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Contact: Susan Duffy
Cal Poly Liberal Arts
(805) 756-2327

Cal Poly Creates Endowments to Recognize Two Women in Arts Education

SAN LUIS OBISPO – Cal Poly’s Central Coast Center for Arts Education has established endowments in honor of two San Luis Obispo women who are widely recognized for their pioneering work in the field of arts education.

Cal Poly Professor Emeritus Bernice Loughran Nicholson and longtime educator, author and administrator June King McFee, both Stanford graduates, are nationally recognized scholars whose work resulted in bringing arts education to the classroom of children in both the state and the nation.

Nicholson began her teaching career at Johnson State College in Vermont in 1943. During the 1950s, she moved to Redwood City, worked as an elementary school teacher, and raised two children. She completed her doctorate in art and education at Stanford University in 1958.

She then came to Cal Poly, serving as a professor of art from 1958 to 1990 and as department chair from 1969 to 1975. “Her influence is still felt,” said Susan Duffy, chair of the university’s Liberal Studies Department. “Bernice taught at Cal Poly at a time when few women were on campus, especially women faculty members.”

During that time, Loughran was asked by the College of Engineering to design a humanities course to fulfill accreditation requirements. “From this one class, Human Values, the Liberal Studies Department at Cal Poly evolved, which in turn created the Central Coast Center for Arts Education,” Duffy said.

Loughran has published articles, texts and manuals relating to her work in art education and has shared her knowledge with scores of teachers as co-director of the Integrated Arts for the Classroom workshops that have been offered locally since 1992. She was a member of the original statewide committee that drafted the standards and framework for the visual and performing arts curriculum in California public schools, she served as president of the California State Humanities Association, and for a number of years, she was a board member of the San Luis Obispo County Arts Council. She remains active in the arts and education.

McFee earned a doctorate from Stanford in 1957, staying on as an instructor and assistant professor of art education until 1962. She taught at the University of Oregon where she also served as director of the Institute for Community Art Studies. She became head of the Department of Art Education at the University of Oregon when it was created, serving from 1977-1983.

McFee is the author of six books and scores of articles, including several that are considered “seminal” works, according to Duffy. McFee served on the editorial board of Review of Research in Visual Arts Education, and Studies in Art Education.

She received numerous awards during her long career. In 1975, the Women’s Caucus of the National Art Education Association established the June King McFee Award to honor outstanding scholars in the field of art education whose research and academic accomplishments emulate the model she set.

McFee continues to conduct research and write, and serves as an editorial board member for the Journal of Multicultural and Cross Cultural Art Education. She serves as an advisory board member to the Central Coast Center for Arts Education at Cal Poly.

“Central Coast residents might not know of the remarkable influence each woman has had on the field of arts education in California and nationally,” Duffy said. “Bernice’s efforts to keep the arts in California public schools are nothing short of heroic. She is known statewide for her unwavering commitment to establishing content standards for the arts that now must be met by every teacher in the public schools.

“June’s legacy is evident in the faculty and coursework of every arts education department in the country,” Duffy said. “She was a founder of the study of Visual Culture Education, and her work is cited in every major publication addressing this
Cal Poly Creates Two Endowments of Arts Education

Once the endowments are fully funded, the payouts they generate will be used to continue these women's work in art education and to ensure that the arts continue to be offered in San Luis Obispo County schools.

"We would like the public to help us establish these permanent endowments," Duffy said. Anyone interested in making a tax-deductible contribution should call the Central Coast Center for Arts Education at 756-2935.

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Cal Poly Public Affairs
California Polytechnic State University
San Luis Obispo, CA 93407
805.756.7266
polynews@calpoly.edu