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18903 Allendale Forest Drive  
Richmond, Texas 77407  
9/02/2024

Jackie Schuessler-Kimsey (MHHA)  
City of Houston  
Mayor's Hispanic Heritage Awards  
901 Bagby, 3rd floor  
Houston, Texas 77002

Dear Jackie Schuessler-Kimsey (MHHA):

It is with extreme joy and admiration, that I nominate Ruby Rivera with the Texas Salsa Congress for a 2024 Mayor's Hispanic Heritage Award in the category of Arts in the Community. As a nominator I had the tough decision to either nominate Ruby Rivera for the Education category or the Arts. Ruby has dedicated her career and life to both Education and Art Access.

Ruby has spent over 20 years dedicated to the Arts and dance community in Houston, Texas. I have had the privilege of working with her and seeing her efforts for over a decade. Within the time frame that I have had the chance to work with her, I have seen Ruby's selfless efforts to support and inspire the dance community.

The Texas Salsa Congress (TSC) works within Houston and the state of Texas to highlight and foster the immense amount and varied talent within the local, national, and international Latin dance community through the curation of exhibitions, workshops, musical clinics, and more, serving as and providing a platform to highlight Houston and its diverse urban culture and talent.

Throughout all the years that I have known Ruby, she has always believed in the arts and has prioritized giving dancers and teams the opportunities to grow within the dance industry. Some of the participants that have attended TSC events started as kids and have become professional dancers, traveling the world. Ruby genuinely cares about every single person that attends her events and treats each person and dancer with respect. To Ruby the dancer comes first, and the art of dance is what unites her and the hearts of everyone that attends Texas Salsa Congress events.

Ruby is responsible for producing events like Latin Beats at the Downtown Aquarium. In addition, Ruby has created several partnerships with different affiliates such as Karbach and Home Run Dugout to provide free salsa lessons at events like Noche Latina, Latina Fest and the Northside Festival. Many of the events where Ruby has created partnerships are free to the public and although they are free, the partnerships acknowledge her experience in the Arts, and she is able to book local Houston dancers, musicians, and DJs for the events. The talent gains exposure and the ability to improve their craft while gaining revenue and they themselves get additional exposure and partnerships. Houston has many local talented artists, and Ruby has provided them opportunities for their artistic growth and additional networking.

The City of Houston also shares my support for Ruby and the work that she does for the Houston Arts community. Ruby was honored by the City of Houston with a Proclamation on, August 4, 2010, making it "Salsa Appreciation Day". In addition, on March 14, 2015, Ruby was bestowed with another Proclamation making it "Texas Salsa Congress Day". Most recently on February 17, 2024, Fresh Arts Houston celebrated Ruby by honoring her at the "Wonder Ball" Gala.

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From teaching at the Houston Farmers Market, First Generation college group, to the middle of Downtown Houston, Ruby has carved out and ensured that the arts, especially Latin Music and Salsa is part of the creative placemaking throughout zip codes in H-Town.

There is something so beautiful to see people from all walks of life, intergenerational families, and diversity come together for events that are curated to create community in Houston. What is most impactful is that many of these events are FREE. Yes, Ruby is intentional in creating partnerships to ensure these events are free and opens access for community.

I truly thank you for your time and hope that you sincerely consider Ruby Rivera for the 2024 Mayor's Hispanic Heritage Award. The Houston Arts Community believes in her, I believe in her and she deserves this recognition by the city for the creative placemaking and contribution to the arts, travel and tourism ecosystem. I can wholeheartedly make that statement.

In fact, below is a direct quote from Angela Carranza, Fresh Arts Executive Director, which is a further indication of the support and admiration that the Houston Arts community has for Ruby and her work through the Texas Salsa Congress and her work in education.

"Beyond her work with the TSC, Ruby's commitment to the arts is also evident in her advocacy for arts education. She is deeply dedicated to increasing college and university enrollment particularly for first-generation students, immigrants, and those pursuing careers in the arts. In her role in college access, Ruby develops initiatives that support students and families in Houston. Her recent efforts, such as creating a teen intern program with Arts Connect, highlight her dedication to nurturing the next generation of arts leaders. Ruby's kindness, humility, and generosity shine through in her interactions with colleagues and community members, as she consistently fosters a collaborative and inclusive environment. Her dedication to both her craft and community has earned her significant recognition in recent years. As Executive Director, I had the honor of naming Ruby Fresh Arts' 2024 Gala Honoree for her exceptional work in uplifting artists. I was also thrilled to collaborate with Ruby when she was selected for the Fresh Arts Space Taking Artists Residency in 2023. During this residency, Ruby celebrated Houston's vibrant Salsa dance and music community with inclusive and free programming and used this platform to highlight and collaborate with multiple artists, vendors, and organizations." - Angela Carranza, Fresh Arts Executive Director

If given the honor to be the award winner, Ruby will continue to make Houston proud, just as she has made me proud by her hard work, dedication, focus and overall passion for the love of the arts.

Sincerely,

Cynthia Rojas

Director of Hospitality

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