

**MEDIA CONTACT**

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**Hermitage STARs Announced for 2018**

*Four outstanding Florida arts educators have been selected for a three-week residency, July 2-22, at the Hermitage Artist Retreat in Englewood. This year's recipients hail from Tampa, Miami, West Palm Beach and Merritt Island.*

(Sarasota County) This month, four Florida public school arts teachers will be spending three weeks in Sarasota County working on their own artistic endeavors. They’re the winners of the 2018 State Teacher/Artist Residency program (STARs), presented by the Hermitage Artist Retreat and the [Florida Alliance for Arts Education](http://faae.org/) (FAAE). This year's recipients include three visual artists and a composer. The four receive a three-week summer residency, July 2-22, at the Hermitage in Englewood, where they live and work as artists, without any expectation, schedule or demands.

“These exceptional educators are also artists,” says Bruce Rodgers, executive director of the Hermitage. “They need time to pursue their own artistic work. Creativity is like a muscle, and like other muscles, it needs to be exercised. The STAR program gives them the rare opportunity to experience an ambience where artists from around the world come to get motivated and connect with the artist within. Stepping back from the demands of everyday life can inspire leaps in creativity.”

The chosen four are Marisa Flint, a visual arts teacher from Edgewood Junior/Senior High School (Brevard County); Rosemary Shaw, a visual arts teacher from U.B. Kinsey/Palmview Elementary School of the Arts (Palm Beach County); Travis Damato, a music composition teacher at Muller Elementary Magnet School (Hillsborough County); and Laura Tan, an art teacher at Southside Elementary Museum Magnet School (Dade County).

Florida arts educators apply for the Hermitage summer residencies through FAAE. Applications are open to all Florida music, visual art and creative writing teachers. Since the start of the program in 2011, 39 teachers have represented 20 Florida counties. Residencies last for three weeks and culminate with a free community program on the Hermitage’s beachfront campus. This year’s program is scheduled for Friday, July 20, at 7 p.m., and is open to the public.

**Marisa Flint** is a painter who has taught visual art at Edgewood Junior/Senior High School in Merritt Island since 2004. She also serves on the county’s Art Leadership Team. She says that her plan for the residency is to immerse herself in the practice of encaustic painting. She views winning this residency as a way to model for her students the importance of applying for opportunities that can help one grow as an artist and a person.

**Rosemary Shaw**, a mixed media/acrylic painter, has taught visual art at U.B. Kinsey/Palmview Elementary School of the Arts in West Palm Beach since 1995. During her residency, she plans to develop a series of works reflecting the inspiration she gets from objects collected around the Hermitage campus, incorporating what is given in nature into layered paintings.

**Travis Damato** is a composer who teaches music composition at Muller Elementary Magnet School in Tampa. He plans to re-orchestrate and complete a large wind ensemble piece he started several years ago, as well as strengthen his knowledge of electronic music during his residency.

**Laura Tan**, a figurative painter and school teacher for more than 30 years, teaches art to grades two through five at Southside Elementary Museum Magnet School in Miami. She has exhibited extensively in South Florida. Her residency plan is to enjoy solitude and nature, “get lost in the moment,” and explore painting watercolors on new surfaces.

“We look forward to seeing what this latest group of STARs will create,” says Rodgers. “It’s an honor to celebrate Florida’s top arts educators.”

**About the Hermitage Artist Retreat:**

The Hermitage is a not-for-profit artist retreat located at 6660 Manasota Key Road in Englewood, Florida. It invites accomplished painters, sculptors, writers, playwrights, poets, composers and other artists from all over the world for residencies on its beachfront historic campus. Artists are asked to interact with the community during their stay and, as a result, Hermitage artists touch thousands of Gulf Coast community residents with unique and inspiring programs each year. Hermitage programs are sponsored by philanthropist Gerri Aaron, and in part by the National Endowment for the Arts, the Florida Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs, the Florida Council of Arts and Culture and the State of Florida (Section 286.25, Florida Statutes), and Sarasota County Tourist Development Tax Revenues. In addition, the Hermitage awards and administers the prestigious Greenfield Prize, an annual $30,000 commission for a new work of art, rotating among visual art, music and drama. The Hermitage also partners with the Aspen Music Festival and School to award the annual Hermitage Prize to a composition student during the Festival. For more information about The Hermitage Artist Retreat, call 941-475-2098, Ext. 5, or visit the website at www.HermitageArtistRetreat.org.