



## Tom and Cindy Robertson honored with 2020 Youth Impact Award

By Loni Nannini

For Tom and Cindy Robertson, investing in the future and creating art are second nature. They have incorporated both in their philanthropic efforts with the Boys & Girls Clubs of Tucson.

The couple's three decades of dedication culminated in the HeARTworks program and the recently completed Catalina Rotary Creative Arts Center at the Frank & Edith Morton Clubhouse, a mammoth effort recognized with the 2020 Youth Impact Award.

The annual award was created to honor an individual, couple or business that has made a consequential impact on Club youth through innovative program enhancement.

HeARTworks was the brainchild of Cindy, a pharmaceutical sales representative-turned-artist who modeled the program after a Mississippi project for the homeless.

"I thought this was a tremendous vehicle for the kids," she said. "They have a wonderful fine arts program at all the clubhouses, but this allows kids to learn about the whole process, from studying art and learning from visiting artists, all through production and sales, through an art show in which 100% of proceeds go back into the program.

"Until you witness it, you can't believe what it does for their self-esteem," Cindy said. "They are like flowers blooming right before your eyes and the art they create is magnificent."

Cindy spent at least 30 hours weekly working hands-on with youth in the program before the COVID-19 pandemic, and later implemented virtual programming.

Tom, a past president of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Tucson board of directors, said the program gives young people the chance to "close the circle."

"When I say, 'Close the circle,' I mean the HeARTworks Art Show offers an innovative way for these kids to sell their work and raise money for the Boys & Girls Clubs of Tucson," said Tom, senior VP of Presidio Group Wealth Management. "This gives them pride in their work and helps them take ownership of programs at the clubs."

The Robertsons initially underwrote HeARTworks and then helped facilitate a small grant from Catalina Rotary, of which Tom is a longtime member and past president. He also served as assistant district governor in Rotary District 5500 in Southern Arizona.

"Catalina Rotary was looking for a project that involved the arts, literacy and youth. Research shows how vital a good arts program is for a young person's education: That is why it is called STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math) and not STEM," Tom said.

As interest in HeARTworks expanded, Catalina Rotary pledged an additional \$50,000 and considerable manpower to convert administrative space into the 1,800-square-foot Catalina Rotary Creative Arts Center, which now has a stage and studios for recording, painting and dance.

"At every Clubhouse there is a picture of a door, with the words, 'Great Futures Start Here,' which is the national tagline for Boys & Girls Clubs," said Cindy. "When we started HeARTworks, we designated the key as our symbol, so every painting and piece of art has a key on it somewhere. The theory is that the key will unlock the door to a brighter future and it has been a tremendous honor and blessing to try to do that with these kids."