

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## **WSIU Public Broadcasting Honors Oak Street Art Group with 'Good Neighbor' Award Inspired by Fred Rogers**

**Carbondale, IL** – WSIU Public Broadcasting, a service of Southern Illinois University Carbondale, is pleased to announce Oak Street Art Group as the new Community Group award recipient for WSIU's One Region, All Neighbors initiative. The "Good Neighbor" Award is inspired by Fred Rogers and recognizes those who make a positive impact in the community. Each month during 2019, winners will be chosen from nominations submitted by the public in five categories - individual, youth, educator, community group and business

Exemplifying the power of "art-reach," the intersection of art and outreach, a team of eight local artists earned the "Good Neighbor" Award for their efforts with John A. Logan Elementary School in the Murphysboro, Ill., school district. Nominated by teacher Tabitha Harris, the Oak Street Art Group recently expanded from a local art fair into classrooms and the community at large.

Initially, the group created an accessible art fair that brought artists out of their studios; annual events now include a children's art tent, music stage, and emerging and established artists. The children's tent evolved into an outreach – or art-reach – program that member Shirley Krienert set up with John A. Logan Elementary School, which didn't have any art programming at the time.

"Art was critical to all of us as children and to our children," said Cathy Schmidt, and the group wanted to support more creative options for kids.

Krienert, a retired elementary teacher, helped launch the second-grade program, which incorporates art, literature, history and culture, "and the feedback has just been mind-blowing." The volunteers are now recognized with hugs and appreciation even when not at school. The program has since expanded to the Murphysboro Center and includes a holiday ornament program for kids, with plans to increase programming via the General John A. Logan Museum.

To this team of teachers and artists, being a good neighbor is all about “supporting, sharing, respect, conversations, and actively doing,” according to Sue Gindlesparger.

“There’s nothing better than seeing a little person’s face light up because of something you’ve said or” the experience of mentorship, and “having that success and feeling of seeing the self-esteem build in a child, that’s just priceless,” added Gindlesparger.

The group has “demonstrated and modeled neighborliness to me, my colleagues, and, most importantly, our students. Creative expression through art is something I believe essential to the development of a whole child,” said Harris. “When I expressed a need in my school district, the group jumped immediately into action to do what they could to provide those opportunities to the young people I call ‘my kids.’ My kids have benefited greatly and have made meaningful connections to art.”

Reactions to earning the award ranged from “a happy dance” by Krienert to a lot of “wows” and “whoahs.” “I think this is just the beginning,” said Luca Cruzat, citing the great long-term potential of art and opportunities for all in the community.

### **About One Region, All Neighbors**

WSIU’s One Region, All Neighbors campaign is inspired by the life and legacy of Fred Rogers. For more than 30 years, Rogers reached into homes and hearts with his children’s public television program, “Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood,” demonstrating the power of kindness and transforming our understanding of childhood. WSIU’s One Region, All Neighbors initiative encourages community members to nominate those making positive contributions through acts of kindness, compassion and service. Each month during 2019, winners are chosen from nominations submitted by the public in five categories - individual, youth, educator, community group and business. All awardees and nominators will be invited to attend a special ceremony where they will be recognized for outstanding contributions in their communities.

### **Nominate Your Neighbors**

WSIU encourages the public to participate in the One Region, All Neighbors campaign by nominating neighbors at <http://www.wsiu.org/neighbor> and sharing on social media using #WeAreAllNeighbors.

### **About WSIU Public Broadcasting**

WSIU Public Broadcasting is licensed to the Board of Trustees of Southern Illinois University and is an integral part of the College of Mass Communication & Media Arts on the Carbondale campus. WSIU stations reach more than five million people across six

states and beyond through five digital public television channels, three public radio stations, a radio information service, a website, and education and outreach services.

WSIU's mission is to improve the quality of life of the people they serve. WSIU stations partner with other community organizations to promote positive change and to support the academic and public service missions of Southern Illinois University Carbondale. Learn more and get the latest station news online at [wsiu.org](http://wsiu.org) and on WSIU's Facebook and Twitter pages. WSIU's programs and services are partially funded by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency.

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