

UMS Announces 2018 DTE Energy Foundation Educator of the Year Awards

Awards Honor Teachers in Detroit and Ann Arbor: Denise Allen from Martin Luther King, Jr. High School and Yael Rothfeld from Ann Arbor's Thurston Elementary School

Ann Arbor, MI (May 29, 2018) — The **University Musical Society (UMS)** and the **DTE Energy Foundation** are pleased to honor Martin Luther King, Jr. High School Teacher **Denise Allen** and Thurston Elementary School Teacher **Yael Rothfeld** as the 2018 **DTE Energy Foundation Educators of the Year**.

The award recognizes and celebrates excellence in arts education, lifting up the importance of the arts as a way of teaching 21st-century knowledge and skills, including creativity, collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and familiarity with local and global cultures. The recipients were nominated through a public nomination process. The DTE Energy Foundation is sponsoring the awards as part of its annual grant support for UMS Youth Education Programs.

“We believe that exposure to artistic experiences in education helps young people become innovative, collaborative, and creative thinkers, as well as compassionate and open-minded individuals,” said UMS President Matthew VanBesien. “We are so grateful for the DTE Energy Foundation for recognizing the value that the arts can bring to an educational setting and for continuing its longstanding support of UMS’s K-12 initiatives. Together, we are thrilled to honor Denise Allen and Yael Rothfeld for their remarkable ability to leverage the power of the arts to make a positive difference in the lives of our community’s young people.”

“The DTE Energy Foundation is proud to partner with UMS Youth Education Programs, particularly when we honor outstanding educators in the community,” said DTE Energy Foundation President Lynette Dowler. “Great teachers like Denise Allen and Yael Rothfeld provide their students with the opportunity

to experience the arts in a way that will affect them for a lifetime. Ms. Allen and Ms. Rothfeld’s dedication to the arts and their students is truly inspiring.”

A dance educator at Martin Luther King, Jr. High School in Detroit, **Denise Allen** is a noted champion for the inclusion of the “A for Arts” in STEAM. Mrs. Allen runs one of the few performing arts programs that has remained within Detroit Public Schools throughout its years of emergency management and one of just a handful of dance programs offered for credit at high schools throughout Southeast Michigan. She organizes after-school rehearsals, special evening and weekend performances, and master classes with guest artists, as well as student fundraisers that provide students with opportunities to develop leadership skills. Several of Ms. Allen’s students have gone on to study with professional dance companies, but the discipline, confidence, and focus instilled in learning the craft has also led her students to success in academics and other areas of life.

Ms. Allen’s commitment to inclusivity in her program is especially laudable. To allow any student who wishes to participate the opportunity to do so, she arranges transportation, provides healthy snacks, and purchases costumes and supplies for students who are in need. She also invites autistic students to her dance performances at no cost, encouraging the use of the movement, rhythm, and sound embedded in dance as both physical and communicative therapy. She has made a big difference in the lives of young male students, encouraging them to explore and enjoy their interest in dance and to enjoy it without fear of shame from their male peers.

Yael Rothfeld has been a vocal music educator at Thurston Elementary School in Ann Arbor for 15 years. Ms. Rothfeld works with students in Preschool through Fifth Grade, developing her curriculum in a way that demonstrates to her students the importance of music throughout the world, in her students’ own communities, and in the life of their school. She organizes regular performances for her students, giving them an opportunity to set and work toward specific goals, and to use music as a powerful tool to communicate around ideas and issues that are relevant to their everyday lives.

Ms. Rothfeld continuously develops new programs and ideas for her students so they can grow through hand-on experiences with different instruments and techniques. In 2015, she launched a successful fundraiser to purchase ukuleles — an instrument that lends itself particularly well to teaching melody, harmony, singing, improvising, and storytelling — for Thurston to add another layer of music to the

school curriculum. She also leverages resources offered by regional arts organizations to further her own professional development, bringing new ideas and techniques back to her classroom and taking students out of the school to experience live performances by professional artists.

Visit ums.org/DTEAwards18 for more information and video content.

ABOUT DTE ENERGY FOUNDATION

The DTE Energy Foundation is the philanthropic arm of DTE Energy, continuing the legacy of community support and involvement of its electric and natural gas utilities, which serve 2.1 million electric customers and 1.2 million natural gas customers in Michigan. In 2017, the DTE Energy Foundation provided \$18 million in grant support to nonprofits throughout the company's service territories. As one of Michigan's leading corporate citizens, DTE Energy is a force for growth and prosperity in the 450 Michigan communities it serves in a variety of ways, including philanthropy, volunteerism and economic progress. Visit DTEFoundation.com for more information on the Foundation's work across the state.

ABOUT UMS

A recipient of the 2014 National Medal of Arts, UMS (also known as the University Musical Society) contributes to a vibrant cultural community by connecting audiences with performing artists from around the world in uncommon and engaging experiences. One of the oldest performing arts presenters in the country, UMS is an independent non-profit organization affiliated with the University of Michigan, presenting over 70 music, theater, and dance performances by professional touring artists each season, along with over 100 free educational activities. UMS is committed to bold artistic leadership, engaged learning through the arts, and access and inclusiveness. Since 1990, the organization has co-commissioned and supported the production of nearly 80 new or reimagined works. Matthew VanBesien joined UMS as its seventh president in July 2017.

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