



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Three Rivers Community Foundation Awards Grant to
Prime Stage Theatre
to Support Teen Dating Violence Education**

WHO: Prime Stage Theatre

WHAT: Teens 4 Change Grant Award

Website: www.primestage.com

Pittsburgh, PA – Prime Stage Theatre has been awarded one of the first Teens 4 Change (T4C) grants in the amount of \$2,000. The grant will support the non-profit's continued work in educating teens, parents and teachers about the warning signs of teen dating violence.

T4C is a program of Three Rivers Community Foundation (TRCF). TRCF promotes *Change, not Charity*[™], by funding and encouraging activism among community-based organizations in underserved areas of Southwestern Pennsylvania. The foundation supports groups challenging attitudes, policies or institutions as they work to promote social, economic or racial justice.

TRCF's Teens 4 Change program is a youth-led group that encourages and promotes social justice by funding and empowering youth who are seeking to make change in the SWPA communities.

According to a report from the Family Violence and Protection Fund, approximately one in three adolescent girls in the United States is a victim of physical, emotional or verbal abuse from a dating partner – a figure that far exceeds victimization rates for other types of violence affecting youth.

One of the most troubling problems is the lack of awareness and information surrounding this issue. Prime Stage Theatre addresses this silent epidemic through its live theatre production of *Everything is Fine*. The production is performed for the public each year and is also available for bookings in schools and other educational settings.

The play is an original creation of Prime Stage Theatre's Teen Board. One of the goals of the Teen Board is to give back to the community by engaging in projects that benefit area youth. This play shares important information through an engaging story, and provides tools to reduce the likelihood of someone becoming a victim of teen dating violence.

Prime Stage Theatre Board member, Dotty Weisberg, has been involved with the teen program for several years. Her daughter is Hannah Jo Weisberg, who in her former role as president of

Prime Stage Theatre's Teen Advisory Board, originally chose the theme "the dangers of teen dating violence" as the group's focus for a performance.

"It was truly inspiring to receive a grant that will help the Prime Stage Teen Board make a difference from a group of my peers who are also trying to make a difference. We are extremely honored," says Hannah Jo Weisberg.

The motivation behind the creation of the play was the death of a Pittsburgh area high school student, Demi Brae Cuccia. Demi was murdered in August 2007 by her ex-boyfriend just one day after celebrating her 16th birthday. She was a victim of teen dating violence.

Demi's parents have tirelessly campaigned to teach the warning signs of dating violence. Jodi Cuccia, Demi's Mom, has been involved with the Prime Stage Theatre project since its inception. Her presence, personal story and talk-back sessions follow each performance, make a big impression on the teens in the audience.

"The very personal story of Demi Brae Cuccia's death gave the issue of teen dating violence an actual person and face to identify with the enormity of the issue. This personal connection deeply affected the teens on the board of Teens 4 Change.

"When a person is faced with one of the most difficult situations in life, losing a child, they do one of two things – either they isolate themselves and privately deal with their grief or they take the opportunity to reach out and educate as many people as possible in the hopes of saving another parent this from horrible heartache. Since her own daughter's murder, Jodi Cuccia has relentlessly worked to get the word out about the warning signs of teen dating violence," says Dotty Weisberg.

For more information on Prime Stage Theatre's Teen Dating Awareness project:

http://www.primestage.com/teen_programs/teen_dating_program.html

MORE ABOUT PRIME STAGE THEATRE:

Prime Stage Theatre is a non-profit organization committed to producing high-quality, artistic experiences for adults, families, students, and educators as they discover the fusion of live theatre and literature. With education as the cornerstone of its mission and vision, the Company offers unique programs designed to support educators and families in the sharing and appreciation of great literature, and that encourages both literacy and a love of theatre.

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