

TAPROOT THEATRE



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Kill Date: April 23, 2011

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VANCOUVER & PORTLAND AREA STUDENTS LEARN TO PREVENT BULLYING FROM SEATTLE TOURING THEATRE GROUP

Taproot Theatre's Road Company teaches bullying and cyber bullying prevention April 14-22

SEATTLE – March 8, 2011 – One look at recent national headlines is enough to show that bullying can have harmful, and sometimes tragic, consequences. A mean message—said in person or sent online—can cut to the core of the recipient. A Seattle theatre group is visiting schools in the Vancouver and Portland areas April 14-22 to teach students how to respond to bullying in their own schools.

Bullying directly affects as many as one in four students, studies show, and technologies such as e-mail, social networking sites, blogs and text messaging have extended the potential for bullying from the playground into cyberspace.

Guided by Seattle-based Committee for Children's acclaimed bullying-prevention curricula, the Road Company uses the power of storytelling to teach students how to respond to—and even prevent—bullying and cyberbullying. The Road Company's method is simple: Present a captivating story with compelling characters, and weave lessons on respect and bullying prevention into it. Then when it's over, the actors interact with the students, reinforcing the lessons. One look at the statistics is enough to show the urgency.

In the United States, 15-25% of students report being bullied, and 15-20% report bullying others, according to the "Stop Bullying Now!" website of the Health Resources and Services Administration. In some cases bullying has led to suicide. For the offenders, it can lead to suspension, expulsion or even criminal charges. In Washington, nearly 15,000 students were suspended and 442 expelled in 2008-2009, according to data published by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction last January. In King County alone, 2,231 students were suspended and 89 expelled.

In Washington, a new expanded anti-bullying law took effect in June, stating that although a law had been put in place to prohibit harassment, intimidation and bullying, the problem had failed to decline. The new law expands efforts, requiring schools to institute policies regarding harassment, intimidation and

bullying, and requires each school district to appoint one individual to be the primary contact on the issue.

The Road Company's 2010/2011 season features four plays. *Don't Tell Jessica...* and *New Girl* teach junior and high school students the dangers of gossip, rumors and cyberbullying and the consequences their actions can have. *Treasure Ally* and *Super School* are aimed at elementary school students. Taproot Theatre commissioned Bethany Wallace and Josh Hornbeck to write the scripts.

Touring to schools throughout the Puget Sound region and across the Pacific Northwest, the Road Company has performed for over one million students since it began touring social-issues plays a quarter of a century ago.

About Taproot Theatre's Road Company

Taproot Theatre's Road Company has been touring dynamic social-issue plays to students throughout the Pacific Northwest since 1985. The Road Company reaches tens of thousands of students each year with productions that address relevant social issues and provide youth with safe steps to approach them. In addition to the touring productions, Taproot Theatre provides teachers' guides and resources to facilitate classroom discussion and increase the effectiveness of the message. The actors are also available for individual classroom visits. To book a show, contact Taproot's Director of Outreach at 206.529.3669 or touring@taproottheatre.org.

About Taproot Theatre

Taproot Theatre Company is a professional, non-profit theatre company with a multi-faceted production program. Founded in 1976, Taproot Theatre serves the Pacific Northwest with Mainstage Productions, Touring Productions and Acting Studio. Taproot exists to create theatre that explores the beauty and questions of life while bringing hope to our search for meaning. Taproot Theatre Company is a member of Theatre Communications Group (TCG), Theatre Puget Sound (TPS), and the Greenwood-Phinney Chamber of Commerce.

The Road Company is supported by The Charles Simonyi Fund for Arts and Sciences, The Seattle Foundation, 4Culture, ArtsFund, Moccasin Lake Foundation, PONCHO, the Fred Meyer Fund and the University Lions Club.

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SCHOOL TOURING PLAYS

***Treasure Ally* by Bethany Wallace**

For Grades K-6

Swashbuckling scallywag! The good ship Buccaneer has a bad case of the bullies, and it's much worse than our hero Louis ever experienced on the playground. The pirate captain calls him names and won't even let him off the ship in time to get to class! And that's not all; it turns out the captain is being bullied himself. Can Louis and his fellow crew members teach their captain a few things about standing up to bullies before the next full moon? Or will Captain No-Beard come to pick on them and steal their map to the treasure?

Education Goals: Bullying Prevention and Friendship | Recognize, Refuse and Report | How to be an Ally | Initiating a friendship

***Super School* by Bethany Wallace**

For Grades K-6

It's back to school at Asteroid Academy, and the first rule is, no superpowers on the playground. But when Danrelle uses her invisibility powers to steal Tilly's toy and tries to get her to explode in anger, the students risk detention or even being suspended. Your students' favorite superheroes from *Camp Super Friend* are back with all-new challenges and experiences. Will they use their superpowers for good or for evil? Only a visit to Asteroid Academy will tell!

Education Goals: Problem Solving | Empathy Training | Emotional Management | Bullying Prevention

***Don't Tell Jessica...* by Josh Hornbeck**

For Grades 6-12 | A play about gossip, rumors and cyberbullying.

It all started with a rumor—or was it the truth? In an age when gossip spreads like wildfire, a seemingly harmless message can destroy friendships, reputations and lives. At Clements High, homecoming is just around the corner and the stakes are high as a group of friends discovers the danger of jealousy when it is wielded like a weapon in e-mails and social networks. The drama will resonate deeply with students, who will see their classmates—and themselves – in the characters played out on stage.

Education Goals: Cyberbullying prevention | Understand the consequences of gossip and rumors

***New Girl* by Josh Hornbeck**

For Grades 6-12 | A play about the faces of harassment and the function of community.

Rachel is the new girl at Clements High. She wants to fit in and get along with everyone. But when two of the school's popular kids attempt to sabotage her friendships with two of the school's outcasts, Rachel learns that the way she treats others can have serious consequences. From cyber-abuse through instant messages and online social networking sites to verbal abuse in the halls, *New Girl* looks at the consequences of our actions and the need to treat everyone with kindness and respect.

Education Goals: Examine various forms of bullying and harassment, both subtle and overt | Learn importance of respect | Explore the dangers of cliques | Understand personal and social responsibility