseum on April 18 at the Residence Inn by the Marriott in Ocean City, where the first Champion of the Arts was crowned. The event served as a celebration of appreciation for all the Gladiators for the Arts and the grand finale for this year's Gladiator Games.

Courtney Blackford was named Champion of the Arts for raising the most money to benefit the Art League with events such as Mac & Cheese Competition and Breakfast w/ Santa. Her fundraising leadership was a standout moment of the evening, and her efforts helped make the night a remarkable success. The combined efforts of all participants and supporters totaled \$32,000 for the League's outreach and community programs.

The night blended spectacle with generosity, featuring Olympic follies, Mediterranean cuisine, and silent auctions. It offered a low-stakes, high-laugh twist on classic sports, with guests encouraged to wear togas or tunics, though any comfortable attire was welcome.

Gladiators and teams who attended the event included:

- The Bees Knees Team: Sharyn O'Hare, Carole Spurrier, Donna Smith, John Sisson, Tinsel Hughes, and Marjie Givarz
- The Marauding Mystery Makers LSPAC Team: Michael Lane, Dane Russell, and John Lenda
- Courtney Blackford
- Mary Rupinski
- Zachery Thornton

Additionally, several supporters contributed from afar with equally legendary impact: Kathryn Redden, Robert Forester, Hannah Kate Grobin, Nick Donchak, Jan Belestri, Christine Swift, Caroline O'Hare, Kathi Desouter, Dean DeFino, Crystal Collins, Susan Deller, and Robin Chiddo.

A heartfelt thank you to all the volunteers and staff who brought joy to the arena and to the creative team behind the night. The event marked a successful first Gladiator Games, thanks to the bravery, sweat, and creativity of everyone involved. "The creativity, passion, and care of our Gladiators turned our inaugural Games into something legendary," said Jessica Bauer, Development Director. "Seeing the community rally behind our mission in such a fun, spirited way proves that the arts are alive and thriving in Ocean City. We are so grateful to everyone who stepped into the arena to make a difference."

A new season of Gladiator Games has begun, and those interested in becoming a Gladiator for the Arts should reach out to development@artleagueofoceancity.org to speak with Jessica Bauer, Development Director. New faces have already begun to appear in the arena; Hondo Handy announced his Mini Golf Tournament to be Sept 17, 6-9pm at Old Pro Golf. Further details on how to participate or support this event are forthcoming.

The Art League of Ocean City is a non-profit organization dedicated to bringing the visual arts to the community through education, exhibits, scholarship, programs and community art projects. Financial support comes primarily through membership dues from individuals and corporate sponsors.

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