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OMA Founder H. Eugene (Gene) Jones Wins Prestigious \$100,000 Purpose Prize!

Gene Jones, Opening Minds Through the Arts founder and benefactor, has won a \$100,000 Purpose Prize for 2007, given by Civic Ventures, a national think tank and program incubator helping society achieve the greatest return on experience.

"I'm just blown away," Jones said upon learning that he received one of only five \$100,000 awards. "I want it go to the kids!" Jones, 91, is contributing all of his prize money to TUSD's OMA Program and Foundation.

Gene, a decorated World War II bomber pilot, built his post-war career by turning failing businesses into profitable corporations. Then, in 1999, at the age of 84, he turned his attention, skills and time to the next generation. Combining his business savvy and love of music with his passion for education, Jones helped create and fund the Opening Minds Through the Arts Program in TUSD. In 2003, with the program well underway and recognizing the need for outside support for the program, he laid the groundwork and provided additional funds to establish the OMA Foundation.

The Purpose Prize is a three-year, \$9 million program investing in social innovators over age 60 and is the nation's only large-scale award for those working to solve a critical social problem in the second half of life. "The Purpose Prize winners are taking their wisdom, their skills and, in some cases, their savings to engage in work that has meaning beyond themselves," [said] Jim Emerman, director of the Purpose Prize program and vice president of Civic Ventures. Funding for



Gene Jones
Spring 2007

the Prize comes from The Atlantic Philanthropies and The John Templeton Foundation.

Started eight years ago in just three TUSD elementary schools, the [OMA Program this year will serve 19,000 students in 42 TUSD elementary and middle schools.](#)

See related story, p. 2. Also see Civic Ventures & The Purpose Prize at: www.purposeprize.org

"This [OMA] is the most satisfying thing I've done in my life by far."

Gene Jones in an interview with the Arizona Daily Star, July 2007

He's Made A Difference For Kids

This story was excerpted with permission from an Arizona Daily Star article on July 20, 2007.

Eugene Jones has more than 17,000 reasons to believe that he has made a difference in Tucson.

When he was 84 years old, Jones founded Opening Minds Through the Arts, a program within the Tucson Unified School District that uses music, dance and other creative forms to stimulate academic learning in children...

Opening Minds reaches more than 17,000 students a year and includes involvement from more than 50 professional local musicians, dancers and artists.

"This is the most satisfying thing I've done in my life by far," Jones ... said ... "I've had the opportunity to help affect so many kids' lives, to make such a difference in their outlook and their chances."

Jones has always been a staunch supporter of the arts, particularly music ... He came up with the concept for Opening Minds after attending an American Symphony Orchestra League-sponsored seminar that included a workshop on student learning through the arts.

"I came out of that room on fire," Jones said. "I thought that if this is what music can do, we damn well better do it. We would be derelict not to." Jones contacted the Tucson Unified School District and, with the help of people like TUSD Fine and Performing Arts Director Joan Ashcraft, got the ball rolling... He kicked this [the OMA Program] off with a \$50,000 contribution...

Under guidelines set out by Jones and his colleagues, the district formed ties to major players in the arts community, recruiting members from the Tucson Symphony, Arizona Opera and the University of Arizona's music and dance schools – a practice that they continue to this day...

By all accounts, the program appears to have yielded results. [Studies conducted by the independent educational research firm WestEd have shown improved Stanford 9 test scores in reading, language and mathematics for students attending Opening Minds Through the Arts schools.](#) Those kind of numbers have garnered national attention.

Jones himself – who said he has ponied up more than \$1 million of his own money for Opening Minds Through the Arts – is currently in the running for the ... Purpose Prize for his philanthropy, a \$100,000 award... Jones said every cent of that money will be put into the program. He hopes to have Opening Minds Through the Arts running in every elementary school in the district within the next few years and eventually in all of the districts throughout the Tucson area.

"In this fast-moving world, you've got to have a good education," Jones said. "It is gratifying to see that happening in Tucson."

Jones' Prize Delights Leaders

Governor Janet Napolitano: "Gene Jones epitomizes what is best about Arizona. His dedication to children, education and the arts is a model that all Arizonans can look to for inspiration. Students, TUSD and our state are indeed fortunate to be the beneficiaries of Gene's talent, passion and generosity. Congratulations, Gene."

Mayor Bob Walkup, City of Tucson: "I've said many times that Tucson is a special place. Now here is Gene Jones to prove just how special Tucsonans can be. He has succeeded not only in business but in life. And most importantly, he has improved the lives of our children by opening their minds to the arts. Congratulations to Gene for this well-deserved award."

Roger Pfeuffer, TUSD Superintendent: "Gene's award is fitting recognition for a world class individual and a world class TUSD program. The OMA Program stands high above every other arts program in the nation. It is a result of Gene's extraordinary vision, generosity and commitment, combined with the exceptional talents and hard work of TUSD educators who turned Gene's vision into reality. Congratulations - and thanks from all of 'US' in TUSD, Gene."

Mary Belle McCorkle, Ed.D., OMA Foundation President: "We who have been privileged to work with Gene are ecstatic about his winning the Purpose Prize. We've seen his tireless work and his financial generosity to the OMA Program. And it's always been 'for the kids,' as he's repeatedly said. Indeed, thousands of TUSD children have received a better education because of him. We revel in your accomplishments, Gene, and the national recognition you have earned – and now have received."

Joan Ashcraft, DMA, Director, TUSD Fine & Performing Arts/OMA: "On behalf of everyone on whose lives you have made such a positive, significant impact – our students, their parents and teachers, the arts integration specialists, the teaching artists, OMA staff and especially on me – we send you our heartfelt thanks and heartiest of congratulations. We are overjoyed!"

TUSD Employee Payroll Deduction Approved for OMA Foundation

TUSD employees can now make contributions to the OMA Foundation through payroll deductions. The foundation is pleased and proud to have received approval from the TUSD Governing Board this spring. Contribution cards are being distributed at all school sites and departments.

Contributions can be made in amounts of \$1, \$2, \$5, \$10 or other for each pay period. When cards are completed, please either return them through interschool mail or send them to:

The OMA Foundation
Lee Instructional Resource Center
2025 E. Winsett Street
Tucson, AZ 85719

The foundation will send each contributor an e-mail confirmation note, and within a few weeks, contributors also will receive a written "official" thank you and verification letter. The foundation will quickly send the cards to the Payroll Department. If you'd like a card and didn't receive one, just e-mail or call the foundation at: shirley.kiser@tusd1.org. **225-4656**

Here are a few reasons why the foundation encourages employees to contribute to the foundation.

- OMA has proven success in improving students' test scores, attendance and self-discipline at the same time it develops an appreciation for the arts.
- OMA brings positive local, state and national recognition to TUSD.
- Last year the OMA Program served 17,000 students in 36 TUSD elementary and middle schools. This year it will serve 19,000 students in 42 schools.
- Please contribute at least \$1 per pay period to help OMA to continue helping students. OMA WORKS!

Thanks so much for considering our request. We appreciate it greatly.

Mary Belle McCorkle, Ed.D., president
Shirley Kiser, executive director

OMA Program Proudly Adds Six New Schools

"It is with great pleasure I am announcing we are adding six new schools to the OMA 'family' this year," said TUSD's Fine & Performing Arts Director, Joan Ashcraft.

This brings the total number of OMA schools in TUSD to 42. The schools are: Cragin, Miles, Ochoa, Oyama and Richey Elementary Schools and Naylor Middle School.

IT'S TAX CREDIT SEASON!

Dear Readers: If you haven't yet made a tax credit contribution, please consider making it to an OMA School. For a list of the OMA schools, please go to the OMA website at www.omaprogramaz.org

YES, I WANT MY TAX CREDIT CONTRIBUTION TO GO TO AN OMA SCHOOL

Name _____ Address _____

Phone _____ Contribution Amount \$ _____

Name of School _____

Please clip this form, make out your check to an OMA school of your choice, write "OMA" in the memo and return it to: **Dr. Joan Ashcraft, 2025 E. Winsett Street, Tucson, AZ 85719**. When we receive your check, we'll quickly mail you a tax receipt.



OPENING MINDS
THROUGH THE
ARTS

**OPENING MINDS THROUGH
THE ARTS FOUNDATION**
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TUCSON, AZ, 85719

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Organization
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Opening Minds Through The Arts Foundation

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Foundation Elects New Leadership Team

At the Annual Meeting of the OMA Foundation Board of Directors on September 5, the board elected a new slate of officers and committee chairs and added three new board members:

Officers

- President Mary Belle McCorkle
- Founder & Past-President.... H. Eugene Jones
- President-Elect Carolyn Kemmeries
- Secretary Renee Downing
- Treasurer Jason Zeider
- Member-at-Large Marilyn Heins

Committee Chairs

- Development Julia Barwell
- Marketing Renee Downing
- Nominating & Governance .. Marilyn Heins, Mary Belle McCorkle, Renee Downing

New Members

- Dan Eckstrom
- Judith Meyer
- Sally Trattner



Please Consider a Tax Deductible Contribution to the OMA Foundation

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

Name (s) _____

Address _____

Zip Code _____ Phone Number _____

Please make check out to: Opening Minds Through The Arts Foundation

We will send you a receipt acknowledging your donation.

Send donation to: **Opening Minds Through The Arts Foundation**
2025 E. Winsett Street, Tucson, AZ 85719