

NOMINATION FORM
COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION SERVICE LEARNING COMPETITION

Institution: **College of Charleston**

Title of Project: **Unified Theatre (Special Needs Theatre in Partnership with City of Charleston Therapeutic Recreational Services)**

Project Director: **Laura Turner**

Contact Information for Project Director:

Dept. Of Theatre and Dance

TURNERL@COFC.EDU

8434529473

Establishment Date of Project: **August 2008**

Unit That Administers Project:

Dept. Of Theatre and Dance Theatre for Youth Program and the Masters of Arts in Teaching Performing Arts Program

Total Number of Students Involved:

Since inception: 32 students averaging about 4 students per year working as Teacher/Director/Playwright/Designer/Producer

PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS REGARDING THE NOMINATED PROJECT
(Insert your response after each question; the response to each question should be no more than one page)

1. For purposes of this competition, the Commission on Higher Education defines service learning as college student learning at any level and in any situation that is *linked* in a direct, hands-on fashion to the resolution of a problem or concern in a target community outside the institution *and is related* to a college course with some type of reflection activity. How does your project meet the parameters of this definition?

This program was created in partnership with the City of Charleston Therapeutic Recreational Services and the Theatre for Youth program in an effort to give a meaningful, hands-on educational theatre experience for my students while providing special needs citizens in the City of Charleston an opportunity for an artistic experience where none had previously existed. The CofC students in this program receive a practicum credit per semester and keep reflective journals chronicling their experience. Unified Players was also awarded Excellence in Programing in 2012 by South Carolina Recreation and Parks Association.

2. Specifically, which segments of the college/university community does your project involve?
This program involves CofC students within the Theatre for Youth concentration within the BA in Theatre as well as graduate students in the Theatre Concentration within the Masters of Arts in Teaching the Performing Arts.

3. How many students (specify degree levels to the extent possible) does the project affect?
32 students, with 3 of those coming from the graduate level and the rest from the undergraduate level.

4. Describe the target community or communities your project serves.
Within the City of Charleston's Recreational Division this project is a staple of the therapeutic services that serve special needs adult citizens of the City of Charleston, SC. The participants have disabilities ranging from Down's syndrome to physical disabilities. The average age of the participant is 20 years old.

5. Describe your project's effectiveness in helping to solve the problems or concerns in the target community.

This project has given a community of people that were previously only being offered athletic experiences as a part of the therapeutic recreation program a chance to participate in artistic activities. Since it's inception in 2008, the program has about 15 to 20 participants each semester participating in custom theatrical productions that are adaptations of classic titles. There has also been a glee class offered for several years, as well as creative arts summer camps each year. The productions give the participants the chance to sing, act and dance. There has been a steady involvement from the participants with a great turn out from audiences to see the finished productions each semester. The joy that this program has brought to this population and to their families getting to see them be stars instead of sidelined in artistic experiences is immeasurable.

6. Describe the degree to which your project enhances student learning while providing specific examples of the service learning activities the college students engage in. Also explain how the service learning activities reinforce or apply what the college students learn in the classroom.

The goals of the Theatre for Youth program and the Masters in Teaching in the Performing Arts program include hands on teaching practicums meant to give real world application of the educational theatre skills students are learning in the classroom. These include learning to teach acting, learning to direct, learning to adapt material for different ages and skill sets, learning to produce, market shows on little to no budgets, and learning to design and build the spectacle to accompany their shows. Every one of these skills are practiced within this project semester after semester, year after year. And because these students (who are aspiring theatre teachers) will have to teach all students in a public school, including special needs students, this experience is invaluable in teaching them how to adapt their teaching to any student. This is simply a fantastic experience in every way when it comes to applying their newly acquired skills and making a difference in the community.

7. Is there academic credit associated with the project (not necessary for submission)? If so, please explain the particulars.

The students receive a one hour practicum credit each semester and can choose to continue for another credit. However, most students continue for no credit! They stay because they have fallen in love with the participants and the work and can see so clearly the joy that is coming from their hard work. It is these students who choose to stay past the required one hour credit that become production directors and begin mentoring the new CofC students who join the program. The baton passes every 3 semesters on average to a new student director.

8. If funding is required, how is the project funded and what is the approximate annual budget for the project?

The program exists with the help of in-kind gifts such as facilities and some craft supplies for the spectacle aspects. The program meets weekly at the Hazel Parker Playground that is owned by the City of Charleston Recreation Dept. with performances happening in a theater at the College of Charleston for no charge. The program won an Innovative Teaching Grant from the College of Charleston that helped provide some basic set pieces. Otherwise the program has no ongoing budget, but rather solicits donations of materials.

9. Add any other comments you may have about your project.

Unified Players was awarded the state Excellence in Programing award in 2012 by South Carolina Recreation and Parks Association. It also contributed to a Very Special Arts Program award given by the Kennedy Center for South Carolina.

Please see the attached letter of support for a previous grant, as well as some photos and a program from a recent production.

An Adaptation of Into the Woods



An Adaptation of Into the Woods



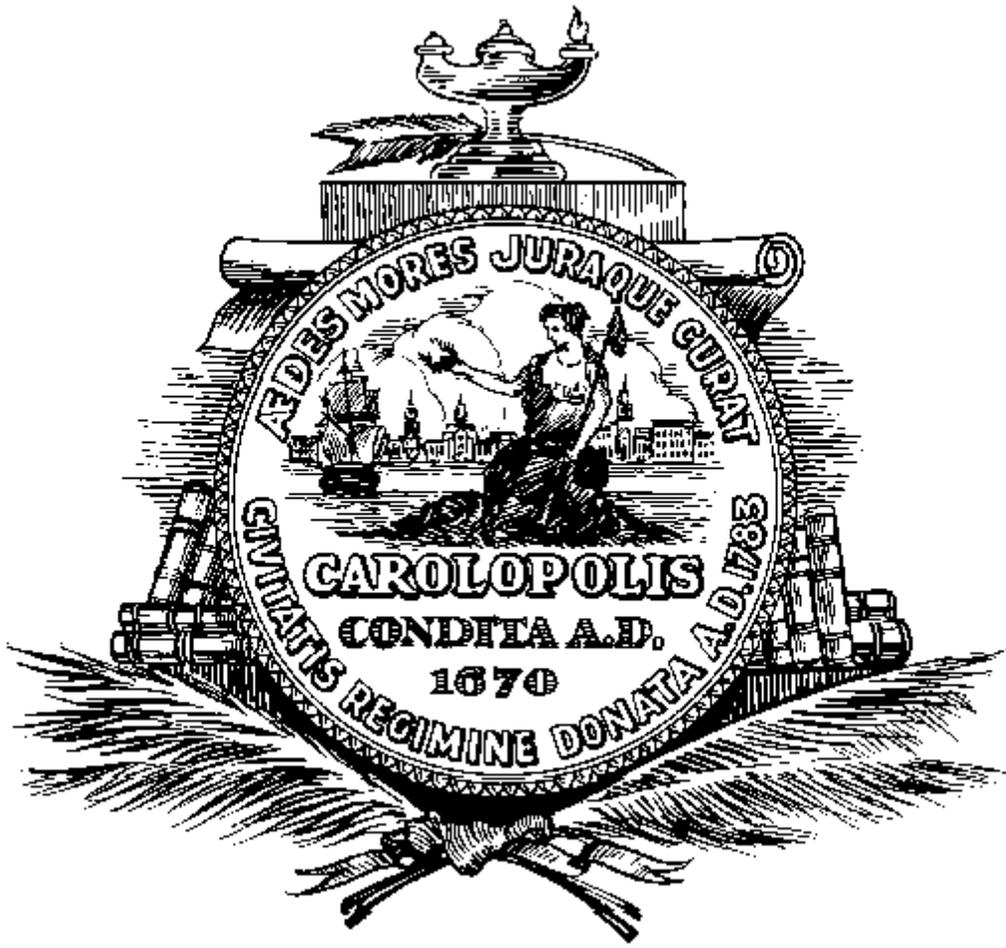
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City of Charleston

Joseph P. Riley, Jr. South Carolina Laurie Yarbrough
Mayor Director

Department of Recreation

April 8, 2013

Dear Professor McNerney,

I am writing today to express my gratitude in regards to the unending support Unified Players, the theater program with the therapeutic recreation division of the City of Charleston, has received since 2008 from the Theater for Youth program with the College of Charleston. Students are sent to help our productions each semester and those students greatly impact the experience that the participants in the program have. In my experience as coordinator of this program I have witnessed students from the College of Charleston write scripts, create costumes, paint the set, direct, stage manage, act and even work one on one with the participants of the program to deliver quality programming to the community. Many times the students will continue working with the program

even after the semester has concluded.

Recently Unified Players was graciously given grant money from the College of Charleston Innovative Teaching Grant for special community programs involving the Theatre for Youth program led by Laura Turner, Theater for Youth Professor. These funds were used to purchase materials to create the set for an adapted version of Charlotte's Web, which will be showcased this year at Piccolo Spoleto. Unified Players was also awarded Excellence in Programming in 2012 by South Carolina Recreation and Parks Association. All this could not have been achieved without the support of the College of Charleston Theater for Youth program.

Thank you again for all your support throughout the years.

Jennifer Molizon

Jennifer Molizon

Therapeutic Recreation Coordinator

Hazel Parker Playground, 70 East Bay St, Charleston, South Carolina 29403 ● (843) [708-3651](tel:8437083651)

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Charleston Recreation...where having fun is #1!



College of Charleston Theater 220
Located in the
Albert Center for the Arts

Admission: Donation to Unified Players Theater

Unified Players Theater Proudly Presents

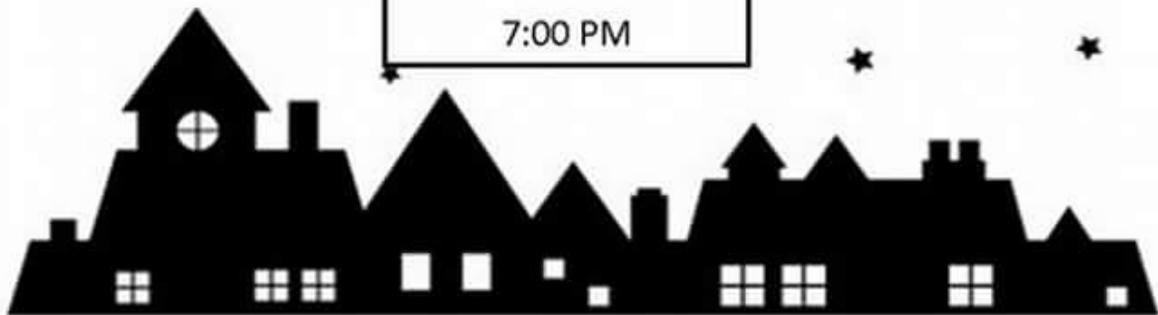
Mary Poppins

The Musical

Saturday

December 5, 2015

7:00 PM



You may also include supplemental information about the project (such as brochures, pictures, etc.)