

Generosity of 'Spirit' Keeps Arts Accessible for Underserved Youth

NORTHWEST CHILDRENS THEATER and SCHOOL

NW Neighborhood
Cultural Center
1819 NW Everett Street
Suite 216
Portland, OR 97209-2189

phone: 503-222-2190
fax: 503-222-4130
www.nwcts.org

*Our mission—to educate,
entertain and enrich the lives
of young audiences*

Managing Director
Judy Kafoury

Artistic Director
Sarah Jane Hardy

Education Director
Carolyn Newsom

Volunteer Director
Diane Carlson

Northwest Children's Theater and School (NWCT) has received \$30,000 from the Spirit Mountain Community Fund in support of the theater's educational outreach program for underserved and at-risk students.

Funded through the Spirit Mountain Community Fund, NWCT's outreach program was created as a way to contend with the decreased funding and declining arts resources in public schools. The program provides classes and production support in numerous local schools and programs, particularly Title One public schools and programs that serve at-risk youth.

"As an arts organization, NWCT's outreach program is unique," says NWCT Outreach Coordinator Tiffany Rowland-Morris. "A major award from the Spirit Mountain Community Fund makes an incredible difference. We can listen to the needs of the individual teachers or administrator, then tailor-make an arts program specific to the school."

Davis Elementary is one such school. With a majority student population of native Spanish speakers, Principal Susan Dunn wanted to bring the arts to her pupils in an accessible way throughout the entire school year, not just for one assembly. As a Title One school with limited resources, Dunn knew money would be an issue. But when she called NWCT, she learned that the Spirit Mountain Community Fund would provide funding for the year-long program.

Now all she needed was a dynamic theater teacher that would commit to a long-term contract, and who was fluent in Spanish. It was a tall order, and Northwest Children's Theater had a tall teacher. At 6' 8", Matt Haynes (picture included with press release), a gifted actor, theater instructor and Spanish-speaker, has fit the bill perfectly. And in addition to classes at their school, Davis students come to NWCT's school matinees free of charge.

Thanks to the Spirit Mountain Community Fund, students who might never experience the magic of the performing arts are instead receiving the highest quality theater arts training the city offers. "NWCT unleashes the imagination and potential of children as they develop concepts, literacy skills, and confidence," says Dunn. "(It's) a gift that influences a life time."

But it's not just the students of Davis Elementary that benefit. Thanks to the Spirit Mountain Community Fund, NWCT is able to offer free or discounted classes and student matinees to over 100 schools and programs per year. "It's a pleasure when NWCT can fund these programs," says Rowland-Morris. "We're honored to be part of the Spirit Mountain Community Fund's legacy of giving."

Initiated in 1997, the Spirit Mountain Community Fund of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde is committed to honoring their tribal traditions of sharing and giving back to the community. The Fund dedicates six percent of the profits from Spirit Mountain Casino to organizations in Western Oregon. A board of trustees made up of government and civic leaders and Tribal representatives administers the Fund. The Fund targets special needs in public safety, health, education, culture, environment, problem gaming and historic preservation. To date, the Spirit Mountain Community Fund has given over \$35 million to Oregon non-profits. "We love exposing children and adults to theater programming. It expands their interest and understanding of the world they live in. The Tribe and Fund believe in helping individuals become self-sufficient. Employment and education is important, but so are arts and cultural programs," says Director Shelley Hanson.

Founded in 1993, Northwest Children's Theater and School is one of the largest children's theaters on the West Coast, reaching 75,000 children and adults annually through a mainstage season of plays and year-round theater arts school. Each season features titles from children's literature with adult actors working beside talented young performers. The school offers skills classes and playlabs, performance troupes and professional training programs, including a prestigious internship program. NWCT's outreach program provides classes and production support for schools and programs that serve at-risk youth.

Photo Caption (two photos included, credit: David Kinder)
Students from Davis Elementary cheer as Northwest Children's Theater and School's Managing Director Judy Kafoury (left) and instructor Matt Haynes (center) receive a 'large' gift from Spirit Mountain Community Fund's Shelley Hanson (right).

**FOR IMMEDIATE
RELEASE**

Release Date
May 14, 2007

Kill Date
May 25, 2008