

MAY LUNCHEON PROGRAM

Scholarship Awards Luncheon

Thursday, May 14, 11 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Sarasota Yacht Club

\$45 for Arts Advocates members

\$50 for nonmembers

Sponsorship opportunities available

REGISTER HERE BY MAY 8



We gave you a hint last month about the wide-ranging talents of our 2026 artist scholars – architecture, art, dance, entertainment design, filmmaking, graphic design, music, and musical theater. In alphabetical order, here are the 10 talented individuals who will be receiving a \$5,000 Arts Advocates Scholarship for 2026:

Trenton Bardi, Englewood, 1st time Arts Advocates scholar, architecture major at the University of Florida

Emmalee Bunnell, Venice, 3rd time Arts Advocates scholar, dance major at Marymount Manhattan College

Vivianna Coppa, Bradenton, 2nd time Arts Advocates scholar, musical theater major at Jacksonville University

Sean Jenkins, Sarasota, 1st time Arts Advocates scholar, film major at Ringling College of Art & Design

Isabella Juliano, Bradenton, 1st time Arts Advocates scholar, Lakewood Ranch High School, focus on dance

Spencer Schurawel, Sarasota, 1st time Arts Advocates scholar, Riverview High School, focus on graphic design

Michael Snyder, Venice, 1st time Arts Advocates scholar, major entertainment design at Ringling College of Art & Design

Kila Sons, Sarasota, 1st time Arts Advocates scholar, Booker High School, focus on musical theater

Samantha Tanelli, Sarasota, 4th time Arts Advocates scholar, major fine art/illustration at Ringling College of Art & Design



Danai Tran, Bradenton, 4th time Arts Advocates scholar, major orchestral instrument (violin) at Stetson University

You will learn more about each scholar-artist during our scholarship awards luncheon. Most of the students will be able to attend the luncheon. You will meet the recipients and see their exciting work, and there will be an opportunity to hear from them individually.

The Scholarship Committee is excited for you to see for yourself the talent our very generous donors make possible. Please join us at this heartwarming event AND bring your friends. If you would like to support the event, please note the donor and sponsor opportunities are listed on the [event page](#), along with tickets to the luncheon. All donors and sponsors are invited to a pre-luncheon meet and greet with the students and their guests.

With 26 applications this year, the 10 students selected are truly the cream of the crop. We can't wait for you to see this for yourselves.

FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

Dear Arts Advocates Members and Friends,

Welcome to the month of May, but first, let's look back at the wonderful events we held in April:

Our Talkback Tuesday was held on April 7 in the Arts Advocates Gallery and featured a talk by Justin Gomlak – "From Broadway to the Classroom: Building Creative Futures." His journey was a masterclass in artistic evolution, with a career defined by versatility, passion, and purpose.

A Behind the Curtain: Exploring the Van Wezel from the Art to the Stage was held on April 13. Don't miss the last one of the season on May 18.

Our March luncheon featured Joseph McKenna, president and CEO of the Sarasota Orchestra. He talked about the orchestra's future state-of-the-art 1,800 seat purpose-built acoustically sound concert hall.

Our April/May exhibiting member artist, Art Venti, presented "The Imagination of Art Venti" during his opening reception on April 11.

A tour of this Historic Palmetto Village was held April 14. The tour included the 1880 Heritage Post Office, the 1936 School House, the 1900 Cottage Museum, the Heritage Chapel, and the Cyprus House Military Museum.

The workshop "Make Your Flower and Garden Photographs Special" was offered at Marie Selby Botanical Gardens on April 27. It covered both beginner and intermediate photographic concepts. Participants were able to use all types of cameras and learn how to improve their photographs.

Looking ahead to May 2026

A Celebration of the Life and Legacy of Beth Arthur will be held on May 2 from 1 to 2 pm at the Arts Advocates Gallery. Arthur, who is an historic member of the Sarasota Art Colony, will be celebrating her 100th birthday this year.

Arts Advocates is a Presenter Sponsor at this year's Annual Arts Summit that is being held at Asolo Rep's Mertz Theatre May 11, from 1 to 4 pm. It is a day for Sarasota's arts community to come together and convene with other arts organizations, individual

artists, creative businesses, educators, funders, and civic leaders to explore the shared challenges and opportunities shaping our work.

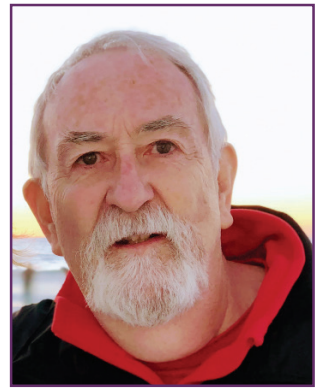
The 2026 Scholarship Awards Luncheon will be held at the Sarasota Yacht Club on May 14 from 11 am to 1 pm. Our annual celebration of student scholars gives you the opportunity to get to know these students, view their artwork, see some of their performances, learn more about our scholars, and understand the impact the Arts Advocates scholarships have on their lives.

Art Venti will host a "Meet the Artist" on May 19 at the gallery from 4 to 6 pm. He will answer questions about his meticulous and wonderful technique of applying layers of color to the fascinating surreal landscapes he has "imagined" and brought to life. During the talk, you'll be invited to view the many works on the walls up close.

We extend our sincere thanks to the Observer Media Group for their generous sponsorship of our exhibitions and luncheons through this month.

Stay connected through our weekly e-blasts, monthly newsletters, or by visiting www.artsadvocates.org for updates and event registration.

Warmly,
Bill Rusling
President, Arts Advocates



Bill Rusling, President

Ask the President

Questions? Comments?
Suggestions for luncheon speakers, art talk subjects, or other ideas for next season?

[CONTACT BILL HERE](#)



The Arts Advocates Gallery is located inside the Crossings at Siesta Key mall, 3501 S. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota. Enter the mall through the doors next to Connors Steak & Seafood and turn left.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

May Luncheon	1	May Events	5
From Your President	2	Recap of April Events	6
Celebrating Beth Arthur	3	Local Arts/Save the Dates	7
May Exhibit	4		

A CELEBRATION OF THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF BETH ARTHUR

May 2, 1-2 p.m. | FREE

Arts Advocates Gallery

Registration is requested but not required.

REGISTER HERE



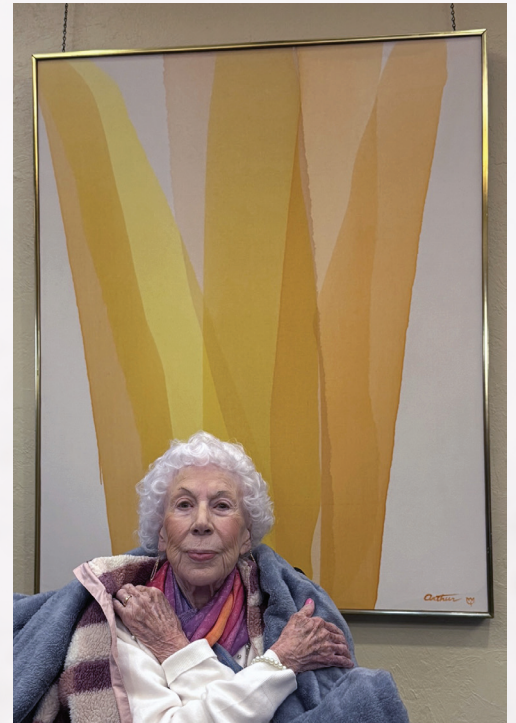
Arts Advocates recently added two paintings by Sarasota artist Beth Arthur, an historic member of the Sarasota Art Colony, to our collection. Beth will be celebrating her 100th birthday this year. Arts Advocates will honor her with a special reception that Beth and her daughter Robin Draper will attend.

Beth came to Sarasota in the 1950s with a degree in fine arts from the University of Pittsburgh. She accepted a student scholarship from Hilton Leech, who originally came to Sarasota to organize the Ringling School of Art, and who many remember was a prominent teacher and painter responsible for influencing many artists.

Beth served as a staff artist at the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus creating props and dazzling displays. She always said that the circus was a key part of her development and that the circus was “an unending source of imagination.”

Renowned Sarasota artist Syd Solomon was a close friend of Beth’s and helpful to her career while she firmly cemented her place within the Sarasota Art Colony. She later studied with some well-known contemporary artists that came to Sarasota through the New College Arts Institute. Along with Syd Solomon, artists such as Phillip Guston, James Brooks, Larry Rivers, and Conrad Marca-Relli became friends and familiar guests in Beth’s Siesta Key home.

As a contemporary abstract artist, Beth pushed the boundaries as not many women were bold enough to pursue abstract, experimental work that was often considered out of the mainstream. Arthur spent six decades working as a Sarasota contemporary artist, holding 30 gallery showings while earning countless honors and awards.



<https://betharthur.com>

MEMBER ARTIST EXHIBIT

THE IMAGINATION OF ART VENTI CONTINUES THROUGH MAY

Saturdays, May 2-May 30, 2-4 p.m.
Arts Advocates Gallery

Enjoy Art Venti's "pencil paintings" – magnificent, extremely detailed works created with layers and layers of delicate colored pencil strokes on very large paper. His compositions often address environmental and socio/political issues. The larger pieces take 3-5 months to complete. Since moving to Sarasota, Art has produced his largest and most complex and meticulous works, the sizes having increased up to 110" in width.

In this exhibition of selected recent works, Venti's imagination is not constrained to conveniently fit into any one category: there are elements of abstraction and glimpses of "reality." One might guess at surrealism, but these original works cannot be narrowly defined to fit into even such a broad genre. Venti's objective is about taking a fresh look at the traditional landscape.



Art Venti, *The Last Honey Bee*

By using this familiar format, a dialogue is created between the viewer and the image. The brain always attempts to organize the lines, shapes and colors it perceives; with no easy reference point, there may be no connection. A recognizable arrangement, even though out of the ordinary, begins the communication.

Art Venti is a NY born artist celebrated for his unusually imaginative large scale color pencil work on archival paper. He has been a professional artist for over 40 years. He is a Signature Member of the Color Pencil Society of America (CPSA), having won several awards in their national and international juried shows.

This exhibit is sponsored by Observer Media Group.

May Events

Tour

Behind the Curtain: Exploring the Van Wezel from the Art to the Stage

May 18, 1:30–3 p.m.

Take a guided tour of the paintings and sculptures owned by Arts Advocates on display at the Van Wezel. After that, step onto the stage where a Van Wezel guide will give you a peek behind the curtain and share stories and anecdotes about the colorful world of show business!

[READ MORE HERE](#)



Artist Talk

Meet Art Venti

May 19, 4–6 p.m.

Arts Advocates Gallery

Art Venti will answer your questions about his incredibly meticulous and wonderful technique of applying layers of color to the fascinating surreal landscapes he has “imagined” and brought to life. During the talk, you’ll be invited to view the many works on the walls up close. He may bring along the large array of the colored pencils he favors, and demonstrate the techniques that he has developed to achieve the wondrous effects in his work.



HIGHLIGHTS FROM LAST MONTH



Gary Hansell and Holly Barbour, MD, are the proud new owners of Art Venti's *Earth I Live, Imagination I Dwell*.



Nanette Crist interviewed Justin Gomlak for his Talkback Tuesday, "From Broadway to the Classroom: Building Creative Futures."



Our April luncheon featured Sarasota Orchestra's president and CEO Joseph McKenna, discussing the orchestra's new concert venue.

The planned interior of the new concert hall.



It was a beautiful day for a tour of the Palmetto Historical Park and Village. Front row (from left): Teresa Kravitz, Liz Trostli, and Bill Rusling. Back row (from left): Barbara Hyde, Jeannette Paladino, and Candace Cox.



As a core element of its mission, Arts Advocates helps raise awareness of local arts organizations. Please support ongoing and upcoming programs in our community. Click on the links for more information about these events:

Art Center Sarasota

[North Sarasota County Schools Spring Art Show](#)

Artist Series Concerts of Sarasota

[Baroque Treasures](#)

John Sims Studio/Halo Arts Project Gallery

[Àșe: Seeing Spirit in Afro-Caribbean Art](#)

Sarasota Art Museum

[Something Borrowed, Something New and Maria A. Guzmán Capron: Penumbra](#)

Venice Art Center

[South Sarasota County Schools Spring Art Show](#)

Special thanks to the Observer Media Group for their media sponsorship of our 2025-2026 season!



Thank You for Powering Your Arts Passion

Arts Advocates thanks you for your generosity during the Giving Challenge, assuring that our work continues to provide scholarships to aspiring young artists of any genre, preserve works by Florida artists, and sponsor programs that raise awareness of our Sarasota Art Colony artists and the Florida Highwaymen. We are grateful for your continued financial support.

Sincerely,
The Arts Advocates Board of Directors

save the dates

+ May 2

A Celebration of the Life and Legacy of Beth Arthur
1-2 p.m., Arts Advocates Gallery

+ May 14

Luncheon: 2026 Scholarship Awards
11 a.m. - 1 p.m., Sarasota Yacht Club

+ May 18

Behind the Curtain Tour
1:30-3 p.m., Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall

+ May 19

Artist Talk: Meet Art Venti
4-6 p.m., Arts Advocates Gallery