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How the Power of Theatre Brings Life Skills to Children and Teens **Wheaton Arts on the Road**

—Groundbreaking Project Launched by Partnership: The Highwood Theatre and
A. Mario Loiederman Middle School for the Creative and Performing Arts—

Middle School Students Make Theatre Happen

This September, students from Loiederman Middle School will mount their own production and creative vision of the popular musical, *James and the Giant Peach, Jr.* Whether onstage or behind-the-scenes, students will collaborate together to learn communication skills and participate in an exciting theatre production to be seen by an audience of 1,600 elementary students for free and 5,000 families at a deeply discounted rate. “Our goal is to expose students to the substantial academic and social benefits that accompany collaborative arts experiences,” says Highwood’s Executive Director Kevin Kearney.

Eight theatre professionals from The Highwood Theatre’s staff will work alongside teachers at Loiederman Middle School to guide teams of students learning to do it all: acting, stage management, set and costume design, lighting, audio, singing, dancing, and marketing support. “It is really their show,” adds Kearney. Funded in part by the Arts and Humanities Council of Montgomery County through the Wheaton Cultural Arts Grant, this project is dedicated to serving Wheaton area students and their families by giving them access to theatre and the extraordinary experience of interacting through the arts as a community.

In November, 1,600 students from eight Wheaton elementary schools (Brookhaven, Georgian Forest, Harmony Hills, Sargent Shriver, Strathmore, Viers Mill, Weller Road, and Wheaton Woods) will be transported by bus to Loiederman to watch free daytime performances of the show. Their families can see public performances at Loiederman with discounted tickets.

Robyn Paley, Loiederman’s Theatre Teacher, is thrilled about the project: “Wheaton Arts on the Road is a terrific opportunity for Wheaton children to enjoy working together and gain important hands-on production and

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communications skills that translate to the real world of work and social experiences.” Paley adds: “I am ecstatic to have the opportunity to work with The Highwood Theatre in making this project a success for our students. They will have the benefit of direct training with theatre professionals and take part in all the steps of the creative process.”

Theatre Workshops for 2,000 Elementary School Students

Not only will middle school students produce and be part of musical theatre, Loiederman students will design hands-on theatre workshops, based upon their experiences, and travel to the Wheaton elementary schools to engage younger students in the workshops.

A preview of the collaboration will take place on September 3rd from 1:00 - 2:30 PM at The Kennedy Center’s 2016 Page-to-Stage Festival as part of Highwood Theatre’s “The Students’ Art Collaborative Millennium Stage Performance.” Students from The Highwood Theatre and Loiederman will perform a collection of short scenes, monologues, songs and previews from Highwood’s upcoming 2016-2017 Season Schedule, including *James and the Giant Peach, Jr.*

About The Highwood Theatre

The Highwood Theatre is a nonprofit organization dedicated to bringing the community together through theatre. Now in its 14th Season, Highwood’s guiding principle is “anyone can do theatre.” Highwood was founded in 2004 and began executing its mission through seasons of professional quality theatre featuring all-student casts, design teams, and production staff. In 2013, in conjunction with its relocation to the heart of downtown Silver Spring, The Highwood Theatre expanded to more fully carry out its mission and develop innovative, engaging programming for artists of all ages through professional and student productions, classes, and programs in schools and for home schooled students.

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