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F&M Bank Gets Award from O.C. High School of Arts

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Farmers & Merchants Bank (F&M), a longtime advocate of arts education, received the prestigious Community Partner Award from Santa Ana's **Orange County High School of the Arts (OCHSA)** at the School's season finale performance Sunday, May 22, at the **Segerstrom Center of the Arts**.

OCHSA recognized Farmers & Merchants Bank for its long-term commitment to enhancing, expanding and endorsing the School's stature in the midst of the challenging economy. Partnering with OCHSA to invest in the artists of tomorrow, F&M played an instrumental role in financing the School's recent expansion.

In 2010, F&M was the catalyst to solidify a complex, \$30 million financing deal which had three components: acquisition of the former **OC Pavilion** building on Main Street in Santa Ana to serve as the new OCHSA Center for the Arts; purchase a building south of the existing campus to become the new visual arts facility; and refinance and renovate three existing OCHSA buildings. The new OCHSA Center for the Arts includes the **Margaret A. Webb Theater**, which is the School's new premier performance venue.

"We are very thankful to community partner F&M for driving the growth of OCHSA," says **Ralph S. Opacic**, Ed.D, president and director of OCHSA. "The Bank has demonstrated unwavering championship of the students' abilities, and we want to recognize the impact that F&M has had, not only on the school but also on the artistic identity of Orange County. F&M is more than deserving of the Community Partner Award at this year's season finale."

"With the status of government funding, arts programs are usually the first to be susceptible to budget cuts," says F&M chief executive officer **W. Henry Walker**. "F&M strongly believes that the arts are an important component of education and cultural development. On behalf of F&M, and my family, we are humbled to receive this honor."

According to Walker, F&M and the Walker family consider OCHSA to be a key asset to the enrichment and cultural identity of Orange County. Believing that music education at a young age helps set the tone for future generations, F&M will remain an active supporter of the county's budding artists.

In addition to financing, F&M also provides a hands-on role in artistic growth. **Kevin Tiber**, senior vice president at F&M Bank, has been serving on the OCHSA board of directors for nearly a decade. The OCHSA Season Finale showcased the School's gifted students in a compilation of the year's best presentations. The performance featured student works of art from each of the school's 11 conservatory programs. The annual performance recognized volunteers and ongoing supporters and contributors.

OCHSA is the only specialized arts program of its kind in the region to offer tuition-free academic and arts instruction to students from Orange, Los Angeles, Riverside, San Bernardino and San Diego counties. Established in 1987, OCHSA currently serves more than 1,550 students in grades 7-12.