

Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors Proclamation

HONORING JANET JOHNS AS
SANTA CRUZ COUNTY'S 2025 ARTIST OF THE YEAR

WHEREAS, as an Assyrian woman, mother, educator, dance instructor, choreographer and a performing artist in Santa Cruz County for over 45 years, Janet Johns has experienced firsthand the power of the arts for healing a community and bringing people together; and

WHEREAS, Janet began studying folklorico dance at age 18 as a university student at San Jose State University, where she learned from her mentor, Ramon Morones Ortiz, the importance of learning authentic steps, style and choreography from master instructors and keepers of the traditions of Mexico; and

WHEREAS, in 1978 Janet co-founded Esperanza del Valle and in 1980 established Esperanza del Valle as a performing company providing hundreds of dancers the opportunity to train and perform folklorico dance for over 44 years; and

WHEREAS, Janet has volunteered in the Santa Cruz County arts scene for over 40 years, including serving on the commission supporting the arts in Watsonville, as a founding member of the Watsonville Film Festival, and with Esperanza del Valle partnering with the Watsonville Center for the Arts; and

WHEREAS, Janet has produced annual gala theater performances in the Greater Santa Cruz Tri-County area with Esperanza del Valle, bringing the best of Mexican dance and music to our community for 4+ decades, as well as collaborating and performing with El Teatro Campesino, Santa Cruz Symphony, and Tandy Beal and Company; and

WHEREAS, Janet has received numerous awards and accolades, including a proclamation from the mayor and the City of Watsonville in 2020 recognizing her 40 years of leadership with Esperanza del Valle; The Watsonville City Council Mayor's Award in 2014 in recognition of her leadership in the City of Watsonville; a Gail Rich Award in 2002 for her community service in the arts; and a Calabash Award in 2001 for Excellence in the Ethnic Art; and

WHEREAS, Janet is very proud of her son, Gabriel Johns Robledo, who teaches folklorico and drama at Pajaro Valley High School, inspiring new generations of adolescents to see themselves as artists and agents of change.

NOW, THEREFORE, Felipe Hernandez, Chair of the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors, and Kimberly De Serpa, Santa Cruz County Second District Supervisor, and do hereby honor Janet Johns as Santa Cruz County's 2025 Artist of the Year in recognition of her significant contributions to the arts and to the Santa Cruz County community.



Kim De Serpa
Felipe Hernandez
Chairperson, Board of Supervisors

May 9, 2025

Date