

CITY OF VENTURA
NEWS RELEASE

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Mayor's Arts Awards honor four recipients on November 9

The public is invited as the City of Ventura celebrates its vibrant arts community during the second annual Mayor's Arts Awards on Thursday, November 9, 6-8 pm, at the Crowne Plaza Hotel Ventura Beach, at 450 E. Harbor Blvd. in Ventura.

Join Mayor Carl E. Morehouse for a reception hosted by the City of Ventura Cultural Affairs Division honoring these four 2006 recipients: Arts Educator – Clarissa Boeriu, founder, All American Ballet Company; Arts Leaders – Sandra and Jordan Laby, co-founders, San Buenaventura Foundation for the Arts; Artist in the Community – Gerd Koch, Visual Artist; and Special Initiative – Ventura Visitors & Convention Bureau, for the Nonprofit Organization Marketing Grant Program. The event has been graciously sponsored by the Crowne Plaza Hotel Ventura Beach and Weaver Wines.

Each year arts and business representatives meet to select recipients for these non-monetary awards in four categories to recognize the artistic achievements and contributions to the cultural community by City residents, artists, educators, organizations and business leaders. The awards aim to cultivate greater visibility and understanding of the value of the arts, build new leadership and develop new patrons for the arts. The Mayor will present recipients a limited edition artwork by Lis J. Schwitters called "Mark of Distinction," a computer generated photographic print.

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Arts Leaders - Jordan & Sandra Laby, Co-Founders, San Buenaventura Foundation for the Arts

Nominated by Betsy Chess, Jordan and Sandra Laby are being honored for their work as co-founders of the San Buenaventura Foundation for the Arts (SBFA). But the Labys have been a driving force in founding and supporting many arts organizations in our community. In addition to the SBFA, the Labys have served or are serving on the boards such major county art organizations as the New West Symphony, Rubicon Theatre Company, Ventura Music Festival, Ojai Music Festival, and the California State University at Channel Islands. In the past twelve years, they have supported numerous regional arts organizations with gifts totaling over a million dollars. In 1999, the Labys began their efforts to create much-needed cultural facilities for Ventura through a centrally located Cultural Arts Village. Building towards this long-term goal, the SBFA's current programs such as Arts Explosion and the Ventura Arts Online website have galvanized the community and provide ongoing support to local arts organizations.

Artist in the Community - Gerd Koch

Nominated twice by Carolyn Friend and Paul Benavidez in multiple categories, Gerd Koch epitomizes an artist actively engaged in his community – a visual artist who has been active in the Ventura County area since the 1950's when he started an arts colony in Ojai, Gerd's many accomplishments are difficult to summarize briefly. Over the past 50 years, he has been a top tier artist whose work is found in major museums and galleries, an arts educator at Ventura College for 30 years, a board member and volunteer for numerous local arts organizations such as Studio Channel Islands Art Center, Focus on the Masters, and the San Buenaventura Artists' Union. He is also a member of the city's Public Art Commission and Municipal Art Acquisition Committee, and an advocate of and mentor to many. Of Gerd, Carolyn Friend has stated, "I am deeply impressed with Gerd's dedication to each project, his high level of professionalism, his knowledge and enthusiasm, and the great passion for what has been his life...art."

Arts Educator – Clarissa Boeriu / All American Ballet Company

Nominated by Camille Wallace, President of All American Ballet, Clarissa Boeriu (lovingly called "Mrs. B" by her students) serves as the Artistic Director of the All American Ballet Company in Ventura. Born and educated in Romania, Clarissa has taught in Ventura for the past 14 years, promoting the highest standards of technique, integrity and professionalism. Her dancers have been awarded scholarships to university dance programs at the Boston Conservatory, Butler University, UC Irvine, and UC Santa Barbara. Many students have gone on to dance professionally in companies around the world including New York City Ballet, Royal Danish Ballet, Stuttgart Ballet, Munich Opera, Zurich Opera, Boston Ballet, Ballet San Jose, San Francisco Ballet, Dance Theatre of Harlem, Milwaukee Ballet, Cirque du Soleil, Eugene Ballet and Pennsylvania Ballet. Beyond the high level of technical and artistic standards that Clarissa has established, she has instilled in many students a sense of passion, discipline and focus, which serve them in other facets of their lives. Her former students frequently credit her with their success and praise her for the training she has provided.

Special Initiative – Ventura Convention & Visitors Bureau for the Nonprofit Organization Marketing Grant Program

Cheryl Heitmann of the Ventura Music Festival nominated the Ventura Visitors and Convention Bureau in the category of Special Initiative for its 2006 Nonprofit Organization Marketing Grant Program. In February 2006, \$15,000 of in-kind advertising and marketing services was awarded to six organizations including the Buenaventura Gallery, Focus on the Masters, Livery Theater, San Buenaventura Foundation for the Arts, and the Ventura Music Festival. Grants resulted in advertising in top media publications including *Southwest Art*, *Artscene*, *Los Angeles Times* and *Westways* and garnered extensive press coverage and attendance of each organization's programs. The total combined efforts resulted in over 1,100 households requesting information on the events. Over 1 million households were reached through the awarded advertising and public relations efforts. Through the dedicated efforts of Executive Director Jim Luttjohann and his hard-working staff and board, the Bureau serves as an innovative leader in attracting visitors to "California's New Art City".