



## **Ulysses Owens, Jr. Selected for the Ann McDonald Baker Art Ventures Award**

*Grammy award-winning performer, producer and educator uses music to empower Jacksonville youth*

JACKSONVILLE, Florida – September 12, 2022 – Grammy Award-winning jazz percussionist, producer and educator Ulysses Owens Jr. was recently named the 2022 Ann McDonald Baker Art Ventures Award recipient by The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida. The award, bestowed annually, recognizes a gifted local artist whose work brings distinction to Northeast Florida. The award is named for the late Ann McDonald Baker and includes a \$10,000 unrestricted grant for the recipient.

A graduate of Douglas Anderson School of the Arts and the Juilliard School of Music, and a Jacksonville native, Owens was called “a drummer who takes a back seat to no one,” by the *New York Times*. Owens’ artistic command of percussion has earned him positions in some of the most successful jazz ensembles in the world. His accolades are numerous, including being named a Rising Star by DownBeat Magazine five times in a row; the Gold Medal winner in the 2014 Global Music Awards; and a 2015 Jazz at Lincoln Center Awards Honoree. His most notable accomplishments are performances on the 2021 Grammy Award-winning album *Dedicated to You*, and the 2021 Grammy Award-winning Big Band album, *The Good Feeling*.

In addition to touring, he is regularly involved in special projects, including serving as Artist-in-Residence at the Park Avenue Armory Conservancy. He was also commissioned by Jazz at Lincoln Center and the Museum of Modern Art to compose a work for the Museum’s Summer Garden Series. Owens has demonstrated a lifelong commitment to educating music’s next generation and has held music positions at numerous music schools.

Alongside his international touring schedule, Owens is deeply invested in Jacksonville. In 2008, he was inspired to create a nonprofit organization, Don’t Miss A Beat, with his family as an antidote to the level of high school dropouts and murder rates among young Black people in the community. The program began with the singular objective of helping suspended youth stay in school so they wouldn’t “miss a beat.” Today, Don’t Miss A Beat blends music, art, academic achievement and civic engagement to enhance the lives of children, teens and their parents in the Riverside, Brooklyn and Woodstock communities of Jacksonville. The organization uses the performing arts to facilitate youth development, cultivate talent, provide academic support, and enhance educational achievement and graduation rates.

“Ulysses’ superior artistry has brought a singular distinction to Northeast Florida. It is this type of dedication to craft Ann McDonald Baker sought to recognize in her lifetime through Art Ventures,” according to Amy Crane, senior program director at The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida and coordinator of the Ann McDonald Baker Art Ventures Award selection process.

“Just as remarkable, through Don’t Miss A Beat, Ulysses has impacted the lives of thousands of young people and their families in Jacksonville. Students have stayed in school, graduated, and received scholarships to colleges. His passion for cultivating young artists by investing in their education has profoundly benefitted our entire community.”

Owens was introduced as the 2022 Ann McDonald Baker Award winner at the Don’t Miss A Beat Summer Camp finale and the Broadway Production of Dreamgirls held last month in Jacksonville.

(more)



### **About The Ann McDonald Baker Art Ventures Award**

For decades, The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida has invested in the arts as part of an exceptional initiative known as Art Ventures, which grew out of a challenge grant from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) in 1989. Community Foundation Trustees Ann McDonald Baker and Courtenay Wilson led the successful drive to raise the necessary matching funds, and the Art Ventures initiative has now provided more than \$1 million to individuals and small arts organizations since inception. In 2015, The Community Foundation created the Ann McDonald Baker Art Ventures Award to recognize gifted local artists whose work brings distinction to Northeast Florida, and to honor Ann Baker's pivotal role in creating and/or nurturing many vital cultural organizations as well as her leadership as the first female chair of The Community Foundation Board of Trustees.

### **About The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida**

The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida ([www.jaxcf.org](http://www.jaxcf.org)), Florida's oldest and largest community foundation, works to stimulate philanthropy to build a better community. The Foundation helps donors invest their philanthropic gifts wisely, helps nonprofits serve the region effectively, and helps people come together to make the community a better place. Created in 1964, the Foundation had assets of \$630.4 million at 12/31/2021 and has made approximately \$640 million in grants since inception.

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### **Editors: Photo available – photo credit Felicia Bass**

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