

MEDIA RELEASE

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San Jose Rep's Red Ladder Theatre Company Celebrates 15-Year Anniversary *Rep's Social Outreach Program Uses Theatre Arts to Reach Santa Clara County's Most Vulnerable*

SAN JOSE, CA. (May 31, 2007)— **Red Ladder Theatre Company**, San Jose Rep's nationally recognized, award-winning social outreach program, is celebrating 15 years of community service this June. The program has served nearly 17,000 at-risk and disadvantaged individuals from age 3 to 83 since its creation in 1992. On June 4, **Red Ladder** will mark the program's significant milestones with a celebration from 5:00 – 7:30 p.m. at the San Jose Repertory Theatre, located in downtown San Jose at 101 Paseo de San Antonio. **Mayor Chuck Reed** will speak at 6:00 p.m. (see fact sheet below)

“**The Red Ladder Theatre Company** is such an important part of the Rep's mission and demonstrates the power of theatre and the arts to transform lives,” said Timothy Near, Artistic Director of San Jose Rep. “We remain steadfast in serving our community and helping our participants develop positive life skills and believe in themselves.”

The company is made up of multi-ethnic, multi-lingual professional actors who conduct the theatre workshops for each group on an individual basis. The workshops vary in time and frequency but each uses tools and techniques of improvisational theatre to help participants make positive choices, solve problems creatively, focus on tasks and work collaboratively. Most groups attend **Red Ladder** workshops on a weekly basis throughout the year but groups can opt for one-time or occasional workshops.

Participants of **Red Ladder Theatre Company** range in age, experience and abilities but often are the most neglected and disenfranchised members of the community. They include autistic children and adults; at-risk youth who are in danger of dropping out of school and engaging in violent or destructive behavior; incarcerated youth and adults; pregnant and parenting teens; disadvantaged adults; homeless individuals and those struggling with issues of poverty and violence at home or in their neighborhoods.

“By empowering the imaginations of our participants, we empower the individuals themselves. We let them know that what they feel and think is important. We validate their creative abilities and help them practice how to live out of their artistry in their daily lives,” says Red Ladder’s Director, Karen Altree Piemme. “We help them to understand that by employing their creativity and believing in their own imaginations, they will have the power to change their lives.”

Red Ladder focuses on strong social issues that are central to the lives of these participants. By encouraging individuals to try on alternate modes of behavior they gain a different perspective and are better prepared to make difficult choices when presented with problems in their daily lives. The company works in partnership with educators and social service professionals to create a strong network of support. Many of the relationships are long-standing and have grown over the years.

The list of partners over the past 15 years is extensive, below is a partial list of agency collaborators: The Morgan Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders, The Foundry School (an alternative high school for extremely at-risk students), Bill Wilson School for homeless and runaway youth, HOPE Rehabilitation Services, Women’s Residential Center, Mid-Peninsula Housing Consortium and the City of San Jose’s Office of Cultural Affairs. **Red Ladder’s school partnerships have included:** Horace Mann Academy, Downtown College Prep, National Hispanic University’s Upward Bound Program, San Jose Leadership Academy, Leadership Public High School, and Estrella Family Services in partnership with Galarza and River Glen Elementary Schools.

Jennifer Sullivan, Executive Director of the Morgan Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders says, “Red Ladder is one of the most valuable programs we have to offer our students. The positive effect on them is apparent not only during the workshops, but for days, weeks and months after. They talk about the program all year long.”

National Recognition and Replication

Red Ladder has received clear validation of its significance and effectiveness nationwide. Piemme has traveled both nationally and abroad to replicate the program with artists and organizations in Santiago, Chile and most recently in Anchorage, Alaska. The company has been asked to make presentations and conduct workshops at several conferences including:

- Making Art Making Change—Arts for Social Justice Youth Conference 2006
- National Service Learning Conference
- America’s Promise -- Silicon Valley (Colin Powell’s Initiative)
- CYZYG (the National Conference of Idealism for City Year’s corps members)
- TeenWorks 2000-the California State Youth Leadership Summit
- The Art of Peacemaking – Conflict Resolution Conference

On three separate occasions, **Red Ladder** was named a semi-finalist for the Coming Up Taller Awards, sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities and the President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities. The program’s inclusion in the California Arts Council’s Demonstration Project from 2001 through 2003 allowed for replication of this program statewide.

About San Jose Rep

San Jose Rep is one of largest non-profit, professional theatre company’s in the South Bay, presenting six main stage productions each year. As a major contributor to South Bay’s cultural community for 26 years, the Rep’s mission is to stimulate, celebrate and enhance understanding of ourselves and others

through the shared experience of live theater by producing new plays and classics marked by innovative interpretations and a reflection and inclusion of our community and the world in which we live. For more information, visit us at www.SJRep.com



FACT SHEET RED LADDER THEATRE COMPANY CELEBRATION

WHAT: 15th Anniversary Celebration for Red Ladder Theatre Company

WHEN: Monday, June 4th
5:00 p.m. Doors open
5:30 – 6:30 p.m. Program
6:30 – 7:30 p.m. Reception

WHAT: Program to include:

- Mayor Chuck Reed will speak at 6:00 p.m.
- San Jose Rep Managing Director Nick Nichols
- Joe Izzo, Bill Wilson School
- San Jose Rep Artistic Director Timothy Near
- Red Ladder video produced by Roy Avila and Channel 36
- 2007 Red Ladder participants from the Bill Wilson Center will perform a song they wrote, including both the words and music
- Red Ladder Theatre Company Director Karen Atree Piemme will close the program

WHY: The event is an opportunity to celebrate the impact we've had in the community, see how far we've come and look forward to all that lies ahead as we express our appreciation for our community, our partnerships and our participants.

To RSVP, contact Lauren Ivie at 408-367-7292 or laureni@sjrep.com