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Celebrate! Maya Project announces 2019 Spirit of Maya Award winners

LITTLE ROCK—The Celebrate! Maya Project, an Arkansas-based nonprofit honoring Maya Angelou, has announced that Garbo Hearne and the late Beulah Flowers are the recipients of the organization's 2019 Spirit of Maya Award. The award will be presented at the nonprofit's 5th Anniversary Celebration, which takes place 6-9 p.m. Friday, Oct. 18, at the Clinton Presidential Center in downtown Little Rock.

Angelou referred to Flowers as Bertha Flowers in "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings." Flowers was a teacher and community activist in Stamps, Arkansas. She supported the young Angelou's love of books and poetry and, through literature, helped Angelou regain her speech after she was mute.

Hearne is director of Pyramid Art, Books & Custom Framing and Hearne Fine Art in Little Rock's historic Dunbar neighborhood. She is an advocate for the inclusion of black culture in art and literature, and she serves on the board for the Mid-America Arts Alliance and represents Arkansas on the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies. She is also founder of Arkansans for the Arts, an arts advocacy organization.

"Through the Spirit of Maya Award, we remember the legacy of Maya Angelou while recognizing important community leaders who embody the lessons Angelou has given us in her works," said Janis F. Kearney, president and founder of the Celebrate! Maya Project. "This year's Spirit of Maya Award winners represent Angelou's teachings and our organization's mission through demonstrating how the humanities can help change a life."

The Celebrate! Maya Project provides educational programming related to Angelou and academic scholarships for high school writers and poets. Tickets to the 5th Anniversary Celebration are \$100 and benefit these efforts.

The organization's commemoration of its fifth anniversary also includes its 2019 FriendRaiser from 6-8 p.m. Oct. 17 at Trapnall Hall in Little Rock and a Stamps Educational Bus Tour that departs from Little Rock on Oct. 19.

The public is invited to nominate candidates for the annual Spirit of Maya Award.

"It's 2019, and we need Maya Angelou's wisdom and compassion for human life more than ever before," Kearney said. "She was an unparalleled reminder for all of us of why we are here: that our lives must be about more than simply 'getting through,' but about getting through, then pulling one or five or 10 young people through, behind us."

For tickets and more information on the Celebrate! Maya Project, visit celebratemayaproject.org.