

Melrose Center: Melrose Creative Expo

by Jim Myers

On Saturday, February 11 from 1–4 p.m., the Melrose Center celebrates its third anniversary by hosting the Melrose Creative Expo. The event, a celebration of Orlando’s creative community, will feature the Melrose Awards ceremony, live music, studio and virtual reality demonstrations, fabrication and simulation lab activities and guests from throughout the community. The Melrose Awards honor the best projects of 2016 in the categories of Film, Maker, Audio, Game Design & Programming and Photography & Graphic Design. To be eligible for the awards, projects must have been created at least in part at the Melrose Center, and entries are voted on by the public. A first prize of \$250 is awarded to the winner of each category, and one grand prize winner will be chosen to win \$1,000.

Since it opened in February 2014, the Dorothy Lumley Melrose Center for Technology, Innovation and Creativity has allowed OCLS to significantly expand its role as a provider of technology education. Occupying 26,000 square feet on the second floor of the Orlando Public Library, the Melrose Center allows users to gain the understanding required to be a contributor to and consumer of emerging technologies.

Signing up to use the Melrose Center is easy—library patrons can become members by completing a short orientation, opening the door to a number of creative possibilities. The Melrose Center offers state of the art audio, video and photo studios, fabrication and simulation labs, an interactive media wall, editing bays, sound booths, collaborative work spaces and the means to pursue virtual reality and video game development. Over 7,000 OCLS patrons have become Melrose Members by taking the Center’s general orientation. Last year, Melrose instructors taught nearly 4,200 classes, guiding patrons toward self-sufficiency with an array of equipment and software. During that same period, Melrose Members reserved over 2,000 sessions in studios, editing bays and sound booths.

The Melrose Center is also about collaboration and community. It is a monthly meetup venue for numerous groups with interests including robotics, podcasts, web development and game design. Additionally, staff have created monthly meetup groups pertaining to specific areas of the Melrose Center, with combined group membership over 1,300. The recently initiated *Open Mic: The Voice of Melrose* further encourages the community to embrace the center as a gathering place by inviting musicians and spoken word performers to take the stage each month to share their talents.

The Melrose Creative Expo provides the perfect opportunity to explore the Melrose Center as we look ahead to Year Four of its existence. Come help celebrate the best projects created in the Center, tour the studios, learn about our growing immersive technology curriculum and connect with other people sharing common interests in the community.