



*Irene Rose  
Community Service  
Award*

**Purpose:** This award is to encourage and reward commitment to community service.

**Overview:** The Irene Rose Community Service Award is presented through the generosity of the Georgia College Foundation annually to one individual, and is named in honor of the late Irene Rose, an exemplary community servant. To be eligible for nomination, an employee must (1) hold full-time faculty status, and (2) be in at least the third year of employment at Georgia College. This award recognizes exemplary community service. For a previous recipient to be nominated, at least five years must have passed since the faculty member's most recent recognition with this award.

Candidates for this award must be nominated by a faculty member, department chair, or dean. Self-nominations and nominations from students will not be accepted. It is the responsibility of the nominee to ensure completion of the application portfolio.

Recipient of this award will receive a \$500 check from the Georgia College Foundation.

The award is not necessarily made annually.

**Criteria:** The nomination must include evidence that the community service is exemplary and noteworthy. The criteria for this award include the following, but are not limited to:

1. Service to the Central Georgia community.
2. Service while employed at Georgia College.
3. A consistent record of service over a period of time as distinct from a one-time contribution.
4. Service includes one or more of the following, but is not limited to the following:
  - a. Uniqueness of performance of service beyond normal expectations.
  - b. Development of a public service contract/grant that benefits the Central Georgia community.
  - c. Exemplary service to support the function of the university-wide mission.

- d. Leadership in one or more community service activities with a visible campus connection.
- e. Excellence in Continuing Education instruction or supervision.

**Required Documentation:** Nomination portfolios for this award are limited to 16 pages (in a font no smaller than 12 point, single line spacing, 1 inch margins including top and bottom), excluding the application form. Each portfolio must include the following information:

1. Faculty Excellence Application Form.
2. Nomination Letter.
  - a. Letter from nominator highlighting noteworthy community service contributions using stated criteria.
  - b. Maximum of two pages.
3. Community service narrative.
  - a. Nominee will describe their community service. Community service can be described in a number of ways, including but not limited to:
    - i. Continuing education courses taught by the nominee.
    - ii. Leadership/involvement in community service with campus visibility.
    - iii. Service performed to promote Georgia College’s service mission.
  - b. Maximum of 4 pages.
4. Documentation of community service.
  - a. Using the community service narrative, nominee will provide documentation.
  - b. Maximum of 6 pages.
5. Letters of Support.
  - a. Two letters of support from colleagues qualified to comment on the value and quality of nominee’s community service.
    - i. Letters can come from Georgia College employees and/or community members. Letter writers must describe their relationship with the nominee.
  - b. Maximum of two pages per letter.

Portfolio will have the following sections and headings, please do not add sections.

Section	Topic	Maximum # of Pages

1	Faculty Excellence Application Form	-
2	Nomination letter	2
3	Community service narrative	4
4	Documentation of community service	6
5	Letters of support	4

**Total Maximum Pages**

**16**

Required formatting: No font smaller than 12 point, single line spacing, 1 inch margins including top and bottom.

All documents must be combined into a single pdf file and submitted by email.

Portfolios that exceed 16 pages or do not meet formatting requirements will not be accepted.

**Due Dates:**

Nominations to Dr. Steve Jones by: February 13, 2015

Nominees notified by: February 16, 2015

University selection by: April 8, 2015

Award recipient notified by: April 10, 2015

Section 2

# Nomination Letter



Department of Art  
Campus Box 94  
Milledgeville, Georgia 31061-0490  
Phone 478-445-4572  
Fax 478-445-6088

February 16, 2016

Dear Steven Jones,

I am nominating Professor Valerie Aranda for the Irene Rose Community Engagement Award. Her excellent work in our various communities qualifies her as an exemplary recipient for this award in recognition of the generous and meaningful service and scholarship she has provided. Engaged well beyond the highest standards for service, promoting the GC Mission in concrete and lasting ways, and her leadership of students and faculty through unique community service activities show Professor Aranda clearly meets multiple criteria listed for this award.

Among the many projects Valerie has spearheaded, our local public library has benefited greatly, as have our Habitat for Humanity branch, the Harrisburg community, Milledgeville Main Street and First Fridays, the Flagg Social Justice program, the YES After School Enrichment Program, and the cities of Sparta and Eatonton. Her work with "The Mystery of Mucha" took our students' efforts as far afield as the Czech Republic, and these are but a few examples of the scope and breadth of her activities.

Professor Aranda has consistently worked across age groups, cultural agendas, and modes of representation in order to help others find voice and meaning in their communities. Her impressive list of local and regional service in a multitude of projects including the creation of large, complex public arts projects, the diverse groups, schools, committees, students, businesses and private citizens that she brings

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Georgia College, the state's designated public liberal arts university, combines the educational experience expected at esteemed private liberal arts colleges with the affordability of public higher education.

together for the betterment of multiple communities, the range of students, disciplines, departments and organizations that have collaborated under her guidance and vision, all speak to her profound commitment. As one of our senior faculty and most highly respected peers, she has been tireless in creating local, regional, national and international opportunities for our students.

Professor Aranda has my highest recommendation for this award, and please contact me if I can provide further information on this very worthy candidate.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'BF', with a stylized, cursive flourish.

Bill Fisher  
Professor, Chair  
Department of Art

Section 3

# Community Service Narrative

As a faculty member at Georgia College I have the honor and privilege to serve and collaborate with incredible people from the university and the communities of Baldwin county and the region. Using art and murals as a vehicle for social change, I have been fortunate to have the help of Georgia College and the Department of Art to support my endeavors that bridge Georgia College with the community. Over the fourteen years I have taught at Georgia College I have provided community service to diverse groups on multiple projects for the betterment of the community. Some of the community service projects I have led have involved volunteer work, and some projects were designed for class projects as a way to take learning beyond the classroom and connect learning to real world experiences. The opportunity for students to practice their skills with some of these projects and make a difference in the lives of others has had positive effects overall; and I feel my community service and engaged projects over the years have contributed and promoted Georgia College's values of reason, respect and responsibility as well as GC's community engaged learning mission. Whether class or volunteer projects, the students develop a sense of purpose, and leadership, which ultimately helps them develop civic awareness and a connection to the world around them. It is an honor to be considered for this award for community service and I hope you find my application and service over the years to be acceptable for recognition for the Irene Rose Community Service Award.

One of my goals as an artist, faculty member, and global citizen is to promote art, education and communities. I believe in the power of art and its ability to uplift the soul, and heal the spirit of a community, not only by the story the art expresses, or the beauty of the colors, but in how the act of creating a mural brings people from diverse perspectives together. I am particularly sensitive and motivated to work on projects where a particular community may not have access to art museums; galleries or art classes, or the resources for creative projects. Murals are typically public, large-scale, and accessible to everyone, which is a major reason I focus on murals. The most recent mural project I worked on involved creating a mural for the children's library theatre at the Mary Vinson Memorial Library in Milledgeville; a project, which began the summer of 2015 and was recently, completed spring of 2016. This project began when Sarah Hamil, program coordinator of the Mary Vinson library reached out to me in hopes of sparking an interest in creating a mural for their children's theatre. With a two hundred dollar budget for materials and a lot of planning and creativity, we found a way to make it happen. One of my students needed a project and this opportunity was a perfect match. Senior art student, Sarah Fisher took this on as her advanced mural project assignment over the summer. Under my supervision, Sarah's role was to research, sketch multiple ideas, create composite drawings, and finally put together a proposal that would be reviewed by the library staff. With the library staff's feedback and my critique and guidance we were able to finalize a mural design for their children's theatre. By the end of the summer session we had a design for their mural.

During the fall semester of 2015 I led the effort to paint the mural, a community service effort. Devoting Fridays and Saturdays to finish the mural, Sarah Fisher and I completed

the mural in January of 2016 for the Tuesday story time unveiling, where we were able to share the moment with the children, their families and the library.

Involving Georgia College students in community service is rewarding because the students begin to see the value of what they learn inside the classroom, and apply that knowledge beyond the classroom. Art is something that may be seen as superficial or not so important, but when all those involved begin to see the transformation of a place, its people, and their attitudes, as a result of rehabilitating an old mural, or bringing a visual expression that brightens the day for its viewers, students, community members and volunteers begin to see themselves as having a direct impact on the world and making a difference in the lives of others through art.

The Bishops Mural in Sparta Georgia is another example of a community service effort I am involved with. The project in Sparta involves my artistic direction in a major rehabilitation of a historic mural located in downtown Sparta, originally painted in 1996 for the Atlanta Summer Olympics. The rehabilitation and repainting began the fall of 2015 and is almost complete. Working with community organizers such as Jeanette Wadell, Storyteller and Community Organizer, Mayor Evans, local artists, Georgia College students and two professors from North Georgia College, we began to rehabilitate the deteriorating mural. Replacing decomposed panels with new plywood panels, installed by the City of Sparta, I led the volunteers to prepare the panels and repaint the fading imagery on the mural walls. With careful attention, we reconstructed through painting and drawing some of the areas that were completely faded using photographs, records, testimonies from the community, and visits to the Sparta public library to research some of the buildings that were portrayed in the mural. I involved my Painting 2 class of 10 students on two separate occasions in the repainting of the mural where they had the opportunity to engage with the local community of Sparta practicing their design and painting skills and working alongside artists like John Culver and Bubba Smith. This past Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday, I invited students to participate in providing community service to help complete the mural. The mural is about ninety percent finished. I will be leading one more paint-in day involving volunteers and the Sparta community.

Over the years, I have been fortunate to work with amazing people on unique projects that have had a positive impact on individuals, organizations, neighborhoods and diverse communities. In this narrative I have included a list of community service projects I have been involved with. These projects include service to the university, and the local, regional, state and national level. I feel that my community service with diverse communities over the years has had positive and lasting benefits. To be recognized for the Irene Rose Community Service Award would be an honor.

### **Community Service Projects**

1. High Achievers Program, Georgia College  
Habitat for Humanity-New Mural for the façade of their building; Milledgeville, GA  
Fall 2015--This project was a partnership with the High Achievers Program, the art department and the Habitat for Humanity. Working in the Fall of 2015 I led afterschool

painting sessions for the high school students as part of their project-based and apprenticeship enrichment activities. With Sequena Moon, Program Director of High Achievers Program and Ashely Youngblood, Program Assistant of the same. Murali Thirumal, Executive Director of Habitat for Humanity of Milledgeville-Baldwin Co, GA, needed a mural for the front of the Habitat office and Restore. I took this opportunity to connect the High Achievers Program students, the art department classrooms and equipment to engage them in lessons about art and mural making. After a discussion about community murals, art, and a discussion of the purpose of the Habitat for Humanity, the students drew individual designs for the mural. From their designs we created a composite design, which was led by senior Art Student Leah Collier. With a final design selected by the Habitat Staff and the student's vote, we decided on a design for the mural. The mural "canvas" or substrate, an 8ft x 8ft plywood constructed panel, was brought into the art studio for the students to work on. The painting of the mural took a couple of extra afternoons, but we were able to finish it altogether in about a month. This project involved over 20 hours of volunteer time with the High Achievers Program.

2. Habitat for Humanity –Mural rehabilitation; Milledgeville, GA, Spring 2015. This project concentrated on repainting the current large scale mural because of its fading colors. Painted originally in 2004 with visiting artist Martin Moreno and my painting 3 students. In the spring semester of 2015, my Mural, Art and Communities class worked on the repainting of the mural for approximately 1 month.

3. Harrisburg Community Mural, Milledgeville, GA; Began spring semester of 2014; Finished during the summer of 2014 involving summer art students. In collaboration with the Harrisburg Community and the Art & Social Justice co-taught class between Valerie Aranda, Professor of Art, and Sandra Godwin, Professor of Sociology. Students worked with the community on creating a series of posters to address developing Healthy Eating Lifestyles and the importance of higher education. The course culminated in an 8 ft. by 32 ft. long outdoor mural.

#### **Additional Community projects**

4. Spring 2016-Community Life Drawing sessions-collaboration between the art department and community member(s) and GC Alum, Karen Snider. This season started in January of 2016 and will continue through April for a total of 6 non-instructional classes open to the community. These non-instructional classes take place in the painting studio. I have offered these opportunities at least 5 years out of the fourteen years I have been teaching at Georgia College.

5. Fall 2015-Dia de Los Muertos Community Altar building and event. In collaboration with Department of Art, the Latino Student Association, the Campus Activities Board and students, we created a cultural site, an altar celebrating Dia de los Muertos open to the campus and community.

6. February of 2015 and 2016. Free Art for U: Mainstreet Milledgeville program staff, Deana Thornton and Carlee Schulte, in addition to local businesses in the downtown

Milledgeville area and GC art students, defined this partnership. Students created artwork the First Friday event. The art was planted in the local businesses for participants to “discover’ and keep the artwork for their personal enjoyment.

7. 2015-2016 M.O.V.E. Paint-A-Long art workshops. MOVE is an infinity group focused on Mutlicultural Organizing that Values Empowerment. I provided painting workshops in the Department of art classroom for minority staff at GC on Friday evenings on two other occasions and I will be leading a paint-along scheduled for April of 2016.

8. Fall 2015-Eagle Ridge Public School-discussions with Teachers led by Angel Anderson, GC Alum, and Principal Shaun Wells. Site visits began in August of 2015. This is a project in its early stages of development.

9. Fall 2014-RAW Project, Miami, Fl; provided assistance to international mural artists in painting murals on the walls of Jose De Diego Middle School in Miami, Dade County; December 2014.

10. Art Healthy Festival, volunteered time to participate as a face-painter for children attending the festival, under the direction of Toyia Barnes, Georgia College Administrative Assistant, Health Sciences Department.

### **Highlights Over the Years**

**2011** - Panel reviewer for NALAC Fund for the Arts Grant; National Association of Latino Arts and Culture, San Antonio, Texas. Jan. 25-26, 2011

**2009** - Art Exhibit Organizer for the Flagg Social Justice Award Ceremony, February 7, 2009, Magnolia Ballroom, Georgia College

**2007-08** - Committee Chair, National Association of Latino Arts and Culture Regional Arts Training Workshop 2008, Athens, Georgia, Planning and organizing a 2 day regional arts workshop in the U.S. Southeast region which involved Latina and Latino artists in the state Georgia and the region in a regional arts training workshop held at The Visitor and Conference Center, University of Georgia, Athens.

**2008-06** - Panelist, Georgia Council for the Arts, State Arts Program, Atlanta, Georgia, served for three consecutive years as a panel evaluator of visual arts applicants for funding from the Georgia Council for the arts. This involved visiting art institutions, centers, and programs where I conducted a site visit; an interview with the director of the institution and staff, and evaluated their programs as well. Sites included: The Georgia Museum at UGA, The Telfair Museum and Jepson Center; People TV; The Tubman African American Art Museum.

**2007** - Youth Enrichment Services-YES After School Enrichment Program; Milledgeville, Georgia, mural arts instructor for middle school youth

**2006** - Co-Juror, Middle Georgia Art Association, Winter Arts Festival, Macon, Georgia

To see more works you can visit my website at: [www.changastudioworks.com](http://www.changastudioworks.com)

## Section 4

# Documentation of Community Service

# Theater's new look

## Children's area at Mary Vinson Memorial Library gets mural

By FELICIA CUMMINGS  
fcummings@unionrecorder.com

The Children's Theater at Mary Vinson Memorial Library has been revitalized with more than just a fresh coat of paint.

The room has been re-imagined by a brand new royal mural along its interior.

"This is a project that we've wanted to do for years, and it feels great to see it to completion. When you walk into the theater room, you truly feel like you've stepped into a new environment," said Sarah Hamil, outreach coordinator for the library system.

Walls that once displayed a few whimsical painted trees are now completely covered in an enchanted forest theme, filled with dragons and other mystical creatures.

"We wanted to choose something that went along with our castle that we recently had installed for Story Time and puppet shows," she said.

Story Time at the library is approximately 30 minutes and generally includes a book reading, songs, finger plays, a video, flannel board stories and a puppet show.

On Tuesday, the library's morning and evening Story Time segments were used to officially showcase the new mural to the public.

Children, parents and library staff attended Story Time dressed as their favorite prince or princess from literature.

Each activity also included a royal theme, designed to highlight the new addition of the mural to the Children's Theater.

The mural was made possible through a partnership with Valerie Aranda, a painting professor at Georgia College.

"Valerie and one of her independent studies students, Sarah Fisher, worked with us on the design and painted the mural for us. We're so happy to see it completed," Hamil added.

Hamil said she has noticed a difference in the room since the addition of the mural.

"Oh there is a huge difference in the room. I feel as if it was completely transformed, and it feels more inviting to the type of learning environment we wanted



Felicia Cummings and contributed photo/The Union-Recorder  
The Children's Theater at Mary Vinson Memorial Library has a new mural covering the walls that depicts an enchanted forest scene, creating a new environment for children to enjoy.

children to be a part of at the library."

During the collaboration, Hamil said she and Aranda looked to other children's outlets for inspiration.

"We researched murals in children's hospitals to get a general idea of what we wanted. Our main goal was to create an environment that fosters a love of literature. What we ended up with is perfect. It's light, fun and imaginative — exactly what we wanted to see in that room," she said.

The entire project took months to complete.

"The whole project from start to finish took a couple of months. We initially started talking about in September, then Valerie and I played around with a few ideas and soon we were off and running with it," Hamil said.

Area youth who participated in Story Time at the library also got a chance to watch the room's transformation.

"We had activities going on in the theater while the process of putting the mural up was happening. I think it was a valuable experience for the children to see the whole process of the mural unfold from week to

week," Hamil said.

Library staffers are appreciative of the work that went into the new mural, she added.

"We are so grateful for the hard work that was put in to make this project a reality, and it was well

worth it."

Mary Vinson Memorial Library is located at 151 S. Jefferson St.

To find out about all the programs the library has to offer, call 478-452-0677 or visit [tilsga.org](http://tilsga.org).



# The News and Farmer

AND WADLEY HERALD

## The Jefferson Reporter



*OUR MISSION: To inform, support, unite and promote the residents of Jefferson and Glascock counties.*

### Communities On My Mind

By Philip Muller  
Correspondent



What are the biggest obstacles that Louisville faces today? What are your hopes for the future of Louisville and Jefferson County? Those questions may seem simple at first, but they were enough to prompt a whirlwind of constructive conversation among Louisville residents during a late July meeting at The Fire House Gallery.

The participating group of about 15 individuals offered a varied sampling of perspectives from young and old within our town and included middle school and college students, nurses, local political leaders, teachers and artists.

After a long discussion these participants realized that they may not see eye to eye on the particulars, but they certainly agree that issues of faith, our youth, the economy, the arts and our environment are crucial to Louisville's future.

These issues would soon come to life on a community mural that was to be created with Louisville's past and present in mind. What has now become the "Louisville Mural Project" began as a small idea by Milledgeville artist and Georgia College and State University associate professor of art, **Valerie Aranda**.

A year earlier, in August 2011, The Fire House Gallery first talked with Aranda, a muralist, about the possibility of exhibiting at the Gallery and about the type of work she might share. Having completed dozens of murals with communities around the country, Aranda had some ideas, but she needed help from locals who actually lived in Louisville.

"What are the people like?" Aranda asked early on. She wanted to have a sense of who Louisville is.

Aranda eventually visited Louisville on three separate occasions in preparation for the mural painting, talking with Gallery Fellows Casey Sullivan and Philip Muller about what form the mural might take and how the community might be involved in its conception and execution. In all of Aranda's work, whether she is painting something more personal or organizing a large team of people to complete a mural, she is always focused on the community as a whole.

Aranda first began painting murals while she was living in Arizona and continued painting in graduate school at the University of California, San Diego. Whether she is doing personal work or organizing dozens of people to create a mural, Aranda concentrates on addressing the social and economic issues that minorities and small communities struggle with, and the issues that unite them.

These themes have been explored through a series of paintings of female role models, paintings addressing the struggles of the Latino community in America, and numerous murals at schools and civic organizations that have each addressed issues specific to those communities. While her murals often showcase people who actually helped work on the painting, they are even more about helping those volunteers speak to their entire community.

In her latest mural at The Fire House Gallery, titled "Communities On My Mind," Aranda made it a priority not to simply paint a mural, but to teach those who participated about the history of murals in America and their importance in reaching out to others.

At that July meeting, she led participants through a process of visualizing their ideas by writing them and moving them around on the wall and then creating sketches of their ideas. With the help of several GCSU students, Aranda took participants' sketches and ideas back to Milledgeville where she and her students composed them into a scene they felt best represented the issues that had been discussed.

The following Saturday, Aranda returned from Milledgeville with two enthusiastic student assistants and a pair of very large canvases to be painted by our Louisville team. Over the course of the day, ideas were debated and landmarks were rearranged into an honest but hopeful vision of Louisville's past and future.

Apart from her work on the Louisville Mural Project this summer, Aranda also travelled to Argentina for two weeks to engage in a cultural exchange of techniques including painting and basket making with local artisans and community leaders in the city of Salta.

She found her interactions with the people there very inspiring and on returning to Georgia, began working on what she calls "portable murals" celebrating the people she met. Aranda paints her portable murals on large canvases, approaching these as if she were painting directly onto fixed walls, though she does not yet have a permanent destination for the work. It is the artist's aim to find permanent homes for both murals depicting Salta, Argentina and Louisville, so they can be enjoyed for generations.

To see the Louisville Mural and several other remarkable community murals

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## Habitat mural revived

LOOKING FOR SOMETHING?

SEARCH ...



POSTED BY: GCSUNADE MAY 1, 2015

Nicole Krinsky

@gcsunade

Located about three blocks north from campus on North Wayne Street, it is hard to miss the vibrant mural that covers the side of the Milledgeville Habitat for Humanity center.

Today from 5 to 7 p.m., the Mural Art and Communities class at Georgia College will unveil their mural restoration project for Habitat for Humanity Milledgeville to the community.

Taught by Professor Valerie Aranda, the purpose of the class is to teach community-based projects and collaborations through the creation of murals as a specific medium of art that involves community engagement.

The semester-long beautification project involved restoring a mural originally painted by Aranda's class of 2004 as a part of a collaborative effort with Martin Moreno, a visiting artist from Phoenix, Arizona.

Approximately 20 feet tall, the mural depicts a diverse range of images that symbolize everything from community members participating in the building process of a home, to handing over the keys to the new homeowners. The borders of the mural are lined with images of different tools used for building, but everything is centered upon a fiery sun.

“With the sun, we had talked about representing the four cardinal directions,” Aranda said. “It could also reflect different races of people regionally like a compass.”

Because the mural is outdoors, the class suffered several setbacks throughout the semester, specifically due to the constant rain. However, that did not deter senior studio art major Brooke Adams from taking advantage of the opportunity to paint large-scale.

“I always do really little, tedious work so I think that's why I wanted to go so big,” Adams said. “I got to explore what my stroke is on such a large scale because I don't usually have those opportunities.”

Adams also said that one of the biggest challenges was matching the strokes of the people who originally painted the mural back in 2004. She explained that every artist has their own stroke-style when painting, and it is important to match one's individual style to the person who painted before them in order to keep the cohesion of the mural in tact.

The community's response to the restoration of the mural has been nothing but positive. Each day that the class has worked on the mural, they have had at least one community member praise them for their hard work and talent.

In fact, during the Colonnade's onsite interview with the class, two local veterans who live in the surrounding community walked up to compliment the class and express their gratitude for the mural in the community.

"We had one lady who was driving a school bus, and she was just about to go get the kids from her school, and she stopped and got out to talk to us," said senior mass communication major Kristin Lukich. "A lot of people are really happy we are redoing it [the mural] and are happy that it is very inclusive of all the diversity in Milledgeville."

Section 5

# Letters of Support



March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016

Dear Dr. Steve Jones,

I'm writing today to offer my support for Valerie Aranda as a recipient of the Irene Rose Community Service Award. In my capacity as Library Director for the Twin Lakes Library System, serving the City of Milledgeville and Baldwin County, I have observed Valerie's service to our community, as she has gone above and beyond to assist the library and its patrons in our mission of lifelong literacy and learning.

From the beginning of Valerie's collaboration with the library, she has consistently expressed her commitment to community projects and improvement. Valerie and her students have done a tremendous job on the mural in the library's storytime room, providing joy and entertainment to community members who attend the library's programs there. Valerie worked closely with myself, the library's staff and our patrons to make sure that the mural fit the location and was as we wanted it. She worked many long hours, including weekends, to ensure the mural's completion, and worked with her students and our staff to coordinate times for work on the mural. Her dedication to the community was constantly on display.

I believe that Valerie's passion for community service would make her an excellent choice for the Irene Rose Community Service Award.

Sincerely,

  
Stephen Houser, M.L.I.S.  
Director  
Twin Lakes Library System



Department of Art  
Campus Box 94  
Milledgeville, Georgia 31061-0490  
Phone 478-445-4572  
Fax 478-445-6088

February 20, 2016

Reference for Valerie Aranda

To Whom It May Concern:

I've known Valerie Aranda for nearly nine years at Georgia College. It is a rare thing to be able to say that a colleague is also a mentor, friend and fellow artist. Each of these distinctive relationships was developed over the years by working alongside of one another with respectfulness, generosity and a shared vision for art and education. Valerie's art and collaborative educational projects always involve our students and focus on strengthening communal bonds within the region. Her art and her mural projects with students have visually changed the face of our community at Georgia College and are both influential and empowering.

Valerie's teaching methods are strengthened by her intellectual curiosity and seriousness in the creation of art, which she tries to nurture in all of her students. Her curriculum is international in focus and has extended into a popular GC course "*Art and Social Justice*", which she developed in collaboration with Sandra Godwin. I have observed Valerie engage with her students and how she encourages her students to constantly ask questions about the world and themselves. She engages them to participate physically in the process and allows them to take risks, and to challenge their own beliefs - precisely because she understands that this kind of inquiry would allow them to become their own best teachers. It is one of the most profound lessons I think a student can take away from their academic experience.

Valerie's research and artistic production falls within two very close genres: portraiture and public art murals. Her paintings document social issues of our place and time. Her palette is grounded in rich earth tones of iron, ochre and burnt sienna and is also somewhat reminiscent of the Georgia landscape. The effect of these colors against her subjects is buoyant and she will often use gestural devices to accentuate the proximity between the figure and the viewer. The narratives and style of Aranda's portraits recall the power and impact of present and past social realist muralists such as Judy Baca. Like Baca, Aranda's portraits and mural projects reflect her community in a meaningful way - using art and politics to create a visual dialogue.

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Georgia College, the state's designated public liberal arts university, combines the educational experience expected at esteemed private liberal arts colleges with the affordability of public higher education.

Within the classroom, Valerie demonstrates a sustained enthusiasm for discovery that I think also renews her commitment to her own work. Not only have I heard her talk about her enjoyment of working with students on community projects, but also I have observed it. She is enlivened by the “*give-and-take*” between herself and her students and this is evident in their enthusiasm, responsiveness and visual outcomes.

As a colleague and mentor, Valerie introduced me to many contemporary issues and practices in Latino art today. Within my first month teaching at Georgia College, Valerie encouraged me to participate and assist her in organizing a conference for Latino Artists in the South under the direction of a NALAC (**National Association of Latino Arts and Culture**). The event that she sited, proposed and organized was the first of its kind for Georgians and was intended to support and give a voice to under-represented Latino artists living and working in the south. In order to bring a thoughtful and engaged mind to the conversations, I observed how she began with ample time to hear ideas, proposals, and difficulties with the project. At the time, I felt that her patience and calm temperament solicited the best from her working team to understand community needs and a common goal. In retrospect, I also see that Valerie created opportunities for all participants to have extended conversations in the support of their research by encouraging their participation. It is this lesson of community building that she encourages. This event was the first of many experiences where I learned to appreciate her efforts and passion to define community through action.

Valerie has earned an excellent rapport amongst her other colleagues and administrators at Georgia College that reaches across the disciplines. She is known to be wholly connected to service to the community through engaged partnerships, which she developed and nurtured. Valerie continues to be an asset to the teaching profession, discipline and our community and I gladly support her in any way that I can.

Should you have any questions or like to have a conversation about Valerie Aranda, please feel free to phone me at 478-445-7024 (office) or send an email to me at [Sandra.trujillo@gcsu.edu](mailto:Sandra.trujillo@gcsu.edu)

Sincerely,



Sandra Trujillo, Associate Professor