



Fiesta® San Antonio Commission, Inc.
THE ORDER OF THE CASCARON
 2018 Nomination Form

NOMINEE INFORMATION

Name of Nominee: Melanie Cawthon

Address: 2002 W Magnolia City: San Antonio State: Texas Zip: 78201

Phone #: N/A Cell #: 210-643-8935 Work #: 210-704-7262

E-mail: mcaawthon@disabilitysa.org

Affiliated PMO's (if any) disABILITYsa

NOMINATOR INFORMATION

Name of Person Making Nomination: Crystal Darby

Address: 628 S. St. Mary's St., #204 City: San Antonio State: Texas Zip: 78205

Phone #: N/A Cell #: 210-863-2250 Work #: 210-458-2878

E-mail: Crystal@crystaldarby.com

On a separate sheet:

In **400 words or less**, please describe the contributions that your nominee has made to Fiesta®. Please include:

- 1) Detailed information on the volunteer role that your nominee has played in the Fiesta® celebration. Give specific details on how your nominee's efforts have had an impact on the Fiesta® celebration in a positive and long lasting way. Elaborate on specific volunteer duties and responsibilities nominee has undertaken.
- 2) The length of time that your nominee has been involved in these activities. Give specific years nominee was active in these activities.
- 3) If your nominee served in a specific leadership role during Fiesta®, i.e., Fiesta® royalty, president of a Fiesta® organization, chairman of a Fiesta® event, etc., indicate how their volunteer involvement has gone beyond the normal responsibilities of that role.

Please submit your Nomination form and essay by 5:00 pm on January 31, 2018 via fax or email to:

Fiesta® San Antonio Commission Inc.
 2611 Broadway, San Antonio, Texas 78215
 Fax: 210-227-1139
 E-mail: Amy@fiesta-sa.org

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2018 Nomination

Melanie R. Cawthon
(397 words)

Melanie Cawthon arrived on the Fiesta® scene in 2011, taking an instrumental role in creating visibility and providing opportunities for individuals with disabilities an inclusive experience through Fiesta Especial® programs in San Antonio's biggest celebration of heritage, culture, and diversity.

Fiesta Especial® became an official Fiesta® event in 2006, but it was Melanie's advocacy, involvement, and efforts which brought Fiesta Especial® into the heart of San Antonio. Her endless hours of work and unwavering determination to ensure the participation of individuals with disabilities in Fiesta® resulted in transforming Fiesta Especial® into a one-day Carnival experience (Celebration Day), parade, and unofficial royal court. In 2017 alone, over 78 schools from the greater San Antonio area brought over 1,200 special education students to participate in Celebration Day, along with 570 adults with disabilities in day-habilitation programs.

Melanie transformed the Fiesta Especial® Royal Court into a leadership and life skills development program highlighting the contributions that individuals with disabilities make in the San Antonio community while helping participants develop into stronger role models and leaders.

Melanie served as the Commissioner for Fiesta Especial® from 2011-2014, and then as an Elected Commissioner for Fiesta® from 06/2014 to 05/2017. This past year, Melanie took a huge leap, demonstrating her passion for the future of the Fiesta Especial® programs and what they mean for inclusion of those with disabilities in the Fiesta® Celebration. When learning of the former PMO's intent to dissolve the Fiesta Especial® programs in November 2016, she found a solution to sustain the programs under disABILITYsa. In Dec. 2016, under Melanie's leadership, disABILITYsa filed for nonprofit status, with a mission to educate, advance, and engage individuals with disabilities by sharing information, creating opportunities, and strengthening the organizations that serve them.

In doing so, Melanie, and others who support and advocate for people with disabilities in our community, were able to create a safe harbor for programs like Fiesta Especial®. Working with disABILITYsa and the official PMO for Fiesta Especial®, Melanie volunteered 100% of her time between February and May 2017 to ensure the programs continued seamlessly for all Fiesta Especial® program participants. In May 2017, Melanie was hired by disABILITYsa. The organization was officially recognized as the PMO for Fiesta Especial®. While it takes many to make the Fiesta Especial® programs a reality, it is Melanie's vision, passion, and determination propelling the programs and sustaining them for San Antonio's benefit.