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## **UMS Announces Winner of 2021 DTE Energy Foundation Educator of the Year Award**

### **Award Honors Ann Arbor Public Schools Teacher Laura Wayne from King Elementary**

Ann Arbor, MI (April 27, 2022) — The **University Musical Society (UMS)** and the **DTE Energy Foundation** are pleased to honor King Elementary and A2V+ Virtual Academy’s **Laura Wayne** as the **2021 DTE Energy Foundation Educator of the Year**.

The award recognizes and celebrates educators who value the importance of arts education and create a culture for the arts to flourish in their school communities. A teacher at King Elementary and, during the 2020-21 school year, the A2V+ Virtual Academy, Ms. Wayne, was nominated through a public nomination process. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the award ceremony was postponed to spring of 2022. UMS and the DTE Foundation are thrilled to recognize Ms. Wayne’s exemplary work at both King Elementary and the A2V+ Virtual Academy. The DTE Foundation is sponsoring the award as part of its annual grant support for UMS Youth Education Programs.

As part of the award, UMS will provide complimentary tickets and transportation for Ms. Wayne to bring one class to a UMS School Day Performance next season, additional complimentary tickets to a mainstage UMS performance, and a \$200 award honorarium. UMS will also work with Ms. Wayne to bring a UMS touring artist to King Elementary for a class visit or school assembly.

Described by colleagues as an open-minded, calm, and inclusive presence who truly believes in her students’ creativity, Ms. Wayne implements a teaching philosophy that centers art and exploration. When asked about her philosophy, Ms. Wayne said, “I try to provide a creative, safe, and compassionate environment. I trust what my students can do. There are no mistakes, only learning.”

Her philosophy and work with students inspire faculty and administrators in her school and beyond to emulate her approach to art-centered lessons. Partnering across schools, Ms. Wayne collaborated with the music teacher at STEAM/Northside to have students create a “Musicscape” in the school garden. Using clay and a variety of design techniques, Ms. Wayne helped students create mobiles that were hung in and around the garden. The beautiful sounds were heard by everyone in the school and neighborhood and inspired Carpenter Elementary administrators to replicate the project at their school.

During the 2020-21 school year, as teachers everywhere looked for innovative ways to build community over screens, Ms. Wayne continually created intricate, exciting, and engaging ways for students to connect through art. When the annual fifth grade trip to Space Camp was canceled due to COVID-19, Ms. Wayne facilitated the re-allocation of those funds towards a commemorative bench that she painted, incorporating a design from every student, and placed on the school playground.

Integrating the arts into the curriculum and building community with her students is Ms. Wayne’s life work. Amongst her colleagues, Ms. Wayne is lauded for her Edmund Fitzgerald project, in which third-grade students researched the details of the ship The Edmund Fitzgerald; illustrated posters with diagrams, photographs, and information; painted pictures of the ship; and presented their work to the school and family community. Ms. Wayne is a quintessential example of what Ann Arbor Public Schools strive for in educators.

"UMS is proud of its service to educators across Southeast Michigan who make arts integrated learning a priority in the classroom," said UMS Vice President of Education and Community Engagement Cayenne Harris. "We are thrilled that this year's Educator of the Year distinction will go to Laura Wayne who truly exemplifies the spirit of the award."

"We are thrilled to honor Laura with this well-deserved award! At the DTE Foundation, we are motivated by teachers like her who inspire our next generation of leaders," said Lynette Dowler, president of the DTE Foundation. "Our goal is to expand educational opportunities across Michigan and encourage those who are on the ground making it happen. Through passionate teachers like Laura, we know that our future is bright as we lean into education to improve our future."

## **About DTE Energy Foundation**

The DTE 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 2.3 million electric customers in Southeast Michigan and 1.3 million natural gas customers in Michigan. In 2021, the DTE Energy Foundation provided more than \$18.9 million in grant support where the company has a business presence with a focus on driving positive, meaningful change on three key areas: jobs, equity and the environment. As one of Michigan's leading corporate citizens, DTE aspires not only to be the best in the world, but the best for the world, serving as a force for growth and prosperity in the communities across Michigan. Visit [DTEFoundation.com](https://DTEFoundation.com) to learn more.

## **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 became the organization's seventh president in July 2017.