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Three Dance Scholarship Winners Announced

Fairfax, Virginia (October 7, 2012) – Three Fairfax County high school seniors win dance scholarships at the Fairfax County Dance Coalition (FCDC) Third Annual Gala Showcase, *A Celebration of Dance*, Sunday, October 7th. This year, says FCDC President Marilyn York, “the Arts Council of Fairfax County (ACFC) joined FCDC to expand the number of scholarships awarded.” Penelope Gross, Mason District County Supervisor, and Linda Sullivan, President of the ACFC, presented the scholarships.

The three dance scholarship recipients are: Christopher Saunders (aka “Peanut”), Audra Avery and Kailey Leinz. Each will receive \$500 to be used for tuition at a college, university, conservatory or summer intensive program for the 2013/2014 school year. Saunders attends Fairfax High School and studies dance at Center Stage Dance & Arts Center. He’s been taking dance training for 4 years. Avery is home schooled and studies dance at Encore Theatrical Arts Project. Leinz attends Lake Braddock High School and studies dance at The Center for Ballet Arts. Both Avery and Leinz have been taking dance training for 14 years.

County Supervisor Gross, who spearheaded the Arts component of the County’s comprehensive plan, mentioned in her remarks to the audience, “how pleased [she is] to see the wonderful array of dancers and dance styles that the Gala event pulls together.” The program as a celebratory event along with the scholarship awards demonstrates the FCDC mission to promote quality dance arts in the County.

Sullivan highlighted that “the two ACFC awards are made possible by private funds that created the Uphoff Scholarship Program.” This year the ACFC will award \$1000 in scholarships for each arts discipline. Sullivan was so impressed with last year’s dance scholarship winner, Michael Hibbs, that she arranged the collaboration with FCDC this year. Hibbs graduated from high school in June 2012, having studied dance for 16 years at Center Stage Dance & Arts Center, and is now a freshman in the dance program at Oklahoma City University.

One of the judges, Richard Yoder (Broadway performer and teacher at Steps on Broadway, NYC), sent a message to all seven applicants, “I feel so blessed to be able to watch you all dance. It is so inspiring to see young people reach for their dreams. No matter what the outcome of this Scholarship please know that you are all very talented and I look forward to seeing the dancers you all become. Thank you for giving me the gift of your dancing.” The other three judges were Lesley Shearer (member of the Royal Academy of Dance, Board of Examiners), Cartier Williams (hooper, choreographer, filmmaker and performer, including for 2 U.S. Presidents), and Dan Joyce (an Associate Professor in the School of Dance at George Mason University).

Scholarship applicants must be 2012 – 2013 graduating high school seniors who currently take classes at a FCDC member dance studio and who plan to pursue studies in dance. Dancers were required to submit an essay, faculty recommendations, and a DVD of a dance performance for consideration. Entries were reviewed by a panel of 4 professional dancers and dance educators not affiliated with the member companies, with expertise in the disciplines of ballet, jazz/modern, musical theatre dance, and tap.

The FCDC Gala, performed at the Northern Virginia Community College, Annandale Campus theatre, featured twelve companies and a mix of ballet, tap, jazz, modern, musical theatre and Indian dance styles. Participating companies include: BalletNova, Center Stage Dance Company, Dancin' Unlimited Jazz Dance Company, Encore Theatrical Arts Project, Gin Dance Company, Impact Dance Company, Lasya Dance Company, Nrityanjali Dance Company, The Ballet Arts Ensemble of Fairfax, The Fairfax Ballet Company, The Kintz Mejia Academy of Ballet and the Virginia Ballet Company.

"Every year, the reasons we produce this show become stronger," says York, also the artistic director of Dancin' Unlimited Jazz Dance Company. "The Gala provides an opportunity for advanced and professional dancers to share their artistic talents with each other across this dance community. Drawing together these twelve specialized groups has put Fairfax County dance on the map in the DC Metro Area, and the FCDC has created this dance production with the purpose of sharing its talent across county lines."

About FCDC:

FCDC is a collaboration of dance organizations, educators and students with professional dancers and choreographers. Members work together to grow dance opportunities and build audience support and appreciation for the variety of dance companies and programs in Fairfax County. Formed in 2008 as a community voice for dance, FCDC focuses on county-wide performances, improving performance venues for dance, emerging choreography, advanced dance education and enriching the cultural fabric of Fairfax County. For more information about FCDC, go to www.dancefairfax.org,



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