

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 8005

By Swann

A RESOLUTION to recognize Bill Griffith on the occasion of his retirement.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should recognize, particularly on the occasion of their retirement, those outstanding teachers who have devoted their careers to providing the highest quality education for Tennessee's students; and

WHEREAS, Bill Griffith is one such phenomenal educator and craftsman who, having distinguished himself as an exemplary teacher for more than three decades at Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts in Gatlinburg, will enter into a well-deserved retirement on December 31, 2021; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Griffith grew up in Indiana and received his Bachelor of Science degree in Art Education from Indiana State University, followed by a Master of Arts degree in Art Education/Ceramics from Miami University and postgraduate study at the Appalachian Center for Craft; and

WHEREAS, he began his career in arts education in 1972 as a teacher and then art department chair at Connersville High School in Indiana; in 1982, he attended Arrowmont as a work-study, and the executive director was so impressed with his knowledge and commitment that she hired him as a staff member in 1985 and as her assistant in 1987; and

WHEREAS, in his more than three decades at Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts, Bill Griffith has served in various capacities in addition to staff member and assistant executive director, including work-study assistant, studio assistant, program director, director of the artists-in-residence program, director of programming, and, most recently, outreach and partnership liaison; and

WHEREAS, in 1991, Mr. Griffith designed and implemented a program that would have far-reaching positive impact for children in Sevier County and across Appalachia; after realizing that many local school systems lacked sufficient arts funding, he created ArtReach, a program that brings K-12 students from public schools to Arrowmont for a day of art taught in the school's professionally equipped studios by working studio artists; and

WHEREAS, to date, more than 30,000 Sevier County students have participated in ArtReach, and in 2017, the program received a major grant to expand its reach into isolated counties across central Appalachia, impacting six states and bringing arts education to the most rural and impoverished K-12 schools; in 2020, in response to the pandemic, Arrowmont implemented Virtual ArtReach; and

WHEREAS, the ArtReach suite of programs reaches additional thousands of students with workshops teaching traditional Appalachian craft and also provides recognition of and teaching opportunities for traditional Appalachian craft artists from the local community; and

WHEREAS, though his contributions to arts education in Appalachia were unmatched, Mr. Griffith continued to innovate and expand Arrowmont's reach and positive impact when, in 2006, he created the Artists-in-Residence program, which brings five early-career artists to the school for a one-year residency; thus far, more than 140 residents have participated in the program; and

WHEREAS, his other contributions include the Utilitarian Clay Symposium, which brings more than 200 clay artists from around the country to Gatlinburg every four years to participate in a weeklong program of workshops and demonstrations, as well as the Figurative Association Symposium, which brings more than 200 figural artists to the community to show their work and participate in workshops and demonstrations; and

WHEREAS, in 2008, he inaugurated the Bill Griffith Art Educators Fellowship that brings a K-12 art teacher to campus each summer for one month, and in 2016, he took on his current

role as outreach and partnership liaison, in which position he has worked with educational institutions to build awareness and ensure the continuation of traditional Appalachian arts; he has since brought the Windgate Foundation on board to create a \$3.5 million endowed fund to assure the program continues into perpetuity; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Griffith, in addition to his unparalleled career in arts education, is a renowned ceramicist whose work is housed in collections throughout the world, including at the Tokoname Cultural Museum in Japan, the Jingdezhen Ceramic Institute in China, the Haan Museum of Indiana Art, the City of Orlando, Florida, Permanent Collection, and the Tennessee State Museum in Nashville; and

WHEREAS, a frequent speaker at national and international symposia and juror and adjudicator for various arts organizations, he has received fellowships and awards to study throughout the world, including in Japan, Ecuador, Taiwan, and Peru, as well as stateside in Montana and Maine; and

WHEREAS, throughout his remarkable career, Bill Griffith has been a force in arts education regionally and nationally, changing the lives of countless students and leaving an indelible mark on the Arrowmont School and the community of Gatlinburg; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Griffith truly epitomizes the dedicated teacher who is wholly committed to the highest ideals of public service and quality education for all, and he has garnered a place of enduring respect and affection in the arts community both locally and nationwide; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we honor Bill Griffith, commending his exceptional service to the children of Sevier County and counties throughout the Appalachian region, saluting his professional

expertise and personal excellence, and extending to him our heartfelt wishes for a happy and fulfilling retirement and every continued success in his future endeavors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy and upon proper request made to the appropriate clerk, the language appearing immediately following the State seal appear without House or Senate designation.