

Lolo Sarnoff Founder's Award



The Lolo Sarnoff Founder's Award recognizes individuals for thought leadership, philanthropy, creativity and lifelong engagement in the arts.

The spark behind the award is the Swiss-German artist, scientist, entrepreneur, philanthropist and founder of Arts for the Aging, Inc. (AFTA), the late Lolo Sarnoff (1916-2014). After graduating from Germany's Reimann Art School in 1930's Berlin, Lolo was a pioneer across continents. Her legacy-works abound: she was a driver in the Swiss Red Cross Motor Corps during World War II, co-inventor of the replacement for the iron lung (the Electro-Phrenic Respirator), ground breaking sculptor of fiber-optics and plexi-glass (The Flame, her favorite, has been on permanent exhibition in the Kennedy Center Opera House since its opening in 1971), and she was a devotee of countless artistic and community endeavors. Among them, Lolo helped establish The Foreign Students Service Council and held philanthropic and volunteer positions to landmark institutions such as the Washington National Opera, the Washington Performing Arts Society, the Washington Ballet, The Corcoran Gallery of Art and the Corcoran School of Art.

With the grace, wisdom and energy of a modern Olympian, in 1988 at the age of 72, Lolo founded greater Washington's Arts for the Aging. She was inspired by studies that showed less agitation and improved moods in seniors with Alzheimer's disease who had taken part in art classes she conducted at the request of former colleagues at the National Institutes of Health. True to Lolo's spirit, AFTA spreads joy, combats isolation and improves the health and well-being of older adults, especially those who are more vulnerable, through the transformative power of arts engagement. Indeed, her personal dream was to "Do today as much as possible. Tomorrow may never come." Because of the vision and creativity of Lolo Sarnoff, and that of outstanding recipients of the Lolo Sarnoff Founder's Award, our world is a better place for the arts and for humanity.

Previous award winners are: Nancy Peery Marriott, soprano and philanthropist; Trish and George Vradenburg, Founders, Us Against Alzheimer's; Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States; Ambassador Donald T. Bliss (Ret.), author, humanitarian and philanthropist; Dorothy Kosinski, director and CEO of The Phillips Collection; Jerome Barry, performance artist, master teacher, founder of the Embassy Series; Carmel Quinn, singer, storyteller and comedienne; Irving Fields, pianist, composer and arranger.