



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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BIG ARTS

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**BIG ARTS RECEIVES PUBLIC RECOGNITION**

**October 10, 2025 – Sanibel Island, FL** – BIG ARTS, formerly known as the Barrier Island Group for the Arts, established in 1979, was recently recognized by the City of Sanibel with a formal Proclamation of appreciation for its community support post Hurricane Ian.

From December 6, 2022, through August 19, 2025, all City of Sanibel government meetings -- normally held in MacKenzie Hall -- were relocated due to the devastating destruction of City Hall by Hurricane Ian. The City's meetings were held continuously in BIG ARTS 410-seat Christensen Performance Hall and included the support of BIG ARTS professional staff for every meeting. The formal City of Sanibel Proclamation, signed by Mayor Mike Miller, Vice Mayor Holly D. Smith, and Councilmembers Laura DeBruce, John Henshaw and Richard Jones, lauds BIG ARTS for its community support and commitment.

"We are deeply appreciative to the City of Sanibel's leadership for this recognition. I know I speak for the entire BIG ARTS staff and board when I say it was an honor to host the City of Sanibel meetings. While BIG ARTS sustained costly storm damage and loss of income due to cancelled programming, it paled in comparison to the tragedies experienced by so many of our neighbors, friends, and business partners. We share this honor with the generous Sanibel residents who made possible a beautiful new building finished in January 2020 that no doubt saved BIG ARTS from greater damage", said Lee Ellen Harder, BIG ARTS Executive Director

In addition to City government meetings held for 32 months, BIG ARTS provided five free open houses for the community throughout the months following Hurricane Ian with free food, beverages, and entertainment. "BIG ARTS was founded on the principle of community commitment to our quality of life, and it remains so today," commented Rene Savarise, BIG ARTS Chair of the Board.

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## **About BIG ARTS**

BIG ARTS vision and mission is to create great arts, entertainment and learning experiences that always inspire, enrich and delight through an array of quality arts and education programs including lectures by world renowned experts, arts education workshops and classes, and dynamic professional visual and performing arts presentations. For information, contact BIG ARTS at 239-395-0900, or stop by 900 Dunlop Road, Sanibel Island, and visit BIG ARTS three professional galleries and a gift shop featuring varied, stunning and unique creations by local artists. Visit [www.bigarts.org](http://www.bigarts.org) for more information and hours.