



News Release Theatre IV

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Theatre IV Promotes Literacy and Fosters Community Partnerships as part of MINDS WIDE OPEN: *Virginia Celebrates Children and the Arts*

Richmond, VA. – In honor of Minds Wide Open, Theatre IV announces a host of children's programming ranging from main stage productions of *The Stinky Cheese Man* and *Seussical* to several unique outreach partnerships such as FIELD ARTS and Poetry Out Loud. MINDS WIDE OPEN: *Virginia Celebrates Children and the Arts*, is a statewide collaboration presenting performances, exhibitions, festivals, and readings by, for, or about children and the arts between March and June 2012. This year Theatre IV will highlight two collaborative projects: **the FIELD Arts (Family Involvement in Early Literacy Development) in partnership with Richmond CenterStage, the Latin Ballet of Virginia, and the local school systems and Poetry Out Loud a partnership with the Virginia Commission for the Arts.**

FIELD Arts is one of five partnerships that make up the BrightLights Education Initiative of Richmond CenterStage. Theatre IV is one of the lead partners and providers, along with the Latin Ballet of Virginia. Currently in the third year of a five-year initiative, the program reinforces essential concepts in language arts literacy through the study of and participation in the arts. Bruce Miller, Artistic Director of Theatre IV and Barksdale Theatre, was part of the initial planning for Minds Wide Open and says, "One of the initial goals of Minds Wide Open

was to link together arts organizations of varying sizes. FIELD Arts does just that.” One teaching artist from Theatre IV and two from the Latin Ballet use arts based strategies to reinforce vocabulary to promote reading comprehension. The artists work with two preschool classes at each of four at-risk elementary schools: A.M. Davis Elementary in Chesterfield County, Skipwith Elementary in Henrico County, and Chimborazo and J. L. Francis in Richmond City. One class at Skipwith Elementary is a combined special needs class. The program runs for fifteen sessions and includes three fieldtrips to reinforce the curriculum. Parents and caregivers are invited to participate in the field trips where they learn techniques in nurturing literacy development. Beginning in March, the sessions will focus on movement and the students and parents will attend *Le Petit Prince* by the Latin Ballet of Virginia. Brittany Taylor is the teaching artist from Theatre IV and has seen the program work, “I have watched the students grow in focus, cooperation amongst peers, memory retention and appreciation for the arts. They astonish me as they read and remember the new words presented to them, and are always so excited to bring those words to life using the drama and dance tools they’ve learned.”

Created by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation, **Poetry Out Loud: National Recitation Contest** promotes the art of poetry in the classroom and encourages students, grades 9-12, to learn great works through memorization and recitation. The Virginia Commission for the Arts (VCA) in partnership with the national organizations appointed Theatre IV and Barksdale Theatre to administer Poetry Out Loud throughout the Commonwealth because of the statewide reach Theatre IV enjoys through in-school touring programs. Poetry Out Loud serves as an entry point for students to learn and love poetry. Much like a spelling bee, the process begins in at the classroom level with students progressing to the school, regional and then state competition. Over 12,300 students from 61 Virginia high schools participated in 2012. The VCA invites other professional theatres in Virginia to host the regional contest such as the Barter Theatre in Abingdon, The Prizery in South Boston, American Shakespeare Center in Staunton, Wayside Theatre in Middletown, Signature Theatre in Arlington, and the Virginia Stage Company at the Wells Theatre, Norfolk. Theatre IV in collaboration with the VCA will host the **Virginia State Final Competition on March 15, 2012 at the Sara Belle and Neil November Theatre from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m.** This event is free and open to the public. The State Final competition will feature sixteen regional winners who will recite three poems. The judges look for physical presence, voice and articulation, dramatic appropriateness, level of difficulty, and evidence of understanding. The winner on March 15 will proceed to the National

Competition in Washington DC in May to compete for \$50,000 in prizes. For more information on Poetry Out Loud contact Jeanie Rule at 235-8687 or visit www.theatreivrichmond.org/pol.html

Theatre IV productions promote literacy as they reinforce award winning books used daily in classrooms across Virginia. Mainstage shows include the *Stinky Cheese Man and other Fairly Stupid Tales*, based on the award-winning book by Jon Scieszka and Lane Smith and adapted by John Glore, running through March 18 and *Seussical* by Stephen Flaherty and Lynn Ahrens running from April 27 to May 20, both in the Sara Belle and Neil November Theatre. Theatre IV, founded in 1975 in Richmond, is the second largest children's theatre in America, touring every school district in Virginia and serving over 350,000 Virginia students in Kindergarten through 12th grade with our assembly-style educational plays. Travelling shows running between March and June include *Jack in the Beanstalk*, *Three Little Pigs*, *Wonderful World of Simple Machines*, *House at Pooh Corner*, *Oliver Hill Story*, *Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad* and *I Have a Dream: The Life and Times of Martin Luther King, Jr.* *Hugs and Kisses*, Virginia's principal child sexual abuse prevention program since 1983 will present over 30 in-school productions all over Virginia during March and April. For a full description and schedule of all productions and ticket information call (804) 282-2620 or visit www.theatreivrichmond.org.