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FOUR WORLD PREMIERES TO BE PERFORMED AT WOODLAWN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ON DECEMBER 17

*HUSH, HUSH ABOUT THAT CRUSH, THIS TOWN AND A DANCING COW,
EMILY AND THE PRINCE AND THE SENSATIONAL IMPROVISING SEXTET*

CREATED AND PERFORMED BY SIXTH GRADE STUDENTS AT HYBLA VALLEY, MOUNT VERNON WOODS,
WOODLAWN AND WOODLEY HILLS ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Mount Vernon Community Children's Theatre Awarded Prestigious Grant From
Arts Council of Fairfax County to Conduct After School Programs

Alexandria, Fairfax County, Virginia—Fifty sixth graders from 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 May. The Mount Vernon Community Children's Theatre received a \$14,108 grant from the Arts Council of Fairfax County to conduct a sixteen-week after school theatre program. 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 four participating Fairfax County Elementary Schools are located in the West Potomac and Mount Vernon High School pyramids and have significant populations of students on free or reduced lunch.

The program's lead teacher and director, **Chris McGriff**, has directed more than 42 musicals and plays including *Ragtime*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Annie*, *Oliver*, *Bye Bye Birdie*, *Cinderella*, *Mari Christine*, and *Children of Eden*. He has worked on the Broadway productions of *The Color Purple* (starring Fantasia), *Wicked*, *La Cage Aux Folles*, *Man of LaMancha* (Starring Brian Stokes Mitchell), and *Julius Caesar* (Starring Denzel Washington). National tour credits include *Les Miserables*, Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*, and *Rent*. Chris has taught theatre for children throughout his career and has been teaching with MVCCT for more than two years. He is an Alumni of Howard University's Theater Arts program where he received his BFA in directing.

Claudia Greene, Site Coordinator for the program, received her BFA in theatre from Tarleton State University. She served as Program Assistant for the Education Community Partnerships Program at the Kennedy

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Center where she served as liaison to 19 District of Columbia Schools, coordinating an artist-in-residence program. In addition to her directing credits, her teaching experience includes classes and camps for Texas Nonprofit Theatres and Junior Players' Discover Theatre Summer Camp. She is a member of the National Association of Drama Therapy.

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 [and] 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."

MVCCT Education Director Beth Hauptle, who spearheaded the group's efforts to secure the grant, 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 26 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 four schools through offers of free tickets to our productions and scholarships to our spring break and summer camps."

The performance of all four plays will take place at Woodlawn Elementary School, located at 8505 Highland Avenue, Alexandria, VA 22309 at 7:00 pm on Monday, December 17, 2007. 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.