

UMS Announces 2017 DTE Energy Foundation Educator of the Year Awards

Awards Honor Beacon Day Treatment Center Teacher Jill Ross and Ypsilanti Community High School Teacher Lynne Settles

Ann Arbor, MI (May 4, 2017) — The **University Musical Society (UMS)** and the **DTE Energy Foundation** are pleased to honor Beacon Day Treatment Center teacher **Jill Ross** and Ypsilanti Community High School teacher **Lynne Settles** as the 2017 **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.

“The arts awaken curiosity, creativity and the desire for knowledge in youth, all of which help to promote diversity and empower individuals in our communities,” said Faye Nelson, vice president at DTE Energy, and board chair and president of the DTE Energy Foundation. “The Foundation is proud to ensure students across the region have access to educational programs and talented teachers who inspire them. We are pleased to join UMS in honoring Jill Ross and Lynne Settles for their exceptional work to help students grow and learn.”

UMS President Ken Fischer noted, “We are so grateful for the DTE Energy Foundation’s longstanding support of UMS and its recognition of the value that the arts can bring to an educational setting. Together, we are thrilled to honor Jill Ross and Lynne Settles 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. Their commitment to making the arts an integral part of K-12 education fosters a new excitement for learning and is instrumental in keeping a passion for the arts alive for generations to come.”

Jill Ross teaches art at Beacon Day Treatment Center, a K-12 educational facility in Southgate that serves students who struggle with emotional impairments that limit their ability to function in a regular K-12 setting. Many of Jill's students are working to overcome challenges related to homelessness, abuse, and abandonment. With no official performing arts program at Beacon Day, Ross works hard to leverage the full spectrum of community resources available to provide positive emotional and creative outlets and exceptional learning opportunities for her students. Using visual arts, drama, and movement exploration, she provides tactile experiences for her students to work with art materials and explore the different ways that their bodies can move. These experiences give her students — especially those who struggle verbally — an outlet for their feelings, allowing them to cope with and avoid depression and aggression.

Ypsilanti Community High School art teacher **Lynne Settles** incorporates visual and performing arts into her students' curriculum in unique ways that inspire them to learn about their heritage and make a meaningful and positive difference in the community. In 2015, her students designed and painted a mural in honor of the early civil rights advocate Henry P. Jacobs. Her students created a second mural in 2016 that recognizes women who were influential leaders in Ypsilanti's history. Most recently, she worked with her students to produce a special program called *Why My Life Matters, As Seen Through the Arts*, which featured spoken word, song, drama, and dance inspired by African-American figures whose lives have affected the course of history in a positive way. In preparation for these projects, her students connected with Ypsilanti community partners to explore the impact that these influential subjects have had on their lives and the city of Ypsilanti.

Visit ums.org/DTEAwards 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 2016, the DTE Energy Foundation provided \$15 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. <http://www.dteenergy.com/foundation>.

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.

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