



For Immediate Release:
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**FIVE ORIGINAL PLAYS TO BE PERFORMED AT WOODLAWN ELEMENTARY ON MAY 4
CREATED AND PERFORMED BY STUDENTS AT HOLLIN MEADOWS, HYBLA VALLEY, MOUNT VERNON WOODS,
WOODLAWN AND WOODLEY HILLS ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS**

**Third Year of Funding from the Arts Council of Fairfax County Enables 55 Students the Opportunity to
Experience Theatre as a Constructive Approach to Issues of Adolescence**

Alexandria, Fairfax County, Virginia—Fifty-five fifth graders from Hollin Meadows, Hybla Valley, Mount Vernon Woods, Woodlawn and Woodley Hills Elementary Schools have been creating original plays on themes of importance to them and rehearsing them since December 2008.

The Mount Vernon Community Children's Theatre (MVCCT) received a \$17,000 grant from the Arts Council of Fairfax County to conduct a fourteen-week after school theatre program. MVCCT has matched the grant with \$34,000 in expenses including tickets to MVCCT productions and numerous scholarships to its camps.

Students were selected who could benefit from the life-long skills that theatre imparts and who might not otherwise have access to such activities. The five participating Fairfax County Elementary Schools are located in the West Potomac and Mount Vernon High School pyramids and have significant populations of students on the free or reduced lunch program.

The program's instructors and directors include John Waldron and Monique Flowers. Melanie McCleerey serves as coordinator for the program. Thomas Britt, Professor, Film and Video Studies at George Mason University, is filming and editing the rehearsal process and performances. The students in the program, as well as their schools, will receive a copy of the DVD.

Woodlawn Elementary School Principal Stephanie Bisson stated that Woodlawn "is thrilled to be a part of the MVCCT's After-School Theater Program. This program offers Woodlawn Elementary students a unique opportunity to express themselves. The skills they are learning will enhance students' learning at school and throughout life." Mount Vernon Woods Principal Marie Lemmon concurred, stating that "Mount Vernon Woods is greatly appreciative for the opportunity to have our students participate in such a wonderful program...many of our students would not have the means to take advantage of programs like these. We are grateful to the Arts Council of Fairfax County for doing its part in making a significant difference for the children of this great county."

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MVCCT Education Director Beth Hauptle, who spearheaded the group's efforts to secure the grant for the third year, is excited about its potential to stimulate and enhance the cultural life of local youth. "MVCCT has been producing children's shows and providing arts education programs for 29 years," she said. "This grant enables us to serve populations we don't consistently reach and expands our existing after-school programs to new students and audiences. The grant also enables us to reach more students in the five schools through offers of free tickets to our productions and scholarships to our spring break and summer camps. We are grateful for the Arts Council of Fairfax County for recognizing the value programs like this have on the lives of students in financially challenged communities."

The performance of all five plays will take place at Woodlawn Elementary School, located at 8505 Highland Avenue, Alexandria, VA 22309 at 7:00 pm on Monday, May 4, 2009. The performance is offered free of charge, but space is limited. For more information call (703) 360-0686.

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MVCCT has long been a fixture on the local children's theatre scene, producing three productions a year including such audience favorites as Alice in Wonderland, Narnia, Once Upon a Mattress, and, most recently, the Wizard of Oz. Casts are comprised entirely of community youth aged 8 through 18 who work under the supervision of a professional team of directors, musical directors, choreographers, and stage managers. Older participants also have the opportunity to try their hand at more mature fare in the group's annual Teen Show. MVCCT also offers Summer and Spring Break Camps and After School Programs in conjunction with local PTAs. To learn more about MVCCT, please visit www.mvcct.org.

Founded in 1964, the Arts Council of Fairfax County, Inc. is a 501 (c) 3, non-profit membership organization designated as Fairfax County's local arts agency. Through partnerships with Fairfax County Public Schools, individual artists, and other cultural and community organizations, the Arts Council creates and supports programs, activities, and policies which inspire, nurture, and reflect the cultural and artistic diversity of Fairfax County and integrate the arts into the lives of all Fairfax County residents. Arts Council funding is provided by Fairfax County Government, the Virginia Commission on the Arts, corporations, organizations, and individuals. To learn more about the Arts Council, please visit www.artsfairfax.org.