



# PRESS RELEASE

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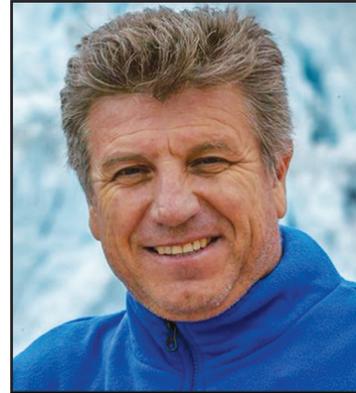
## The National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences Suncoast Chapter Announces 2026 Silver Circle Honorees



Ted Ballard



Brad Friedkin



Luis Felipe Marrou, Jr.



Marybel Rodriguez



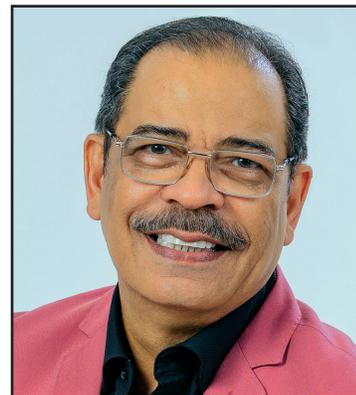
Theresa Schmidt



Jonathan Garcia



Dagmar Rivera



José Vega Santana

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**Pembroke Pines, FL (March 2026)** - The National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences Suncoast Chapter is pleased to announce the 2026 Silver Circle honorees. The Silver Circle honors individuals who have contributed to the television industry for 25 years or more, with a significant portion of their work taking place within the Suncoast Region, which includes the State of Florida, the State of Louisiana, the Mobile, Alabama–Pensacola, Florida television market, and Puerto Rico.

## Silver Circle 2026 Honorees

**Ted Ballard** is a 34-year veteran producer & director in the Sports Television industry. In his 27-year career as the VP and Executive Director of Broadcasting for the Miami HEAT, Ballard pioneered countless production initiatives and innovations. A 38-time Suncoast Chapter Emmy® Award winner, he also spent 20 seasons helping to define and elevate the coverage of Miami Dolphins preseason football telecasts on CBS4.

**Brad Friedkin** joined WSVN in 1985 as a News and Special Projects Photographer. From work in hard news, special projects, magazine programs including “Inside Report”, Brad has traveled the world for Channel 7. Always cool under pressure. Always with a quick wit. Always creative and energetic.

**Luis Felipe Marrou, Jr.** is a veteran TV producer, director, cinematographer, and editor who founded VTM Productions in Miami, Florida, in the early 1990s. For over 30 years, he has produced award-winning travel series and documentaries for PBS, Telemundo, and Amazon Prime. A multiple Suncoast Regional Emmy® Award winner, he is known for impactful storytelling that resonates with audiences both locally and around the world.

**Marybel Rodriguez** is an Emmy® nominated reporter and anchor for CBS News Miami. She began her television career in 1995 as a spokes model on the international television show Sabado Gigante. In 2001 she went on to pursue her journalism career at WPLG in Miami. After a brief time there, this Miami native made the switch to CBS News Miami. For the past 26 years she has covered countless stories in our community from the death of Fidel Castro, many hurricanes to our sports teams’ national championships. Marybel says “I am living out my dream but what makes me the most proud is the title of mother and wife”. She is a true example of the balancing act.

**Theresa Schmidt** joined KPLC-TV in 1978, building a distinguished 47-year career as a broadcast journalist in Southwest Louisiana. Her reporting spanned hard-hitting investigations and compassionate community service journalism. Known for accuracy, integrity, fairness, and fearless pursuit of truth, she earned deep public trust. She was often sought out by those seeking to right wrongs or expose injustice. Theresa retired in July 2025 at age 70.

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**Jonathan Garcia**, blends strategic leadership with hands-on media expertise. A Vermont University graduate, he earned a BS in Business Administration with a Communications minor and began as a top CBS Radio salesperson in Boston. He then advanced at WAPA-TV, focusing on sales, marketing, and new business development, steering collaborative teams and revenue-enhancing partnerships. Jonathan emphasizes operational discipline, data-driven decision making, and mentoring the next generation of media leaders.

**Dagmar Rivera**, stands as a Puerto Rican television icon, guiding the island's screens for more than four decades. A versatile host, actress, and presenter, she defined eras on marquee programs: Dagmarita era on ESTO NO TIENE NOMBRE, El Show de las 12, Los Kakucómicos, Estudio Alegre, Súper Sábados, Dame Un Break, and Día a Día. Her warmth, talent, and mentorship reshaped national TV and inspired generations.

**José Vega Santana**, born (Feb 28, 1956, San Juan, Puerto Rico), grew up amid television, thanks to his comedian mother Gogie Santana. A pioneer in children's TV, he produced, wrote, and performed on Los Payasos del Pueblito, El Pueblito News, Chiquimundo, and more. His show Planeta ReMi, 45 years strong, earned Emmys, expanded to 70 US cities, and born the ReMi Foundation, feeding 150,000+ meals. He chairs WIPR, inspires globally.

The Suncoast Chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences accepts nominations for the prestigious Silver Circle annually. The Board of Governors evaluates nominees' contributions and then votes for inductees by secret ballot.

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## About the Suncoast Chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences

The Suncoast Chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences is a nonprofit Florida corporation dedicated to excellence in television. We offer annual EMMY® Awards called The Suncoast Regional EMMY® Awards to television markets in the entire State of Florida, Alexandria, Baton Rouge, Lafayette, Lake Charles and New Orleans, Louisiana, Mobile, Alabama, Thomasville, Georgia and Puerto Rico. The Chapter is comprised of professional people who work in television or students who are studying television in colleges or universities and aspire to become professionals. If you would like to become a member, please visit our [Membership](#) page. If you are interested in the Suncoast Regional EMMY® Awards, please visit our website at [suncoastemmys.org](http://suncoastemmys.org).